

Transportation

remember very well the time when the Motor Vehicle Transport Act was introduced to fill this gap in the law. This act has been the law of Canada since 1954 and to the best of my knowledge its constitutionality has never been challenged in the only place where a challenge could be made effective, in the courts, by any provincial government or by any agent of a provincial government. That is the situation. All we are doing here is continuing to exercise that jurisdiction which parliament and parliament alone possesses. That is the factual situation.

This is a free country and I take no exception at all to what anyone wishes to say concerning what we are doing in this house. We, after all, are the people who must decide what is to be done in matters which are exclusively under the jurisdiction of parliament. I suggest that if we are to have a country at all it is just as important to protect the autonomy of Canada as it is to protect the autonomy of any province. I do not believe there is any member in this house who has been more anxious than I to respect in letter and in spirit the full rights of the provincial legislatures which are given to them by the constitution. I believe that the powers that were given to the provincial legislatures were given to them and to them only and that we should neither attempt to invade them nor take them away. I also believe, however, that provincial legislatures and other people should not try to take away from parliament or appear to suggest that parliament cannot exercise the jurisdiction which belongs to us and to us alone, in this parliament as representatives of the people of Canada.

It is possible that we might desire to change the constitution or change some of its provisions. This has been done before. It was done quite recently. It was done in 1952 in respect of old age pensions and there was another amendment made a year or two ago. These amendments can be made. But so long as jurisdiction belongs to this parliament and to this parliament alone we are the only ones who have any say concerning how that power shall be exercised. Each person must act according to his best idea of what is the proper thing for us to do.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Chairman, may I ask a question? I thank the hon. minister for his answer and I would like to ask him whether it would be possible to tell us if he received any protests from the province of Quebec and whether he answered them.

[*English*]

Mr. Pickersgill: The hon. member for Sherbrooke attempted to ask the same question on orders of the day. At that time I happened to be out of the chamber for a moment or two preparing for later events. I therefore was not able to answer his question. I indicated to him that if he would ask it at this time I would have an answer for him. I think it is only fair to the hon. member for Sherbrooke that I should mention this because he was very alert to ask the question, as the hon. member for Roberval has been. The answer is that I received no protest from the premier of Quebec. I would not have expected to. The premier of Quebec did write about this matter to the Prime Minister. He is the person to whom I would expect the premier to write. The Prime Minister replied. I believe there was a second letter and a second reply. I consulted my right hon. friend in anticipation of the question from the hon. member for Sherbrooke.

I am authorized by the Prime Minister to say that so far as we are concerned there would be no objection whatever to the production of this correspondence but we feel, nonetheless, we should make sure by means other than reading about it in a newspaper that the premier of Quebec has no objection. Steps will be taken to do that today, I hope, so that if there is no objection we can comply tomorrow or at the latest on Monday with the request for the correspondence which I should be very glad to have made public.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Chairman: Does the hon. member for Sherbrooke wish to direct a question or to take part in the debate?

Mr. Allard: Mr. Chairman, I should have liked to participate in the debate. But it seems to me the Chair is a little short-sighted and that we do not often get the opportunity, in this corner of the house of being recognized, especially during this debate on transportation.

So, if you do not recognize me, I will resume my seat once again.

The Deputy Chairman: The hon. member said that the Chair seems to be affected with a visual defect of some kind or that it is a little short-sighted. I must point out to the hon. member, who gave notice to the Chair of his desire to ask a question, that it is for that reason I am asking him whether he