
UNIT 12 REGIONALISM AND PROVINCIALISM

Structure

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12.1 INTRODUCTION

From the time of formation of Canadian Federalism, there had been evolving processes of centralisation and decentralisation as also the assertions by Federal and Provincial governments with regard to their powers. There have also been resurgences of regionalism either on the basis of cultural and linguistic identities or perceived denial of economic and developmental rights. Regionalism in fact has remained a significant process of Canadian federalism. There are cultural, linguistic and economic aspects of that.

Before we highlight the salient features of regionalism and provincialism in the Canadian political system, we need to elaborate on the broad characteristics of the federal system in that country. That will enable us to closely examine the unique features of provincial regionalism in that country.

12.2 FEATURES OF CANADIAN FEDERALISM

The Constitution Act of 1867 created a political structure based on principles of parliamentary sovereignty and federalism. As set forth in the Preamble to the Constitution, the Provinces of Canada (Nova Scotia and New Brunswick) desired to be "Federally United" in a new political structure with a constitution similar to that of the "United Kingdom". The principles of the parliamentary sovereignty and federalism are generally considered potentially contradictory in operation especially in a decentralised federal system. But, the highly centralised federation outlined in the BNA Act of 1867 did not bring the potential discrepancy between federalism and parliamentary sovereignty immediately on the surface.

In the second place, the initial structure of power provided for in the Act of 1867, strongly favoured the federal **form** of government, with a predominant centre. The highly centralised federalism, which seemed almost unitary in design, is well illustrated by the following basic **provisions**: (a) Areas of exclusive jurisdiction; (b) **The** concurrent and residual power clause; (c) The declaratory power; and (d) The power of disallowance and reservation.

12.2.1 Areas of Exclusive Jurisdiction

The division of powers between different levels of government, which is the soul of federalism, created two levels of government in Canada, i.e. the Federal government in Ottawa on the one hand, and provincial governments on the other. As already explained in Unit 4 of this course, Section 91 of BNA Act granted the Federal government a list of 29 categories of subjects ranging from the minor like light houses, establishment and maintenance of Marine Hospitals to the major ones like regulation of trade and commerce, taxation, defence, currency and coinage. In addition, the Federal government was also given control over public debt ~~and property~~, public credit, postal service, navigation, shipping and banking. On the other hand the subjects allocated to the provinces were of relatively minor importance like borrowing of money on the sole credit of the provincial revenues and the administration of justice in the provinces. Vis-a-vis the provinces, the Federal government was vested, under Sections 91 and 92, with a superior power of taxation under S.91(3). While this Section allowed the Federal government to raise "money by any mode or system of taxation", the analogous power of the provinces was limited by Sec. 92 (2) to "Direct taxation within the Province in order to the raising of Revenue for the provincial purposes". The consequence of this inequity has been that the Federal government has more easily raised revenue than its provincial counterparts. This is one reason that explains as to why the initial expansion of government in Canada was an expansion of the Federal government. Such an imbalanced allocation of powers between the two levels of government under Sections 91 and 92 resulted in a pattern of federalism in Canada, which had often been labelled 'classical federalism'.

12.2.2 Concurrent and Residual Power Clause

The second type of jurisdiction is the shared or concurrent jurisdiction. In this area, both the levels of government may legislate: for example, under Section 95, both the national and provincial governments may regulate with respect to agriculture and immigration. If both levels can legislate in areas of concurrent jurisdiction, then a means may be established for deciding questions of precedence between the federal and the provincial laws in situations of conflict between the two. Such a provision in a Federal constitution is known as the supremacy clause. In Canada, like India, supremacy in areas of concurrent jurisdiction, such as agriculture and immigration, is given to the Parliament of Canada.

Once matters of exclusive and concurrent **jurisdiction** were settled, the framers of the BNA Act were confronted with the problem of vesting power with regard to matters that may arise in the times to come. Not everything can be specified in the constitution at the time of its initial framing, notwithstanding the level of farsightedness of its framers. Therefore, a residual power clause is included to summarily allocate power over those subjects which have not been specifically dealt with in the Constitution. Typically, the residual power is given to that level of government whom, the framers of the Constitution want to be predominant. In Canada, the residual power was granted to the Federal

government under Section. 91, which empowered the Parliament to make laws for the "Peace, Order and Good Government of Canada" (POGG) in relation to all matters not coming within the classes of subjects assigned exclusively by the Act of 1867 to the legislatures of the provinces. It is not always easy or convenient to justify any and every government action which is said to be in clause is defined and interpreted by the federal government itself. A 1976 anti-inflation programme was rejected by the Supreme Court on the ground that if the Federal government perceived an economic emergency, then, such a situation existed in fact and could thus be dealt with under the residual power clause. While such powers have not been invoked frequently, the POGG clause, an important reserve power was retained by the Government of Canada to get involved in the areas of Provincial jurisdiction.

12.2.3 The Declaratory Power

In addition to the centralised allocation of powers and the residuary power clause, a third aspect that has buttressed the Federal government's dominance over the provinces is the declaratory power contained in sec. 92 (C. 101). This clause allows the Parliament of Canada to usurp provincial power, if it feels that such an action is "for the general advantage of Canada or for the advantage of two or more of the provinces". Interestingly, besides India, Canada is the only Federal State in the world which is vested with such a power. In India too, which is a highly centralised Federation, the Central government can take over the administration of a State, if the governor of the concerned State recommends the same. Again, acting on its own initiative, the Central government can make laws on State subjects of national importance and that the Central Government should, therefore, make law on that subject. In addition, the legislatures of two or more states may also ask the Centre to make law on a subject specified in the State List. Although, in Canada, the declaratory power has been rarely used, it is not a dead issue in Canadian politics. The last time that the Federal government used its declaratory powers was in 1961.

12.2.4 The Disallowance and Reservation

A fourth set of techniques through which the Federal government could exert control over the provinces involves its disallowance and reservation, which tantamount to giving it a potential veto over the provincial legislatures. Disallowance is the procedure by which the Federal government can declare a provincial law null and void within a year of its passage. The grounds for disallowance need neither be explained nor specified. These may be as vague as claiming that the provincial-law runs counter to "sound principles of legislation." Under its power of disallowance, the Federal Government may not only enact but also implement its overriding power. The last time the disallowance was used by the Government of Canada was in 1943. In all, some 110 Provincial Acts have so far been disallowed.

Reservation is a procedure by which a provincial law is not made applicable. until the federal government has reviewed it. Reservation means that a Bill passed by the provincial legislature is reserved by its Lieutenant Governor for consideration by the Governor – General – in Council (i.e. the cabinet). Over 700 Provincial bills have so far been reserved by the Lieutenant Governors, of which only about a dozen were eventually allowed to become law. Like the power of reservation in Canada's Federalism. In India, too, a Bill passed by the state legislature is presented to the Governor who, too, may reserve it for consideration of the Presidency.

Thus, given the original distribution of powers between the **federal** and the **provincial governments**, the vesting of both the residual and declaratory powers with the federal level, along with its power to disallow or reserve provincial legislation, the intent of the fathers of the confederation was undeniably to **establish** a highly centralised **federal** system. That is how, to begin with, the **primary functions** of government belonged to the **federal government acting on its own**. It is in view of such provisions that the Constitution Act of 1867 has been described as the one which contained 'Quasi - unitary' attributes of far reaching importance.

12.3 CENTRALISATION MEASURES

Although highly centralised in design, the Constitution Act of 1867 did not specifically deal with the means by which the Federal government could deal either with domestic or international crises. For almost 50 years, it was assumed that the Federal Government's residual and declaratory powers were **sufficient** to meet such threats. However, by the early 20th century, the growing pattern of decentralisation and the judicial **restriction** of the POGG clause, in conjunction with the world crisis prompted the federal government to give to itself emergency powers, like: (a) The War Measures Acts 1914-88; (b) The Bill of Rights, 1960; and (c) The Constitution Act of 1982.

12.3.1 War Measures Acts 1914-88

Passed in 1914 as a Federal statute, the War Measures Act set up a system of constitutional dictatorship under the **direction** of the Prime Minister and the cabinet. The **bringing** into force of the War Measures Act was accomplished by a proclamation of the **Governor-General-in-Council** that there existed a situation of "war, invasion, or insurrection, real or apprehended". Of interest is the phrase "real or apprehended" which meant that if the federal government perceived a crisis involving war, invasion or insurrection, then a crisis **could** be assumed to be in the offing. No evidence to support such a view was required to be actually in sight. Although there was no legal restriction as to how often could such emergency powers be used, for political reasons it was not resorted to, too often, since its passage. The War Measures Act was utilised on three occasions: one each during the two World Wars and till after during the October crisis in 1970. Even though the first was a federal **statute**, like any other law, the War Measures Act was a constitutional document with respect to content and consequence for the **political** system.

The rather extreme powers given to the Federal **Government** under the War Measures Act led to suggestion for its **reform** or replacement. After several delays, in June 1987, the federal **government** finally introduced its replacement, with royal assent granted on July 21, 1988, in the form of the Emergencies Act of 1988 which defines four broad types of emergencies. Unlike the draconian War Measures Act which from 1914-88, was either imposed in totality or not at all, the Emergencies Act of 1988 allowed for a gradual response to different types of emergencies which were specified as (i) Public welfare emergencies like floods, accidents, pollution or diseases; (ii) Public order emergencies like threats to Canada's security; (iii) International emergency; and (iv) War emergencies. In addition to defining different types of emergencies and the possible responses, the Emergencies Act allowed for compensation to individuals who may be hurt by its application. It also provided for its review by the Parliament and was also made subject to the limitations of both the Bill of Rights and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. As such, the Emergencies Act was a much-needed improvement upon the War Measures Act.

12.3.2 The Bill of Rights

With the passage of the Bill of Rights in 1960, a major addition to Canada's Constitutional structure came in. Although most of its provisions have now been superseded by the Charter of Rights contained in the Constitution Act of 1982, it is still formally operative. The basic assumption behind the Bill of Rights and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is the People's need for protection against the likely misuse of its authority by their government. However, the protections guaranteed by the Bill as well as the Charter did not prove to be as effective as it possibly was intended to be. This was due to the possibility of by-passing these enactments by the Federal government, the overriding phrase "not with standing," the Canadian Bill of Rights virtually made all parliamentary enactments immune from its application. Fundamental freedoms were, thus, not as fundamental as to supersede the former. In addition, the War Measures Act, was also given precedence over the Bill of Rights. These were some of the major deficiencies of the Bill of Rights that led to a search for a more comprehensive and effective document in the form of the Constitution Act of 1982.

12.3.3 The Constitution Act of 1982

This Act introduced two major modifications to the Constitutional system: a Charter of Rights and a cumbersome amending formula for future constitutional change. Even under this Act, a tenured over-riding provision allows certain fundamental freedoms to be by-passed by the federal or provincial legislatures. It is a matter of some comfort to the Canadians that such a provision is to be renewed after every five years. The second major change brought about by the Constitution Act of 1982 concerns the amending formulas. Until 1982, the power to amend the Constitution Act of 1867 remained exclusively with the British Parliament. The new amending formula allows revision of the Constitution through an agreement or a consensus between the Federal and the Provincial government.

The brief review of the key elements of Canada's Constitutional structure of 1867 and the major additions since then, reveals the almost over-riding, if not the unlimited power and influence of the Federal government in the affairs of the country. However, as in most countries, the intended constitutional structure may not be reflected in actual constitutional practice. The present Constitution of Canada operates quite differently from the above legalistic descriptions. This is reflected by the different phases through which the Canadian Federalism has evolved since 1867.

12.4 FACTORS LEADING TO DECENTRALISATION AND PROVINCIALISM

While the reasons for the change towards a decentralised political system are complex, four interdependent causes seem to be important. These are: first, the Provinces quickly became dissatisfied with the highly centralised structure created in 1867 and started asking for greater powers; second, as a corollary of the first, as the provinces gained more powers, several of the key powers of the Federal government became restricted. While the legal basis for the exercise of these powers remained, the Federal government's political will to use them got weakened. Three important powers fall into this category, namely the declaratory power and the powers of disallowance and reservation.

The third reason for enhanced provincial powers relates to a series of judicial decisions which began in the 1880s and continued into the early decades of the 20th century. While in the United States, a loose federalism was unified by the judgments of Justice Marshall in Canada, strong union was decentralised by Justice Watson and Haldave. For example, they interpreted the residual power clause rather restrictively, so as to delimit its application only to special circumstances. In contrast, powers of the provinces, like their control of property, and civil rights were generously applied by the JCPC. The result of such judicial decisions was to reinforce the evolving pattern of decentralisation, which became characteristic of the Canadian Federal system in the 20th century.

A fourth contributing factor reflects the effect of the changing nature of **society** on the respective powers of the Federal and Provincial governments. The power granted to the provinces in 1867, which were of minor importance in the 19th century, became the most significant in the years and decades to follow. For example, education, a provincial subject, was a minor function in 19th century as only a few people opted for schooling. The acceptance of the notion of universal public education through the high school years caused a massive expansion of this Provincial government responsibility. Similar was the course of expansion in matters of health and welfare. Now, the provincial governments spend about one half of their entire budgets on these three **concerns**. In view of these significant developments, the influence of the Provincial governments has increased rapidly.

In view of the above, two strong, though opposing, currents have become apparent in the Canadian politics. On the one hand, there has been an ever increasing centralisation of power in Ottawa in keeping with the letter and spirit of the BNA Act of 1867, while, there have, on the other hand, been visible signs of uneasiness in the states as a reaction to this initial trend. If centripetal economic forces strengthened the impulses of centralisation, the strong centrifugal forces have also been unleashed in the wake of the break up of the old political order. In view of the growing resentment of the provinces against the trend towards the centralisation of power, the question that arises is: what are those issues or conflict areas, which make the provinces feel uncomfortable and ask for greater independence from the central government.

12.5. SENSITIVE ISSUES CONTRIBUTING TO REGIONALISM

In the last two decades, commentators on Canadian politics have been expressing alarm at the **possible break** of Canada. In an atmosphere of apprehension, a Task Force on National unity was established way back in 1977 to examine afresh the question as to why the Canadian federation was in peril. The view that Canada was working down old barriers and progressing towards a unified federal state was replaced by profound anxiety and pessimism. The immediate cause of this crisis as **R.B. Byers** points out was the elevation of the separatist **Parti Quebecois (P.Q.)** to power in Quebec in 1976. However, while the rise to power of **P.Q.** under Rene Levesque was certainly disturbing to the federal cause, it represented only one single element of a much larger and more complex problem. Besides the threat of **Quebec's** separation, the grievances of Western Provinces, the controversies over language and educational rights of minorities, the disputes over resource control have been some major political issues which have centred round the restrictive jurisdictions of both the federal and provincial governments in Canada.

12.5.1 The Controversies Over Language and Educational Rights of Minorities

At the time of inauguration of the confederation, there were approximately 12,00,000 French speaking and 23,00,000 English speaking Canadians. It was between 1840 and 1845 that the French had, for the first time, become a minority. The Roman Catholic Church was a powerful influence in determining the initial strategy for minority survival. French Canadians generally remained aloof from political affairs and even after the confederation, the English minority within French majority province Quebec dominated the urban, political and economic life. It was in the late 1950s and 1960s that change came in the character and aspirations of Quebec's Francophones. The French Canadians began to initiate, rather than submit to the events around them. This assertion called "quiet revolution" eventually blossomed into an outright challenge to the Canadian federalism and the very existence of the Canadian nation state. The ethnic conflicts, which periodically erupted, had their roots in the linguistic and educational rights of the provinces. One was Manitoba, with its large French-speaking community and was created in 1870 on the same basis as Quebec, with Roman Catholic schools and bilingual education. In the other provinces, the languages to be used locally were left as a matter solely of provincial concern.

By 1885, the French speaking **Metis** in the West were being swamped by the English speaking settlers. To protest land losses, they rallied around the **Metis** leader Louis Riel, who returned from exile in the U.S. to lead a rebellion against the government. Eastern Canada viewed his action as treason and sent troops to quell the disturbance. Riel was defeated and executed. French Canadians grieved, for Riel for them was a patriot who died in the struggle to preserve the 'Frenchness' of his people. English Canadians saw him as a traitor or a mad man. The ethnic groups were thus polarised, and the stage was set for the limitation of French language rights in Manitoba. In other provinces too, the practice until the 1940s was for the English speaking Canadians, wherever they were in the majority, to deprive the French speaking minorities of public school facilities in their native language.

Abbe Grovix argued that each of these rulings deprived the French Canadians of what they considered to be their basic human rights. This succession of ethnic crises formed the history of the loss of French rights outside of Quebec. At the same time there was virtual abandonment by the Quebecois of French Canadians outside **their province** and the gradual assertion of Quebec Nationalism. The apparent ineffectiveness of the French vis-a-vis the English only helped to fuel the Quebec nationalism.

12.5.2 Quebec Separatism

Quebec's threat for secession from Canada came in many guises—judicial, social and political. Objection ranged from precise attacks on centralising mechanisms such as power of disallowance to general claims that the BNA Act did not define a true federal system. The division of powers between the federal and the provincial governments was also claimed to be discriminatory against Quebec. At the individual level as well, Quebecers have fared worse than many other Canadians. In 'What Does Quebec Want?', Andre Bernard found that since 1926 the gap between Quebecois **and** Canadians per capita incomes has oscillated around an average of 15 percentage points for the former. The rate of unemployment in the province was regularly over 25% above the Canadian average and Quebec's rates for standard taxes were 10% to 15% above the Canadian average.

Quebec continued to pressurise the Federal government throughout the 1960s. For the first time, **an** ethnic crisis seriously threatened the unity of the country. The Front de la Liberation du Quebec (FLQ), representing the most extreme separatists, initiated terrorist activities which culminated in the **October** crisis of 1970, with the kidnapping of a British diplomat, murder of the **Qubec** Minister of Labour, and a direct confrontation with the Federal government. The 'War Measures Act' was invoked to deal with what Prime Minister Trudeau considered to be an acute emergency in legal terms, it was an apprehended insurrection. Trudeau was a strong believer in a modern and progressive Quebec but was equally opposed to "associated state" or "special status" concepts. He argued that these would work to isolate Quebec from the rest of the country. On the other hand, Rene Levesgue and some other Quebecois developed a different vision of the **future** of the province. They did not believe that **Trudeau's** programme would work, if only because English speaking Canada would never seriously cooperate. In their view, since the rest of Canada was larger and stronger than Quebec, it would always control the confederation for its own benefit. They believed that a stronger Quebec offered the only assurance for the survival of the Quebecois, a term now preferred to "French Canadians."

In the 1970 election, the **Parti** Quebecois (PQ) received only 24% of the popular vote, which led to the softening of its stand from political independence to sovereignty Association. This approach worked and 41% of Quebec voters cast their ballots for PQ on November 15, 1976. The meteoric rise to power of the **Parti** Quebecois (PO) in 1976, dramatically strengthened the position of French **as** the required language of work and education.

Ironically, however, the Referendum of May **1980**, asking voters to give Levesque's party a mandate to negotiate sovereignty with the **resurgent** federal liberals under Trudeau, resulted in the rejection of the mandate by a margin of roughly 59 to 41, percent. This proved a set back for Levesque.

The threat of independence did not, however, die with this vote, After all, according to PQ strategies, Quebec had all the ingredients necessary to form an independent state in terms both of people and resources. The desire for Quebec autonomy is not dead, it is only waiting for **another** cycle of grievances with the federal government to surface.

Quebec's Fresh Challenge to Separatism

The movement in favour of political independence of Quebec is a social coalition of several groups in the francophone community-sections of the working class, those in the middle classes who work outside the private sector, and the intelligentsia. These three groups, despite divergent interests according to Christian Bufour, have come together in a single political movement as each one of them perceives a need for the Francophone community to have greater control over its own affairs.

Scholars like Jane Jacobs have described the independence movement **as** a political response to the decline of Montreal in Canada's economic affairs. She is of the opinion that since the beginning of the Second World War, the balance of economic strength has been shifting in Canada from Montreal to Toronto, with the latter becoming Canada's major economic centre. The decline of Montreal has been relative to Toronto. The economic dislocation resulting **from** the decline of Montreal has put additional strains on Quebec's culture. In this context, the independence movement is viewed as a reaction to this dislocation and as

a proposal for obtaining sufficient power to ensure that economic dislocation can be managed and eventually reversed.

Each of these three groups brought specific concerns together to demand political independence. The movement gained further momentum by having common opponents and adversaries in the business community, and the Anglophones. Both the Francophones and the Anglophones in the capitalist class of Quebec have overwhelmingly been against independence. Therefore, as William D. Colemann suggests, the class character of the struggle constrains the independence movement to be *prima facie* anti-capitalist. It has also created significant problems for the Parti Quebecois in office. As a consequence, the leading proponent of independence, the Parti Quebecois, has increasingly diluted its demand for political independence.

As regards the future, a renewed independence movement would have to draw upon a different configuration of social forces than did the independence movement of the 1970s. In the 1980s the PQ brand of technocratic nationalism is losing its credibility. A serious resurgence of the demand for Quebec independence would, thus have to be based upon a new national project. While there has been a certain resurgence of linguistic concerns especially among the younger Francophones, it is not yet clear whether there exists the necessary leadership for a vigorous independence movement. Even if the new independence movement does not emerge within the next few years, Quebecois Francophones will continue to be concerned about the viability of their society and about the status of Quebec within the Canadian constitutional order. It is likely that many would continue to see themselves as first and foremost Quebecers. They would continue to see Quebec as a distinct society and Quebec will continue to be one. The problem that looms large is that of a sustainable fusion of the elements of identity and assimilation.

In October 1995 another referendum was held in Quebec. Quebecers were asked whether they authorised the National Assembly to proclaim sovereignty in accordance with the tripartite agreement of 12 June 1995. The vote in favour of sovereignty was 49.4%.

On a realistic analyses, we can perhaps conclude that Anglophones and the Francophones' reconciliation is becoming more or less difficult; However a federalist from Quebec and a former Canadian minister Stephen Dion believes that a flexible federation is still possible with further expansion of the scheme of decentralisation in Canada. On the other hand, by expressing a contrary view point, Jacques Brassard, the member of the National Assembly from Quebec would argue that Quebec should be recognised as a sovereign state but linked with the rest of Canada through a common economic and political partnership (like having a common currency and a unified defence system).

12.5.3 Grievances of Western Provinces.

Alienation is a major component of Western Canada's political culture also. Throughout the West's history, there has been a strong belief that the resource-rich Prairie Provinces were exploited by the Federal government which principally represented the Central Canadian interests. Large reserves of coal, oil and gas exist in the west of Manitoba. In addition, Saskatchewan possesses half the country's reserves of uranium. Once among the weak partners of federal union, the West began to acquire enormous economic power through its sale of natural resources. As this economic wealth was exploited, migration to the west increased. Since the end of World War II, Alberta and British Columbia have, for

example, doubled their populations. The West finally found itself capable of challenging what it considered the insufferable domination of Central Canada.

The Western Provinces seek to secure not only a measure of financial independence from the Federal government, but also use the wealth generated from the development of their natural resources to diversify their economies so that even when the non—renewable resources are depleted, economic prosperity will continue. The Federal Government, on the other hand, is concerned about its own fiscal needs, as well as about ensuring an equitable sharing of the wealth of western resources throughout Canada. Many westerners perceive the redistribution of this wealth as an attempt to keep the West in a position of permanent subordination.

The most significant public expression of Western alienation was the formation in the early 1980s of various groups and political parties dedicated to the separation of the Western provinces (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia) from Canada. The rise of Western separation was ignited by the re-election of the Federal Liberal Party in 1980, an event which resulted in the political disenfranchisement of Western Canada, since liberals captured no seats West of Manitoba. Frustrated by the lack of political power within the federal government, the Westerners felt powerless against "centralist" policies, including bilingualism and immigration. Dong Owram summarised the separatist rationale as follows: "Without political power, this line of reasoning seems to go, there is nothing that can protect the (resource) wealth that exists. The national government can, if it so wishes, drain the west of its wealth and leave it both economically and politically impoverished within a few years." Thus, the separatist leaders looked at separation as the only alternative. The early 1980s were characterised by acute western alienation. However, these feelings declined after oil prices (which had underpinned provincialism) dropped and Brian Mulroney won the 1984 General Election. With Mulroney's victory, the western separatists thought they would retain strong and effective representation in the government. To some extent, this expectation was valid. Mulroney's western accord dismantled the National Emergency Programme and Trudeau's marketing restrictions on the sale of oil and natural gas. In the 1988 general elections, a new movement called the Reform Party headed by Preston Manning conducted a campaign for the protection of western interests. Its demands for free trade and Senate reform found a ready audience among small conservative voters. Still the feeling that the political system was stacked against the West has remained. To dismiss separation out of hand would be premature. Many westerners feel that they put more into the federation than they receive in return, in terms of benefits. If Ottawa is not able to accommodate the aspirations of the western Canadians, the potential for continued challenge in the west remains, perhaps awaiting the next unpopular decision of the federal government.

Besides these political challenges to the federal government, the imbalance between the constitutional allocation of responsibilities and resources on the one hand and the demands and problems facing the system on the other are the areas of conflict between the centre and the provinces. The provincial governments, constitutionally responsible for most social concerns, have lacked the firmness to develop the desired programmes by themselves. In view of the inflexibility of constitutional guiding procedure, the imbalance between the responsibilities and resources is at the root of the fiscal problem.

12.6 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have begun our discussion by focusing on the broad features of the Canadian federation. Thereafter we have elaborated the basic features of regionalism by looking at the real powers of the Canadian provinces. We have reviewed the emerging trends of Quebec's quest for separatism led by the **Parti Quebecois**. We have also seen the pros and cons of the controversial referendum in October 1995 on the issue of granting sovereignty to Quebec.

12.7 EXERCISES

- 1) Briefly explain the main characteristics of Canadian Federalism.
- 2) Quebec's quest for separatism is threat to the Canadian Federalism. Critically examine.
- 3) Analyse the causes for regionalism in Western Provinces of Canada.
- 4) Write short notes on:
 - i) Constitution Act of 1982
 - ii) Language rights of minorities