

Immigration

should have. A country's capital is the focus of its national spirit. If we are to start politicking with statements that one part of the national capital should not live as the other, there is no point in having a national capital area, and there is no point in having a national capital at all. Because Ottawa, whether we like it or not, will always be an Ontario town and does not reflect in any way the kind of Canadianism and federalism we would like to live and future generations will want to recognize.

The hon. member for Grenville-Carleton uses far-fetched arguments about numerous things, among others the Public Service Alliance. I understand he also said after the announcement that thousands of civil servants would be transferred to Hull that the Public Service Alliance was irresponsible, it should rather deal with the blatantly unfair situations of individual public servants rather than "embalming" itself in discussions about snow removal procedures on the Portage bridge or the Interprovincial bridge for the Ottawa civil servants who will soon be commuting to Hull. I find it appalling that such things should be said in this House where we should speak as one man on the question of national unity. It certainly is not with a speech such as the one we just heard and by putting down the city of Hull as the Public Service Alliance did, that we will promote national unity. In fact, little things such as those are the reason why we lose more ground than we gain in the matter of national unity.

I am against the amendment, and I trust that some day hon. members as a group will show enough sense to see to it that section 16 of the Constitution is amended so that the capital of Canada will no longer be Ottawa but the whole national capital area instead.

[English]

Mr. Lloyd Francis (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, I listened with a good deal of interest to the remarks of my friend, the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker). He seemed to argue the amendment with something less than a full heart. The amendment he is putting will introduce for the first time the principle of a statutory discrimination within the national capital region between the Ontario and the Quebec side. As far as I know, this is a principle which has not been considered since the days of the government of the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) when he passed the National Capital Region Act.

The hon. member for Grenville-Carleton noted that the national capital region was created by a Conservative government in 1957. However, he did not call the attention of this House to the federal-provincial conference of 1969 in which all the premiers of all the provinces of Canada stated in a communiqué which was issued to the press that the capital of Canada would in effect be the national capital region. Premier Robarts of Ontario was most specific in that regard at that time.

We cannot be on both sides of this issue. I am going to vote against this motion should it come to a vote. However, I welcome the opportunity of making some observations.

● (1620)

The hon. member for Grenville-Carleton very carefully went through the political representation at the time and implied that some people had gone to what he called their just rewards. He kindly did not refer to me in any respect so I presume I have not had any just reward in his book.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Be patient.

Mr. Francis: Well, I have been patient, Mr. Speaker. That is one thing that I think those who have followed my career in politics would have to give me credit for.

I think we all have to recognize the very sensitive situation at the present time. My colleague, the hon. member for Hull (Mr. Isabelle) did not mention matters which are very obvious in the press. There has recently been taken into the cabinet for the Parti Québécois the representative of the city of Hull in the national assembly. What Jocelyne Ouellette has had to say about the National Capital Commission and the federal presence and all the rest of it is an appalling record. She simply says that the entire federal presence has to be chased lock, stock, and barrel out of the national capital region. The fact that her own home was expropriated to make way for the bridge may or may not have anything to do with her feelings, but one cannot but help suspect a personal vindictive note in her approach.

The move to Hull is an assertion of the federal presence on the other side of the river in an unmistakable way, and I give the hon. member for Hull and the minister responsible for the National Capital Commission, the Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Ouellet), full credit for standing up to the Parti Québécois and saying "This is a federal state. We have certain federal rights; we will assert those federal rights; we will not be intimidated in the assertion of those federal rights and this is part of our policy of national unity." That is something I would entirely support, Mr. Speaker, without reservation.

But I would be less than honest if I said we had a very good record in managing these affairs. The federal government's record of management of three things; the relocation to Hull, the decentralization policy outside the national capital region of the Public Service, and the restraints on hiring in the Public Service were very badly co-ordinated, and that is no reflection on the present Minister of Public Works (Mr. Buchanan). He has inherited the situation and he is doing his best to correct these things, but the decisions which were taken were not carefully planned. They have had an impact on the city of Ottawa which is the most negative of all the communities in this area. Six million square feet of office space were vacated in Ottawa, or are about to be, over a period, two million of which can be demolished in temporary buildings, and four million square feet of privately-owned accommodation is coming on to the rental market. This represents a depression in this area plus a loss in federal grants in lieu of tax of something like \$150 per household per year in the city of Ottawa.