

Constitution Act, 1867

Up to now, I think that we have always thought of the capital of Canada as a city in Ontario. I have nothing against Ontario or Ottawa, but throughout the years, we have asked the Federal Government to contribute to the beautification of the region and we have been saying that it should not be restricted to the city of Ottawa. Parliament has continued to expand the region on the Quebec side, in the Outaouais region, and we are now saying that the National Capital Region is a product of Canadian federalism and reflects many of the familiar political, social, linguistic and cultural differences and ambiguities of Canadian society. It is typical of Canada.

In other words, it is a simple matter. The National Capital Region should be the capital of Canada. The Hon. Member for Hull has referred to the positive results of such change over the years. One of the things he has always concentrated on is that it would lead to increased co-operation not, as the former speaker said, to problems. What the Hon. Member for Hull is saying is that it would lead to increased co-operation between the municipalities. He explained that in his last speech when he said:

Whenever we have asked for the co-operation of the various regional governments, it has always been a difficult proposition. This is why over the years I have always advocated a federal district, in order that the federal Government be at home here. But this is not for tomorrow, because we know what came out of the so-called co-operation between the various levels of government, both local and provincial.

The Hon. Member for Hull represents his constituents as well as or better than most Members in the House. He made a statement in introducing his Bill which I thought was interesting. I believe his comments were to the effect that because of the present situation on both sides of the river, it is the most over-governed and overtaxed region of Canada. Why is that, Mr. Speaker? The Hon. Member for Hull says it is because of this complete lack of co-operation between the various levels of government, local and provincial.

In reviewing the objections to the Hon. Member's proposition over the years, a couple of things stand out. It has been said that it is not a simple matter to do this; it is very, very complicated; it is difficult to amend Section 16. I should like to refer the House to what the Hon. Member has said repeatedly over the years. It is reported at page 618 of *Hansard* as follows:

To those who suggest that an extraordinary process is required for amending Section 16, I say all that is needed is an Order in Council, simply adding Hull and the surrounding municipalities on both sides of the river, so that Canada's National Capital truly reflects the daily life of every Canadian. Because certainly visitors, whether they come from British Columbia or from New Brunswick or Prince Edward Island, are not particularly enthralled when coming to Ottawa to visit just another Ontario City.

When the Hon. Member presented his Bill, some politicians provincially and some federally accused him of trying to "get rid" of Ottawa. In all the statements the Hon. Member has made he has clarified this matter. I should like to quote briefly from his speech of January 20, 1984 in the Chamber when he said, as reported in *Hansard* at the bottom of page 618:

—we should make Ottawa part of the National Capital Region just as all the other municipalities which are now part of the National Capital Region. And I am sure that members of the House are aware of this major problem of a capital for a young country such as Canada, for we have had a flag for some twenty years and we have a practically new, at least freshly patriated Constitution. In my opinion, what really matters now is to endow ourselves with a capital which clearly reflects the wills, aspirations and modus vivendi of all Canadians.

● (1630)

At that stage, Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member got to the exact point of his campaign over the years with this Bill. He went on to say:

It should occupy a neutral ground, outside the territory of any individual province—

The Hon. Member for Hull (Mr. Isabelle) continued:

—I just cannot understand how a province such as Ontario can logically have two capitals. If there is disunity, if the West feels alienated, it may be because we have no meeting point where we could all get together and feel at home as Canadians. People from western Canada think that they are away visiting eastern Canada when they come to this Ontario city, and those from eastern Canada think they have gone West when they are in the same Ontario city.

How true that is, Mr. Speaker. The Hon. Member for Hull went on to say:

Therefore, to dispel any doubt and give Canada a new image or impetus, in line with the novelties we have known over the past few years, including the flag, I think it is a matter of individual self-esteem and national pride to have a capital which reflects the character of all Canadians from coast to coast.

That, Mr. Speaker, is basically what the hon. gentleman is proposing in this legislation, and basically what he has said over the years in trying to accomplish his objective. He is saying to us all that we do not as a whole understand exactly why he has been proposing to amend Section 16 of the Constitution Act, 1867 that the national capital of Canada become designated as the national capital area. It is a fact of life today that Parliament, that the federal Government, has expanded to the Quebec side. The National Capital Region itself includes municipalities on both sides. Why not make it the capital of Canada? He is also saying that there will be increased co-operation between municipalities. He is making the accusation that this area is presently, and I will quote him exactly, "... the most over-governed and over-taxed region of Canada." He said it is so because of a total lack of co-operation between various levels of government, local and provincial. He makes the point that it is a simple matter, and something for Government to think about, to amend Section 16 of a simple Order in Council. He is not saying that he is trying to get rid of Ottawa.

I commend the hon. gentleman for his persistence and perseverance on behalf of his region and on behalf of his constituents. I believe that, regardless of what happens now, we will see in the not too distant future the Hon. Member's proposition become a reality.

Mr. Donald W. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, before embarking upon the comments I have prepared for this debate today, I should just like to make a few comments on the remarks which have just been made by the Hon. Member for Gander-Twillingate (Mr. Baker). He said that Parliament had expanded to the other side of the Ottawa River into Hull. Parliament had expanded? I wonder if he knows what Parliament is, Mr. Speaker. Later on in his remarks, the Hon. Member said that the federal Government had expanded its operations across the river. I believe that is probably what he meant. I hope he did not mean that Parliament has expanded in that way. I would suggest, therefore, that perhaps the Hon.