

*National Capital*

● (1540)

At the same time, those of us who are interested in matters relating to this area—and this includes both sides of the river—are aware of a failure to get together. For example, during the past several years there have been studies as to what should be done or taken part in by the regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton and other bodies, but with no input from the National Capital Commission. There have been studies on the other side of the river, both at the regional district level and among the various communities on that side. Plans have been produced by the local groups on both sides of the river which, as I say, not only had no input from the National Capital Commission, but parallel with the publication of their reports there has been the publication, for example, of the National Capital Commission's report produced by Mr. Douglas Fullerton. There are suggestions in the one report that certain areas are areas for development; in the other report some of those areas are played down, at least for some time to come. There are suggestions for rapid transit proposed by one group that do not fit into the proposals made by the other groups.

One can understand the intense interest of all those concerned, of the local people on the north side of the river, the local people on the south side of the river and those who work in the National Capital Commission; but it seems to me that more of an effort than has yet been made should be put forward to try to achieve some reconciliation and understanding of the various points of view. Indeed, I would say that here is a tremendous example of the need for co-operation rather than confrontation and it arises out of the conflict between two interests, both of which, in my view, are thoroughly genuine.

On the one hand, there is the interest of Canada, the interest of the nation. This is the capital city for all the people of this country. All the people of this country have an interest in it or in its being a beautiful and attractive place, in its being a place that somehow symbolizes what Canada is. I think it has moved in that direction a great deal, if I may say so again, even in my lifetime. When I first visited it as a schoolboy, to me it was almost a symbol of a colony of Britain. Today it has become the symbol, to a very large extent, of the Canadian nation; some of the trappings and aspects that were evident a half century ago have been changed. It is a capital that belongs to Canada as a whole. It is Canada as a whole that has to pay for most of the cost of the development of things that relate to the national capital characteristics, but that is appropriate. Because Canadians as a whole pay the cost, because Canadians as a whole think of it as their capital, they have the right to have their national representatives, through the National Capital Commission, have a good deal to say about what goes on in the development of this area.

I think that the establishment of the Greber commission back in the days of Mackenzie King, and the consequent Greber report and plan were beneficial and that all the efforts that have been put forward since then under the aegis of the federal government have been exceedingly worth while. That is one side of the coin—the interest of the Canadian people in this place being their capital, the capital of the country as a whole.

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

We are conscious every day of people who come into this very building. Many of them happen to see the House of Commons in session on only one day of their lives. They see the city, visit the parkways and buildings which are attractive and beautiful, and they are proud of what they see. No one comes to Ottawa and regrets having seen this city, and I suggest this is due very largely to the fact that we have this concept of Ottawa being the national capital.

There is, however, another interest, Mr. Speaker, which my hon. friend and colleague from Grenville-Carleton has stated. It is also a place where people, hundreds of thousands of them, live. Though many of them may work for the federal government, they are people, they are workers, and have just as much right to all the trappings and aspects of democratic control of things close to them as people in any of the cities of Canada.

I understand the notion that it would be nice to do things efficiently, to lay down a master plan and just carry it through. But efficiency is not the only thing that counts in life; there certainly has to be a sense of participation and the practice of democracy. I very strongly urge that the federal government not put its weight behind any plan or scheme that would lessen the say of the people of this region in the governing of the area itself. As the previous speaker has pointed out, this has become a much bigger issue in recent years than it used to be. It used to be, for the most part, just a conflict between the federal government and the city of Ottawa, but now there is the whole area on both sides of the river, including two regional governmental areas, several municipalities, school boards and all the rest of it. I insist that the right of the people of those areas to participation in the democratic control of their own local affairs is one that must not be frustrated by a national desire to run things on an efficient basis.

There are some catch words and clichés and references as to how they do it in other places which one could trot out and evoke responses one way or the other, but I am trying to avoid that. I am simply saying that I think these two interests—the interest of our having a national capital that is the pride of all people of this country, and the interest of the people who live here, of having a city to live in that is theirs and which they run and control—are both legitimate interests. I do not think it is beyond the wit of human beings to reconcile these two interests, and I hope that the members drawn from both Houses who will comprise this committee will look upon their job not as one in which they advocate one or other of the various plans but, rather, as a job of trying to reconcile these differences and of bringing about the kind of basic understanding that will make the governing of this area the best it can be.

As I say, there is no question about the beauty that has been added to this city in the past few decades; I am going to say something on the other side in a moment. The problem, as I see it, is not just the development of the national capital region, to use the language of the motion, but how the area is to be governed and how we are to reconcile these two conflicting interests. One of the aspects that has to be considered a good deal, of course, is finance and how much the federal government will pay the municipalities of this area in lieu of taxes or in lieu of the services the federal government gets. There, too, I