

He said: His Excellency the Governor General, having been made acquainted with the subject matter of this resolution, recommends it to the consideration of the house.

Motion agreed to.

NATIONAL LIBRARY

MOTION FOR REFERENCE TO JOINT COMMITTEE ON LIBRARY OF PARLIAMENT

Hon. COLIN GIBSON (Secretary of State) moved:

Whereas representations have been received from numerous organizations including the Royal Society of Canada, the Canadian Library Association, the Canadian Historical Association, the Canadian Political Science Association, the Canadian Social Science Research Council, the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada, the Canadian Congress of Labour, as well as the Provincial Library Association, recommending that consideration be given to the establishment of a national library for Canada; and

Whereas it is further recommended that as a preliminary step action be taken to provide a catalogue of books already available in the various libraries throughout Canada;

Therefore be it resolved that the representations already received and any further representations that may be received concerning the establishment of a national library for Canada be referred to the joint committee on the library of parliament for consideration and report.

Mr. MacINNIS: I think the Secretary of State should give some explanation of this resolution. I should like to know what action the joint committee on the library can take in the matter.

Mr. GIBSON (Hamilton West): As the motion states, Mr. Speaker, various representations have been received from organizations throughout Canada as to the advisability of establishing a national library. The recommendations that have been received do not envisage a library being started by the erection of an enormous building. It is considered that the matter should be given careful study and that possibly as a first step arrangements might be made to provide a catalogue of books already available in libraries throughout Canada. It is recommended that the matter should receive careful study, and the government considers that the body to look into the proposal in the first instance is the joint committee on the library of parliament, which would consider the recommendations already received and make a report to parliament, after which the further steps to be taken may be determined.

Mr. CHURCH: Why refer it to a committee? Why does not the government take action?

[Mr. Bertrand (Laurier).]

Mr. M. J. COLDWELL (Rosetown-Biggart): I must say I doubt very much whether this is an effective way to deal with the proposals that have been made to the government. I was on the joint library committee for a long time; I looked forward to a meeting of that committee, but I do not remember one having been called. Perhaps that was partly owing to my own neglect in not pressing for it a little more strongly, but I do not believe this is an effective way of dealing with the problem.

I have no doubt that neither the government nor this house would be prepared to build a huge library building, but I have often thought that one of the first steps to be taken toward making the city of Ottawa a capital worthy of the country would be to have an appropriate national library here. In fact I would go a step further and say we should have an appropriate cultural centre, which would include a national theatre, an art gallery, and so on. It seems to me that this step will simply shelve the matter, and that we shall hear very little more about it from this committee.

I believe other steps should be taken. We have a number of people in the country, known to the government and to members of the house, who might be sufficiently public-spirited and interested to serve on a special committee which would have very much the same objectives as are embodied in this resolution. It seems to me a committee of persons interested in literature, the arts, and so on, would give the country much better service in this regard than the kind of committee to which it is proposed to refer this question, because, as I say, having been a member of the library committee and knowing the difficulty of getting the committee to meet, I think this action will merely shelve the matter and nothing constructive or effective will be done.

Mr. JEAN FRANÇOIS POULIOT (Temiscouata): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect I would repeat that before we speak of a national library the present library of parliament should be made fireproof in order to protect the treasures we have there, which are exposed to destruction at any time. This is the first step, and it is urgent. I have said for years that it is urgent, and I thank the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggart (Mr. Coldwell) for supporting my contention, which seems to be sound in every respect.

Mr. RODNEY ADAMSON (York West): Mr. Speaker, as a member of the library committee may I say that this motion came up in that committee during the war, and was shelved until such time as the war ended and