

National Capital Commission

interest in the development of Ottawa into a beautiful and worthy national capital.

That interest and support were continued by Mr. St. Laurent. The work begun in those earlier years was continued and expanded after world war II, but over the years I think experience did show that perhaps the administrative set-up for the carrying on and completion, if it ever will be completed, of the work under the national capital plan was not completely adequate to cope with the new problems that arose out of the proper development of a national capital. Some hon. members will recall that a joint parliamentary committee was set up in 1954, and made a report. Another joint parliamentary committee was set up in 1956 to study, as indeed it did study and in great detail, this whole problem. It reviewed the over-all situation and made recommendations. The committee had a great number of meetings and heard a great deal of evidence from many interested individuals and associations. Perhaps I might mention that the hon. member for Villeneuve was joint chairman of that committee.

Out of its recommendations made in 1956 came the bill to which the Prime Minister has already referred, entitled an act respecting the development and improvement of the national capital region. The Prime Minister has indicated that the bill was prepared by the former government. It was presented to parliament on April 8, 1957, but was not proceeded with at that time. A general election was held, and now the present government is taking the action recommended by the joint parliamentary committee and embodied in that earlier resolution, the terms of which were exactly the same as the resolution now before us on the order paper.

At this time, Mr. Chairman, and I think I can speak on behalf of the members of my own party, may I express our gratitude for the devoted, intelligent and unselfish work done over the years by those Canadians who accepted the responsibility of serving on the federal district commission. Their work has been a fine example of national service in the best meaning of the term.

I think all Canadians will agree that the federal government has a special responsibility for and should take a special interest in the development of the capital so it can become a worthy symbol of our nation and one of which we can be proud; to use the words of the report of the joint committee, which have already been used by the Prime Minister, so that it can become "a capital worthy of our country and worthy of its people".

While the 1956 report, which is the basis of the resolution before us, makes a strong

plea for the achievement of that objective, one which we all support, it also points out, as mentioned by the Prime Minister, some of the specific problems and difficulties. There is not only the question of the green belt which has been mentioned and which is of great significance in the development of the national capital plan, but we must also not forget that inside the green belt in Ottawa itself there is still a great deal to be done to carry out the ideas and the vision of this report.

I think particularly—I believe the Prime Minister mentioned this—of the very difficult problem of water pollution and the problem of adequate bridging of the river between Ottawa and Hull. If these problems are to be solved, then irrespective of the kind of federal machinery we set up to solve them this will require the closest co-operation among all three levels of government, the federal government, wherein lies our responsibility, the provincial governments of Ontario and Quebec and the municipal governments of Ottawa and Hull. With the new machinery which will be set up if the resolution and the bill carry, I am sure that co-operation can be achieved and we will have a national capital in the years ahead of which all Canadians will be proud.

I think we have a very good illustration of what can be done in this matter through national effort in the development of Washington, where I lived for some years. Certainly the city of Washington has none of the natural advantages that Ottawa has in its location, because of which Ottawa should and will become one of the most beautiful capitals in the world. Washington was a swamp when it was chosen as the capital of the United States. It was put far enough up the Potomac river, at a point where the river was shallow and the banks were swampy, so the British navy could not get at it too easily, though they did achieve that objective once in American history in revenge for American action against Toronto. Nevertheless, largely because of the planning of that capital by a distinguished town planner of his time from France, Major L'Enfant, and in spite of the swamp, "foggy bottom" as they still call it in Washington—

The Deputy Chairman: Order; it is a few minutes past one.

Mr. Pearson: I am sorry; I will finish in a few minutes. I will get right off Washington. In spite of the natural disadvantages of Washington they have made of that capital one of the most beautiful in the world. With the advantages we have over Washington we ought to be able to do as well, indeed we ought to be able to do better.