

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

imposing and the finest of monuments in all of Europe and where thousands of tourists, both Canadians and Europeans, go each year.

If we hand over the administration and maintenance of that park to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, we shall no doubt blur the identity of that Canadian territory in France, even if some Canadian employees are kept. The administration will be British, the technical board will be composed of representatives from London or Arras. Therefore, I am convinced that our influence will decrease gradually, in the long run, and I would say that the same remark applies to the Beaumont-Hamel park, known as Newfoundland Park.

Such a decision will, I think, raise political issues which were surely not contemplated by the civil servants who made that recommendation.

Mr. Speaker, if we consider the rather lukewarm relations which have been existing between Canada and France for a few years, especially between Canada and the great general who does not care too much for Great Britain, we give him a splendid opportunity to create difficulties for the Canadian government and we open the door to all kinds of innuendoes on his part.

Those who are called upon or have been called upon in the past to arrange remembrance celebrations on French soil know from experience how small details like those can have their importance in certain cases.

The department has already accepted compromises which in certain cases I considered as unfortunate and I suggest to the minister to check on that matter with his officials and our ambassadors in Paris and London.

More important still are our relations with the French people, those who really remember, and I do not understand why we should not assume ourselves the task of ensuring the maintenance of our commemorative monuments and the parks where they are situated.

I will even go farther, Mr. Speaker. I am one of those who believe that the Canadian government should be more interested in Vimy Park. We should develop this Canadian territory in France by constructing a commemorative building—perhaps for the second world war—which could house a military museum, a restaurant, lounges and also other services which could be self-supporting, most of them I think.

[Mr. Laniel.]

• (10:10 p.m.)

I know in advance the reply I will get to my representations because I inquired these last few days from certain employees of the department. I have been told that the superintendents of the Vimy and Beaumont-Hamel parks will be retained and that the technical direction only will come from the regional office in Arras which is under the authority of London.

But I am not satisfied, Mr. Speaker, because I have the impression that in the long run Vimy Park—and I repeat it—will lose part of its Canadian identity and will be considered as all our other cemeteries, small parks and monuments in Europe, when it should be the contrary.

Another decision that I deplore is the gradual disappearance of the office of the Department of Veterans Affairs at our London embassy.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell you that I am greatly disappointed by those two decisions. I intend to bring the matter up again, to do everything in my power to have those decisions re-examined and I ask the minister whether it would not be possible not to go any further until the matter has been deferred to the Committee on Veterans Affairs.

Hon. Jean-Eudes Dubé (Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, first of all may I thank and congratulate the hon. member for Beauharnois (Mr. Laniel) for the interest he has always shown and continues to show in the problems of our veterans.

With regard to the question he has raised tonight, I should explain first of all that there are in Europe 13 monuments recalling Canada's participation in the first world war.

The upkeep of those monuments, except for the Vimy and the Beaumont-Hamel ones, has for many years been entrusted to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission under an agreement between Canada and the Commission.

Under the terms of this agreement, Canada reimburses the Commission for the expenses incurred in this regard. The hon. member for Beauharnois has agreed that the work done by this Commission is of exceptional quality.

Since the beginning, our department and the Commission have always co-operated very closely, and our relations are excellent. Of course, Canada is a member of that Commission.