

The Address—Mr. Baker

The whole question of language training is important to Canada and I am glad to have the opportunity to speak on it in the throne speech debate. In the short time available to me, I want to say that I hope the government will reconsider the whole program of grants to the provinces for second language training. There is no doubt that the place to start language training is with the young, and there is equally no doubt that this will be much more effective than taking an older man or an older woman and attempting to teach them a second language. But the shot ought not to be scattered and perhaps we should consider, at least at the outset, the concentration of those funds within the bilingual districts of Canada, as a real beginning. There ought to be adequate research to identify real and realizable targets, the measurement of the effectiveness of language training programs and the lowering of teacher-student ratios.

In this whole field, the stressing of impossible deadlines ought to be thrust aside and we ought to move in such a way that in a generation from now—I do not say 100 years from now, although the Prime Minister always talks about 100 years from now—those who are children now will be able to communicate with each other in both our official languages.

The whole question of the national capital of Canada is one with respect to which there was no reference in the throne speech. I regret that, because I believe it is of singular importance to the country, not only from the point of view of those things that I have been discussing but also from the point of view of people who live in the national capital area. There can be no doubt that there is no body of the federal government that has a more profound effect upon the life and growth of the Ottawa area.

I believe that the time has come to review the operations of the National Capital Commission in the development of this area and with respect to its relationship with other governments in the area. I hasten to point out that I do not intend us to embark on any grand inquisition of the National Capital Commission—far from it. But it is a fact that there has been no large-scale review of it since 1956.

In recent years the role of the NCC has changed. At one time its predecessor was the builder of highways, the maintainer of roads, and also the maintainer of flower gardens. Today the NCC has moved from that primitive stage to be a major force in the life of this area. In that same period of time the local municipal institutions have also changed; there are now large and powerful regional municipalities on both sides of the Ottawa River.

The NCC plans and arranges for the provision of large parkways and other works that affect the whole thrust of the planning and development of the area. It owns or administers government installations and buildings that affect the revenue picture of the local municipalities. It owns the largest tract of open land, the green belt, through and around the city of Ottawa and the townships of Nepean and Gloucester.

It has made commitments in sewer and sewage treatment installations, and in other matters, and thereby influences development both in the public and private sectors. It owns vast areas of parkland. In short, its influence on the Ottawa area, on the city of Ottawa, the townships of Nepean and Gloucester and the cities of Vanier,

Hull and the Gatineau region, is immense. I believe the time has now come, in view of the changing operations of the commission, to examine thoroughly its structure and operations.

Perhaps now we ought to explore whether there should be representatives of the local or regional governments on the National Capital Commission. This is something that was tried at one time and abandoned. Perhaps it ought to be re-examined again in these new circumstances. Perhaps we ought to see if there are any consultative processes that will permit a closer relationship between the NCC as the municipal arm of the federal government and the local municipalities in this area.

What is the future of the green belt in the next 20 years and how will it affect development, if at all? Is there a green belt agricultural policy? Can we make it into a model agricultural area for the whole of Canada? How will it affect the development of single and multiple family dwellings, of commercial and industrial development and all the problems of servicing such development? Is there any way in which the multicultural nature of the country can be focused and emphasized in the national capital area? It is not now. It would be very healthy if it were emphasized.

What is the real role of the NCC in the development of a transportation system for the national capital area, which so far as my township alone is concerned has grown from a population of 2,000 to 70,000 in a period of 22 years? Ought the National Capital Commission to be represented on a national capital transportation commission to serve both sides of the river? I am sure there are many answers to these questions and, indeed, many more questions.

A review by a joint committee of this House and the Senate such as was undertaken previously, or by a committee of this House alone, would provide real answers, with an opportunity for public input, and input from the members of this House, from planning organizations, from farm organizations, from ratepayers' and community associations, from the municipalities generally and, indeed, from the government itself with respect to its role. I am satisfied that the commission and its staff would welcome such an inquiry and I urge the government to consider this matter among its priorities.

It is Friday evening, Mr. Speaker, and I have occupied the time of the House enough. I want to thank you, Sir, and through you my colleagues, for the attention given to this my maiden speech.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate you on your re-election as Speaker of the House of Commons. As it is just a few minutes to five o'clock, I wonder if the House would be disposed to call it five o'clock and allow me to retain my position in the debate. If that were done, I would be happy to call it five o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: The suggestion has been made that we now call it five o'clock. Is this agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: It being five o'clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday morning next at eleven o'clock.

At 4.51 p.m. the House adjourned, without question put, pursuant to Standing Order.