

*Interim Supply*

the preservation of a strong dominion lies the future of our great country.

Are there dangers? Is this really a vital issue? Are we setting up paper tigers or straw men? I say there is grave danger. I was interested to read an address by a cabinet minister in the province of Quebec not long ago. It is quoted in the *Gazette* of October 24; the first paragraph of the report reads:

Revenue Minister Eric Kierans of Quebec says that federal ministries of industry, agriculture, fisheries and natural resources have become "superfluous" as far as Quebec province is concerned.

The headline above the article reporting this speech is "Minister Tells French Central Economy Now Passé". What does this mean? Do all these federal departments vanish from the province of Quebec if Mr. Kierans' suggestion is valid? Mr. Kierans is a very powerful and able man who obviously speaks with great authority not only in Quebec but beyond. What will happen to the operations of the dominion government if any province decides that it can "go it alone"? Will federal operations within the province be withdrawn? Do the employees of federal ministries working in the provinces go somewhere else? Does the Department of Agriculture, for example, become operative merely in nine of the provinces? If so, what would happen to its effectiveness? What would happen to the standardization of services? What will happen with regard to equality of opportunity as between one province and another? Perhaps Mr. Kierans is right and his province can cope with these matters, and cope with them better. Like my hon. friend from Peace River I would be the last to suggest that every opportunity should not be given to the people of Quebec to work out the changes in their society which they feel are necessary for their advancement at this time. But I am not sure the best method of dealing with this is within the rigid framework of dominion-provincial relations or that it is proper to justify the desire of one province by suggesting to all the other provinces that they should similarly move to take over responsibility because to do this, in my view, amounts to a massive attack upon the dominion structure, a great surrender of dominion efficiency.

Reference could be made to a subject which I believe is under discussion at this very moment at yet another dominion-provincial conference—the question of control of the Indians of Canada, a responsibility placed squarely upon the federal government. What

is the next step to be? What about provincial banks, restraint of interprovincial trade, the wholesale opting out of joint sharing programs on the part of provinces which can operate on their own? It is a great mistake to discuss this vital question of dominion-provincial relations and focus one's attention only on the province of Quebec. It is not now, nor was it historically the only province to urge greater provincial rights.

Many of the great advances in social welfare and resource development which have brought benefit to all kinds of people in this country were initiated by the dominion government and carried out by co-operative effort between the dominion and the provincial governments. But can this sort of activity be carried on if there is a wholesale evacuation by a number of the provinces? What will be left to the authority of the central government?

I do not intend to discuss amending procedures because these were ably discussed by some of my colleagues this morning. Perhaps, in time, the development of legislation for social needs and the general development of our country may lead us to a situation where we should take a new look at the constitution and perhaps even consider a new constitution. We know the British North America Act is only part of our constitution. But it will be serious, it will be a tragedy, if in any effort to deal with contemporary problems we were to follow a general policy of acquiescing in the face of every provincial demand with the result that there is a complete dismantling of the central authority.

What was confederation all about? What did our predecessors have in mind in 1867? It was a merging together of peoples, a sharing of sacrifice, a sharing of poverty and a sharing of wealth. How many times have provinces less well endowed by nature with the resources for modern industrial wealth had to go to Ottawa for equalization payments, for assistance, for subsidies? Where will they go if, in the process of accommodation, of accelerating provincial rights, the national treasury is depleted and the cupboard make bare? It is not any wonder, Mr. Chairman, that Mr. Thatcher of Saskatchewan should be concerned about this.

What about the provinces in the maritime area? Our forefathers made great sacrifices to enter confederation. Many people maintain that we were far better off before that, and indeed this produced our share of separatists. They were always of a law-abiding type, but they were separatists. We made our