

Federal-Provincial Relations

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): Of course, the cost of living has increased 30 times since 1948.

What happened to the federal budget during the same period? It has gone up from \$4 billion to \$12 billion—that is a fourfold increase—while the provincial budget has increased 25 or 30 times.

Mr. Speaker, I am not suggesting that problems do not exist, but I wonder for what reason people go to such lengths in order to create problems where there are none. Provinces are financially sounder than they ever were. One can do far more with \$4 billion than with \$180 million, even though the hon. member suggested a moment ago that the cost of living has increased.

I am willing to compare Quebec's financial situation today with what it was in 1948 and it will be realized that this province is far richer than it was. However, this does not mean that it has too much money.

An hon. Member: It has too little.

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): Of course, it has too little, and so have we. We should very much like to have more money. We could for instance implement guaranteed annual income.

Mr. Speaker, I love my province as much as those who criticize us and tell us: How mean you are! Why don't you give it more? It is as if the government of Quebec were not a full-fledged government which is autonomous within its jurisdiction and has the right to impose taxes in order to collect the needed revenues.

Mr. Latulippe: Why do the unions—

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): Mr. Speaker, I do not understand; in any case, this question should be addressed to the unions and not to me.

I am only replying to the main argument which states that the important thing is money. Let us give money to the provinces and the problems will disappear. We shall print and distribute the money. Production will be balanced, goods will be consumed and Confederation will work out!

We point out the facts and of course we receive no answer. We are told that the purchasing power must definitely be equal to the national production. And yet I do not know what they do with the newsprint which is sold outside when the market is stagnant. We shall have to go and give money to those people so that they can buy our newsprint. Otherwise, we will never succeed.

Mr. Speaker, the present government is accused of being centralist, not to care for the provinces. I shall give some very simple examples and I shall cite facts. I shall not deliver a speech that scares people.

For example, let's take the case of my department: this is a very simple one. Do you know how many agreements we settled with the provinces? We settled 45 agreements. These are formal agreements, conventions which are under my department's jurisdiction. Nothing is being made without consulting the provinces.

For all the "special areas", considerable amounts—

[Mr. Latulippe.]

[English]

Mr. Orlikow: Or a dictatorship.

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): If you have any facts to put before the House, then give those facts—but just facts. And stop screaming just because you don't like the facts.

[Translation]

Obviously, these 45 agreements have been negotiated.

For sure, we would not say: Ask for anything you want, we are going to bargain. If, for instance, a provincial government happens to decide that a road is needed to get to some friend's summer camp, our answer would be no; but in the matters under its jurisdiction, we would never implement anything without first asking the province for its consent.

I have here a list of the agreements entered into under ARDA. As the hon. member for Roberval (Mr. Gauthier) should know, we just signed one with Quebec and the other provinces. We came to an agreement with the Quebec government and we are going to contribute our full share.

In Quebec City, a "special area" has been designated some time ago. We have solved a good many problems without any trouble and the same thing happened in The Pas, following an agreement with the province of Manitoba. Everything went on very smoothly, and those same communities in which unemployment previously ran as high as 30 per cent, are today experiencing a shortage of manpower and workers are coming from other areas.

The same applies to ARDA, to the FRED programme for example, in the Gaspé area, where agreements are reached not only with Quebec but also with private associations. It is the same thing in New Brunswick, where we are about to negotiate an agreement with respect to the northeastern area. Then, what is this business about taxation and centralization by the federal government? On the contrary, we are always trying to decentralize.

If the honourable member read a little, if he were better informed, then he would make better speeches. He says for instance that the constitutional conference was a failure because it was a matter of money. I should like to mention to the hon. member that I was in Victoria and that if it was a failure it was not for reasons of money but of jurisdiction in the field of family allowances. If you want to bring out the matter of money, then money do it always in the same manner, otherwise it is ridiculous.

Therefore, there are not only problems of money but also of jurisdiction. Immediately following the Victoria conference, we entered into negotiations with Quebec and the other provinces. Clearly hon. members opposite are not aware of this, and besides, they are not interested. In fact, it is much more simple to speak about distributing money but we have actively negotiated at the official level and the departmental level with a view to finding a formula agreeable to both parties, because the country should be taken as it is.

How is it that social security has been centralized in Ottawa? It is because the provinces have made no progress in this field.

Mr. Latulippe: They had no money!