

*Federal-Provincial Relations*

the incumbent he is proposing for it. Certainly the Prime Minister is burdened, but the federal-provincial burden that he carries will be made lighter by reason of this particular appointment. I think I strengthen my argument by insisting that the Prime Minister is preparing to fulfill his function in a more co-ordinated fashion by giving himself the required backup.

The hon. member mentioned that this might be a step toward constitutional reform. I say to him, not necessarily so. It may well facilitate the process of constitutional reform, but it is not being adopted for that purpose. The purpose of the office is to make the existing constitutional balance operate more effectively, not to change the constitution in some particular way. Certainly the patriation of the constitution of Canada is a major objective. It may be facilitated through the operations of this office, but the essential purpose to be served here is to facilitate a better operation of the constitution as it now exists, not to change it.

Reference was made to a new philosophy of government being required. I wish to refer to what appears to be a new philosophy proposed by the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton) as recorded at page 1955 of *Hansard*. I trust that is not the new philosophy we are seeking, certainly not the philosophy that this office will support. In fact, it is the contrary. Referring to the need for a strong federal system, the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain said, and I quote:

... a strong federal system will only work if you undertake it by agreement and consultation.

That is fine. I think we all agree with that. That is one of the purposes of this particular office. However, he then went on to say:

If agreement does not follow consultation, then we are not a mature nation and do not deserve to continue.

I think we have to repudiate that. Surely that is not the philosophy we are seeking. If there are strains in the federation, as indeed there are and always have been, they are likely to intensify because of the nature of the world in which we live. As we move into complex problems, we need an institution, or office or activity that will permit us to search more thoroughly for agreement and to develop consultation to a further point. However, I think we must repudiate his contention that failing to get agreement we deserve to fall apart and do not deserve to exist. I expect the hon. member will want to repudiate that philosophy. It is really a philosophy of despair because the constitution assigns responsibilities to different levels of government.

It may be we cannot agree, but there has to be a government that speaks for all Canadians regardless of the province in which they live, a government that will assure balance and equity across Canada. That has to be the federal government. In this particular measure, it is repudiating the philosophy of giving up. It is saying "Let's try harder. Let's have an institution that will assist the Prime Minister in those of his activities concerned with federal-provincial functions, and do a better job to the extent we can."

I intended to speak very briefly on this particular measure. Once again I welcome it as one that strengthens federalism. I believe that, particularly in the period ahead,

we will be well served by the incumbent who is being proposed.

• (1710)

**Mr. Joe Clark (Rocky Mountain):** It is a particular pleasure for me to follow in debate the hon. member for Scarborough East (Mr. O'Connell), not merely because of the eminent qualities he possesses as a member of parliament but also because of the place whence he has come. This is probably as close as we shall get to a man who has, in effect, been the deputy minister of the Office of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), an office responsible to the Prime Minister, which, like the Privy Council Office, is not answerable to this House.

**Mr. O'Connell:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order, to say I have not been the deputy minister. I have to reject that assertion at once. My function was a political function, not a staff function of the kind performed by a deputy minister.

**Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain):** I appreciate the clarification, but my point stands whatever the description of the office—the closest we get as a parliament to people who serve in the Office of the Prime Minister or in the Office of the Privy Council is when those people leave real power and come to parliament, as the hon. member for Scarborough East has just done.

I think there is a natural temptation for someone from the Province of Alberta, like myself, when addressing a question of the kind before us today to speak about the present unfortunate circumstances in federal-provincial relations between that province and the federal government. I shall not do so today, and I do not intend to take much time in this debate. But I do want to draw attention again to the very serious institutional aspects of the bill which has been brought forward and, more particularly, the very many changes which have occurred in the federal structure in relation to the Office of the Prime Minister in particular, for which there has been no legislation.

I think it can be suspected that the reason we have the bill before us is to provide a post of status for Mr. Gordon Robertson, whose qualities have been attested to by members on both sides of the House. The reason this was necessary, I suspect, has very much to do with the ripples which were caused in the public service by the appointment of Mr. Michael Pitfield to replace Mr. Gordon Robertson.

In my opinion the Pitfield appointment was an unfortunate one in its implications for the public service generally, quite apart from causing or inspiring the legislation we have before us today. But I do not wish to dwell on this point, Mr. Speaker, although other hon. members may wish to do so. The point I wish to make, Sir, is that there have been, over the last several years, a multitude of changes in the *de facto* structure and nature of the Government of Canada.

We have seen the growth in size and power of the Prime Minister's office. We have witnessed the growth in size and power of the Privy Council office. We have been treated recently to the simultaneous resignation of five senior public servants—and we in this House can only