

National Capital Commission

We on this side of the house will vote in favour of this resolution, especially since it is in exactly the same terms as the resolution which was put before the house by Mr. St. Laurent a year or so ago.

At one o'clock the committee took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The committee resumed at 2.30 p.m.

Mr. Regier: Mr. Chairman, the C.C.F. members of this house welcome most heartily this resolution that has been introduced today by the Prime Minister. This resolution, as we understand it, forecasts a strengthening of the authority of the government of Canada in the many efforts that are being put forth in the establishment of a national capital in which we hope all Canadians will be able to take a great deal of pride. In addition to forecasting a strengthening of the authority of the federal government to attain our objective it also, to our mind, forecasts an additional willingness on the part of the national government to share the responsibility for that task with the other levels of government, provincial and municipal.

I am extremely pleased to note, in listening to the hon. members who spoke previously, that the development of our national capital is and has always been regarded as a non-partisan effort. We realize, Mr. Chairman, that the national capital belongs to all the Canadian people regardless of whether they are represented by the government side or whether they adhere to one of the opposition parties in this house.

At this time I should like to refer to the introduction by the Prime Minister of this matter on June 18 when, as found at page 1381 of *Hansard*, he said:

The government has now decided to recommend to parliament the necessary measures to make it possible for the crown to acquire ownership of what is known as the green belt around the nation's capital, so as to do what is possible to ensure that the development of the capital area over the long-term future will be in accordance with the national importance and significance of this city.

We appreciate that statement of the purpose of the resolution which the Prime Minister gave to the house at that time. We are a little concerned lest that sentence of his indicates that limitations are going to involve the new commission that is to be established. We sincerely hope that the functions of the commission are not going to be limited to the matter of acquiring and holding some jurisdiction over the green belt. The main tenor of my remarks is to emphasize that

[Mr. Pearson.]

there is a need in other fields as well as in the acquiring of the area immediately around the cities of Ottawa and Hull.

I should like to point out that when the Prime Minister was speaking this morning he referred to the findings of the joint parliamentary committee on this whole problem of the national capital several years ago, and he listed two major matters that were mentioned in those findings. One was the acquisition of territory to be found in the proposed new green belt. The other major problem indicated in the report by the committee was the problem caused by the pollution of the Ottawa river.

So far, Mr. Chairman, the Prime Minister has not indicated, either on June 18 or this morning, that any action is being contemplated toward a solution of the problem of the pollution of the Ottawa river. Knowing the interest which the Prime Minister has shown in this house over many long years in the subject of the pollution of rivers, I hope the omission of this specific aim was inadvertent and that the Prime Minister is going to see to it that the legislation is of such a nature that the problem of river pollution is going to receive some attention.

I noted especially the comment of the Prime Minister when he remarked that the problem of establishing a national capital has been the subject of parliamentary debate for the past 32 years. I believe he indicated the year 1926 as the initial year in which action was taken. When I consider what progress has been made, Mr. Chairman, toward the attainment of our aims in the past 32 years, I cannot help but be reminded of the words used by the Leader of the Opposition this morning—and here may be the major responsibility, as I see it, that is now facing us—when he said, if I have his words down correctly, that inside the city itself a great deal has yet to be done.

I agree at once that this naturally involves the closest co-operation on the part of all three levels of government. I can think of no finer time for that degree of co-operation to prevail than the present time. With a Conservative regime in Ottawa, a Conservative regime in Toronto and another Conservative regime in Quebec, and with the city fathers of Ottawa as they are, I fail to see why there should be any lack of co-operation in the immediate years ahead.

I would immediately like to sound a note of warning. We are asked to vote millions of dollars for the acquisition of land for the green belt. I hope people will be paid a fair price for any real estate expropriated, and that no one will be done out of the hard-earned life savings which they may have