

Government Orders

16 people. It does not matter to me whether it is 11 or 16 or whatever the case may be. However it is going to be a joint committee of both Houses. There will be expertise on that joint committee from both Houses of Parliament.

We have talked over the years of the other place being an instrument that is not of much use to the country. One of the reasons that has come about is that the other place has not been used enough when we are starting out on such things as this investigation of our armed forces.

The people from the other place will contribute to this committee as well as we will contribute to it. So far as the 16 members going across the country is concerned, why not bring the people here? The hon. member will find in a lot of instances that people will be brought here. The most viable thing to do would be to bring people here.

We remember what happened when other committees went across the country in the last number of years. People were very concerned when the committee did not go to their areas. We have to be cognizant of that. We should visit as many of these areas as we find necessary. With that number of people, we can also split into different committees that can visit at different times in different areas of the country. That would help to speed up the process and not miss anybody in the overall scheme of things.

I do agree that in many instances it would be much more expedient, much more economical, to bring the people to Ottawa to listen to them here.

Mr. Leonard Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Madam Speaker, the hon. member who has just spoken has broad experience in government. He has been in provincial government and he has been in Ottawa for a while.

Does he not feel it is very important to have a number of members like 16 on a committee including senators and to have breadth and depth from across the country on matters as important as the future defence policy of our large country, a country that has a great name around the world in peacekeeping and in doing more than our share during wartime in the past?

We will have many people with expertise in foreign affairs. We will have people with expertise in the military field. We will have other people with expertise in the industrial and training fields. The Canadian forces is the largest training school in Canada.

Does the hon. member not feel it is important to have breadth and depth from across Canada on the committee, to have the committee going to meet Canadians who cannot afford to come to Ottawa because this is a huge country, and to let Canadians have their say on such matters as defence policy and foreign policy? If we do not have that breadth and depth, will we not

have an inward looking attitude instead of a broad, outward looking attitude at the world and nationally in our own country?

Mr. Proud: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his intervention and his questions. I think they are very relevant.

• (1645)

I spoke just a moment ago about this very thing. This is certainly one of the most important committees I have been on in my time here. It is going to take an in depth look at our defence policy as to where we are going into the next millennium. I believe we have to be committed to it. As I look at the make-up of the committee thus far I am very pleased. We have many good people on it from every party in the House. I think that spells good for the future. I am sure the people who will be chosen from the Senate will add their expertise to it at their own level.

As I said a moment ago, we have to go out to various parts of the country, and probably other places around the globe, to get the whole input of people who have a great interest in our country and in our military as to what we should have in upcoming years.

This is not something that will be a hodge-podge, band-aid situation. I think we have had some of that in the past. I believe the time has come. Canadians have told us that we have to change. Our economics tell us we have to change. I can see the make-up of this 16-member committee. It will split into sub-committees to go across the land and across the world to see what will be necessary for the next number of years. This is very important to the future of the country.

[Translation]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Terrebonne): Unfortunately, there are only a couple of minutes left, Madam Speaker, and I think I could do a 20-minute speech because I am so frustrated from hearing what I just heard. I will try to be calm and precise and to ask the hon. member opposite for a precise answer.

On the first opposition day, we had a debate on a special committee to review every item of government spending and to save not millions but billions of dollars. The Liberals were against that committee to save money and to avoid duplication in the mandates of committees, as they said at the time. They are now offering us the same thing in a defence committee, not the same thing but a real duplication with enormous costs on reports we already have and answers we already know, with senators, probably to assess the relevance of their duties and to occupy them to a certain extent, since they have nothing to do, with 16 members, 14 on this committee. I am sorry but I would like some clarifications on the relevance of this committee, an approximation of costs, and I would like to know why you were opposed to a committee to save not millions but billions of dollars where now you are proposing to spend money.