

Constitution of Canada

representation. However, political parties such as the Ralliement Cr ditiste and the New Democratic Party cannot sometimes send more than one delegate to each committee, and their members find it quite difficult to follow the proceedings of the committees and of the House. You cannot be at two or three places at the same time. This situation is quite annoying. We are put to task sometimes for not attending committee sittings and this is precisely because we cannot be everywhere at the same time.

I suggest that the government House leader should look into the possibility of adjourning the House from time to time so that the committees may work at full blast and be more efficient.

• (12:30 p.m.)

[English]

Mr. Mark MacGuigan (Windsor-Walkerville): Mr. Speaker, as chairman of the Special Joint Committee on the Constitution of Canada in the last session, perhaps I may be permitted to add a few words of clarification on this subject. I understand the considerations that the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) has advanced in the House both last Friday and today and those put forward by the other speakers who preceded me. I sympathize with the concern which has been expressed in regard to regulating in some over-all way the travelling done by various parliamentary committees. If I may say so, it would seem to me that this consideration is especially applicable to the standing committees of the House, for which travel is a rather incidental part of their function and their interests. On the other hand, I would submit that the Special Joint Committee on the Constitution is a special kind of committee, not only in the sense that it is a special committee but also because it is one which, by the very nature and essence of its work, must travel across the country to hear the views of the people of this country.

Although I do not understand the hon. member for Peace River to disagree with this, in order to underline the point I should like to refer to the debate which took place in the House on January 26 and 27 of this year, which was followed by the vote setting up the committee. One of the speakers in the debate said:

—I hope this committee will give a voice to the views and the actions of the Canadian people. I hope the committee itself will provide opportunities to Canadians everywhere to make their views heard and have them considered and publicized rather than filed away and forgotten.

A little farther on he said:

This means the committee must hear groups and individuals from all across the country. The committee evidently has this power...these public hearings and consultations are necessary to the process of building a real understanding of the problems.

Those were the words of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield), as reported at pages 2818 and 2819 of *Hansard*.

[Mr. Laprise.]

If I may I should also like briefly to quote the words of the hon. member for Peace River in the debate:

I should like to see the committee composed of members of this House and members of the other place who will travel from place to place in Canada.

Those words are to be found at page 2839 of *Hansard*.

I mention those statements not because I believe that this is a matter that is controversial but to indicate the general agreement that existed in the House at that time, which was manifested by speakers from all parties, that this committee should be one that travels extensively across the country.

In the report presented to the House on October 7 by the committee, a report, I might add, unanimously adopted by the committee, the request was made that the committee be re-established as early as possible in this session and with the same powers it enjoyed previously, including, therefore, the power to adjourn from place to place.

If I may say so, the committee has been proceeding rather amicably in deciding where it should travel across the country. The committee has already held hearings in Winnipeg, Brandon, St. Boniface, Thompson and Churchill in Manitoba, and in Whitehorse, Dawson City and Watson Lake in the Yukon. We propose in the near future to visit other parts of the country. As one of the previous speakers mentioned, the committee unanimously agreed at one of its early meetings that it would travel one week a month during this parliamentary session.

If the committee is re-established by the House and it should again fall to my lot to be chairman, I should like to say that I would be happy to make periodic reports to the House in advance of the committee's travel, informing the House where the committee intends to go. This would provide an opportunity for comment by any member of the House. I would not, however, like to see taken from the committee, either in form or in substance, the power to adjourn from place to place, a power that the House has already unanimously recognized.

I conclude by saying, in sentiments that I am sure are felt by members of all parties in the House and especially by members of the committee, that this is a matter of great importance to the people of Canada and to us as Members of Parliament. It is a matter that is too important to the country to be left to the unguided decision of Members of Parliament, politicians, and lawyers. It is a matter that ought to be brought to the people; and it is a matter that this House in the past authorized the committee to bring to all people across the country. I hope that once again the House will extend this power to the committee.

Mr. A. D. Hales (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words on the motion that is now before the House. I do not propose to take the time of the House to give my views as to how the new committee system is working. May I simply say that I do not think it will ever work until governments wait for