

*Interim Supply*

for more and more money and becoming more and more aware of the limitation of its own action or its own ability to act, owing to constitutional difficulties. The provinces were given only certain powers. They can act only in certain ways, can influence industry only to a certain extent and can raise only so much money. When a bewildered provincial treasurer or provincial premier tries to find ways and means of satisfying the cry for new services he must find it very frustrating indeed to discover his hands are tied because the federal government has so much power, power which he might himself find useful.

I am not suggesting, Mr. Chairman, that there is anything wrong with any of the provincial premiers who are striving to get for their provinces a little more power if they feel, and honestly feel, they can use that power to better the lot of the peoples in their provinces. But I do think we should be aware that that problem is not unique to any one province or to any one government which might be in power. I think we should examine the demands made by a province and remember that generally the demands made by a province represent the viewpoint of the government of that day. We must remember that when the government of the day says that there is only one solution to a certain problem, part of that cry may be a political one and part an actual one. But certainly we do know that there are different political governments in the provinces, and we have heard enough, from some of the premiers at least, to know that there are many and various approaches to economic affairs which these different governments reflect.

I should like to single out the government of the province of Quebec for a moment, just as an example of what has been going on. I suggest that the pressure put on by the government of the province of Quebec is explained, in part at least, by political pressure rather than just economic pressure. We are aware that there has been a resurgence of interest in government and government status and in the role of government in that province. There has become an awareness—and a voice to express that awareness as seldom heard before—that there are many depressed areas in the province. There is an awareness that the agricultural industry, for instance, is not faring as well as the agricultural industries in other parts of the country. Certainly when this awareness is coupled with a very high pressured political campaign to convince the country that that

province has the best government it can get and that it is working the hardest, we can understand why the ordinary citizen in that province and perhaps throughout the country as well—and sometimes those in the government itself—fail to appreciate that a lot of this pressure is political propaganda. It is to the welfare politically of the Liberal government in the province of Quebec to convince the rest of the country that there is only one solution to Quebec's economic difficulties, to say that there is no help other than by giving more power to provincial governments so that they will be able to solve those difficulties for themselves. We have observed some of that type of thing in Mr. Bennett's approach to this problem in British Columbia.

Since we in this house are politicians, we are not blind to the advantages to be reaped by provincial premiers who can convince the rest of the country that the only thing wrong with their governments is that they do not have sufficient power to do those things which they in their wisdom think are necessary, and that the big bad government in Ottawa will not let them have those powers. The present government has been politically disappointing along this line. Certainly we are all aware of the Liberal government's ability to sell itself as the government of this country which can handle all the difficulties. In considering the supposed generosity of the Liberal party, I have never been able to comprehend why it farmed out this area to the provincial Liberal government of Quebec. I should think that the first people to seize on this gradual erosion of federal power to excuse their own incompetence as a government would be the Liberal politicians sitting opposite.

Certainly if we are going to consider taking away any further power from the federal government we must also consider the problems the federal government will have to meet, and whether those powers are sufficient to meet those problems. We must consider the difficulties facing the people of Canada and the necessity for increasing the standard of living and services available. How shall those problems be met across Canada. I for one believe that most people in this country are Canadians first. While they are proud of their own provinces they readily agree that the standard of living available to all Canadians in all provinces should be considered in the best interests of Canada as a whole.

We must be wary of giving economic powers to the provinces, because we should

[Mr. Nugent.]