

committees to make reports before making their own decisions. In addition, the committee system will never work satisfactorily until committee reports are studied and acted upon by the government.

● (12:40 p.m.)

I should like to address my remarks more particularly to two parts of the motion before the House. The Special Joint Committee on the Constitution is asking for the power to adjourn from place to place within Canada and that it be permitted to retain the services of three specialists. I think it is time that responsible elected representatives consider this business of committees travelling across this country. In my opinion, travel by committees from one end of the country to the other has become excessive and out of all reasonable proportions. The cost incurred on these trips is fantastic.

I only need to mention the fact that this special committee studying the constitution made one trip last session, as the former chairman has just pointed out, to Winnipeg, Brandon, St. Boniface, Yukon, Whitehorse and Churchill. On that trip there were 16 Members of Parliament and 14 staff officials. They took with them all the necessary equipment and paraphernalia required at the meetings. That trip cost the taxpayers of this country a minimum of \$33,628 because to this must be added the cost of printing and the salaries of the staff that went along, the interpreters and clerks, as well as the advertising and other incidental expenses. These costs are not included in this \$33,628 figure.

Somebody might say the staff is paid anyway and their salaries go on whether or not they make a trip. The salaried staff must be paid if they are going to travel all over the country, but we will then require greater staff here in Ottawa to take their places while they are on the road. Therefore we must add the costs I have mentioned to this figure.

If one takes that cost and divides it by 30, it works out to an approximate cost of \$1,200 for each person who went on the trip. We in this House represent the people of this country who are now being taxed to death. People will tell us, as they have told me, that they cannot afford to pay any more taxes, they are now paying the limit.

It is time this House took a look at the cost of these committees flitting all over the country. It is quite right that this is a special committee but that is no reason why it should have special privileges to spend money in this way. The former chairman advised the House that the committee proposes to make other trips and I understand there are 42 places they expect to visit during 12 trips across the country. If the cost of each trip amounts to roughly the cost of the one that has been taken, and there is no reason to expect that they will cost less, this committee's expenses for travelling will be over \$500,000—a half a million dollars. I will wait to see just how close my estimate is. I do not think we as responsible representatives should issue a blank cheque to this or any other committee to travel round this country, with

### *Constitution of Canada*

permission to adjourn from place to place. I for one do not propose to issue a blank cheque for this purpose.

Let me deal with the alternatives which would cut down this exorbitant cost. This committee will have to give the public an opportunity to voice their opinions on the Constitution of Canada. It would be well within the relevance of necessity that the committee needs to travel only to the capital of each province. If the committee feels it is not going to get enough briefs and reports as a result of travelling to the capitals of each province, then it could save the taxpayers a lot of money by saying to the people who wish to come to a capital that it will pay their expenses to make an appearance before the committee in that capital. There is no reason the committee should have to journey from Whitehorse to Dawson City or from Winnipeg to Brandon, a distance of approximately 60 miles.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** It is 120 miles.

**Mr. Hales:** The hon. member says it is 120 miles from Winnipeg to Brandon. If a group of people from Brandon wanted to appear before the committee they could travel to Winnipeg to present their briefs at the expense of the committee and we would be money in pocket.

Let us give a little thought to what these things are costing. There seems to be an opinion around here that all we have to do is ask the public for money and the public will give it to us. I tell you that we have done this for so long we are reaching the point where the taxpayer is going to say he has had it and is not going to pay any more.

The committee is also asking for permission to retain the services of three specialists. As a chairman of a committee I realize that committees need staff and special assistants. I do not know why this committee could not obtain help from the Department of Justice. There are people on the staff of that department now on the government payroll who could work with this special committee. If the committee needs extra clerks I am sure there are clerks in various departments of government, now on the payroll, who could also work for this committee.

We know from past experience that committees have hired specialists and we know what they charge. A lawyer will charge at a minimum \$250 per day. If you require an accountant he will charge you a minimum of \$200 a day for his services. If you add these costs you will have some idea of the expenses incurred to maintain these committees, and what it costs to have these committees travelling across the country.

Let me give you the four highest costs incurred by committees during the last session. The committee on the constitution spent \$33,628. The finance committee made three trips which cost the taxpayers \$23,837. The regional development committee spent \$7,154. The transportation committee made three trips at a cost of \$23,432. I have not broken down the costs that other committees incurred last session, but the total was \$96,966 excluding