

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: There has been a vacancy for some time. We should be assured that there is need of filling it.

Hon. SMEATON WHITE: The position has not really been vacant; but there is a vacancy now to be filled because the man who has been doing the work is going out.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: I see.

The motion was agreed to.

PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

Hon. CAIRINE WILSON moved concurrence in the third report of the Standing Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: I want to call attention to the third clause of the report. I am not altogether clear myself, because of inexperience, as to just what the effect of the recommendation is, or to whom the recommendation is addressed. If it is merely to the officers of this House as an integral part of Parliament, then it might have final effect, and, if so, I think we should consider it carefully before launching on a plan for further beautifying the grounds by obtaining professional advice at this time. If there is room for discretion after the adoption of the report, I have no objection to its adoption.

Hon. CAIRINE WILSON: The committee, in making this report, felt that in consideration of the importance of the grounds surrounding this building, to which very little attention seems to have been paid, not one of us was qualified to speak authoritatively. Personally I made a few suggestions last autumn, which were carried out, but all the members considered that if we could obtain professional advice it would not involve any additional expenditure at the moment, but the plans could be carried out as the funds became available.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: The most expensive thing I know of is expert advice. That is what I was worrying about.

Hon. CAIRINE WILSON: I think any landscape architect would be very pleased to draw up plans, and the expenditure would be slight. We might even have a competition.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: As long as the matter is at the discretion of the Government, as I presume it is, I have no objection to the passing of the recommendation. I say this without reflecting at all on the recommendation. I do not want to be responsible for a definite commitment if there is no discretionary margin left to the Government after the resolution passes.

Hon. Mr. BLACK: This report is not at all out of line with previous reports that have been submitted by this committee, if I remember rightly. I have not the report before me, but it says that the plan, if approved, may be carried out if and when funds are available. It should be borne in mind that we were not speaking of legal advice when we referred to consultation on architectural features, which we hope would be not so expensive.

Right Hon. Mr. GRAHAM: And more reliable.

Hon. Mr. BLACK: Since I have been on this committee we have made recommendations for changes in the arrangement of shrubbery and lawns and that sort of thing, but I have found by experience in such matters elsewhere that that is a poor way of working. We should have an objective, and a landscape gardener or architect, or even an ordinary man with common sense, could make some plan towards which the work of the future could be directed. That is what the chairman and all the members of this committee had in mind—that there should be some plan or arrangement towards which this committee could work when money was available, so that we should not be wasting money by taking some shrubbery away from Queen Victoria's monument, let us say, and a few years later putting shrubbery back in the same place; or by having some flowers placed near the retaining walls, and a year or two afterwards perhaps taking them away. Such has been the history of the work done by a similarly constituted committee in the past thirty or forty years. The idea, therefore, was to have a plan that could be worked on and gradually put into effect as the years went on, so that in after years this Parliament Hill would be a beautiful place which everybody would want to see.

The Hon. the SPEAKER: I understand that if the report is adopted a copy will be sent to the Minister of Public Works, for him to act on it as he sees fit.

Hon. Mr. LITTLE: Honourable members, should the committee not be a joint committee of both Houses? The report from the Senate committee goes to the Department of Public Works, as I think all the work of the committee has to do with that department, and I suppose that in ninety per cent of the cases that is the last that is heard of the recommendation. If we had a joint committee of both Houses we might get some action.