

National Capital

The National Capital Commission has prepared a concept for the development of the national capital region during the next quarter century. The regional municipalities in both Ontario and Quebec have prepared or are preparing their own plans. The cities of Ottawa and Hull are advancing their ideas. The special task force on the governing of the capital has publicly reported its recommendations. Citizens groups are making suggestions. I particularly welcome this examination of the governmental structure of the region as well as the examination of the physical environment. I believe that the involvement in the governing of the region of two provinces, municipalities and the federal government is unique. As Minister of State for Urban Affairs, I think my first responsibility is to make sure that the national capital region is a good place in which to live and work. I have a special responsibility for Ottawa as that is the capital of all Canadians.

We must resolve the difficulties of what may be termed a truncated government structure. I especially look forward to the committee's recommendations. Incidentally, not one of these jurisdictions is working in secret or independently. The National Capital Commission, for instance, has held briefings for provincial authorities, regional authorities, members of parliament and citizens groups. I think the commission has briefed everybody in sight who would sit still for a few minutes. The commission and all these other jurisdictions and groups are, I am sure, ready to put their views before the joint committee.

I hope that all members of this House and of the other place will take an interest in the deliberations of this committee. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), the cabinet and I, as the minister responsible for the programs of the NCC, all look forward to the recommendations of this committee. If it builds as well as the last committee we will not need a motion like the one before the House for another 18 years. In conclusion, may I quote what Bruce Hutchison said about capital cities:

A nation lives largely by symbols, which represent feelings too deep, subtle and sacred to be uttered directly or framed in words. And of such symbols, a capital city is one of the most profound. A great nation will have a great capital, not necessarily in bulk, expenditure and ornament, but in quality and atmosphere; while a mean nation will display its character by the same outward signs.

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of his speech the Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Danson) paid tribute to anybody who had been in any way, directly or indirectly, involved in the establishment of the capital of Canada. However, he did not mention Queen Victoria who chose this magnificent site on the banks of the Ottawa River for the capital of Canada. I hope this omission was made from a sense of delicacy he might have felt for the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands (Miss MacDonald).

Today parliament has embarked upon a study of this area encompassing 1,800 square miles, with a total population exceeding 600,000 people, according to 1971 figures. I am looking forward with considerable interest to the results of the study. Let no one forget, once the euphoria and romance has been forgotten, that the problems of the national capital are complex, difficult and involve conflicts of interest. Consider the area about which we are talking. It straddles the boundary between two provinces, contains two regional governments, two major cities and a

minor city, a large number of smaller municipalities which are growing and in various stages of development, a number of major school boards, planning boards and even conservation authorities. Land division committees are applied in the area. In addition to the multiplicity of governing bodies, certain aspects of administration are divided between the National Capital Commission and the Department of Public Works. Moreover, in addition, community associations compete for different interests of different areas. As if this were not enough, one finds two cultures in the area and an increasing interest in multiculturalism.

It is true that considerable difficulties lie in the way of achieving a satisfactory system of government for the region. Difficulties confront us, but that does not mean we do not attempt to deal with them. That is the spirit in which I am speaking this afternoon. I say that it is time for us to approach these difficulties openly; let us discuss them openly and fearlessly. If there is truth to the cliché we have heard expounded by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and others, including the minister, to the effect that our country is strong by reason of its diversities, I venture to suggest that the national capital area, by reason of its diversity, must be one of the strongest areas of Canada. We are diverse and we shall be vitally affected by the outcome of that upon which we are embarked today.

Into the middle of this diversity has jumped Douglas Fullerton, the former chairman of the National Capital Commission and a distinguished Canadian with whom it has been my privilege to disagree violently and whom it has been my privilege to know. No one who has ever known Douglas Fullerton and has disagreed with him—and there are many who have disagreed with him violently—can deny that he had the interests of the area at heart. He did perhaps more than any one person to give the National Capital Commission some life in the sense that it is known in the community as a vital force. In terms of ski trails, bicycle paths and Rideau Canal skating, the NCC and the position of the federal government became known to the average member of the general public. However, if he had a weakness as a man and as a viewer of governments, it was his passion for efficiency. It was this view of our area as being faulty because it was, as he put it, over-governed that led to his view of the National Capital being inefficient in the governmental sense.

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If one reads Douglas Fullerton's report, which is basically only one of the working tools of the committee, he will see that it bears the imprint of his conviction for efficiency and his basic distrust for elected municipal politicians. If one probed his heart of hearts, one would find that Mr. Fullerton would rather see national capital government vested in this area in an organization that was federally dominated. He took great pains to say that would be impossible, but I think if you looked into his heart of hearts you would find that is what he would like to see. Mr. Fullerton was wise enough to know that the public would not stand for that. Therefore, what he advocated in terms of his proposal for a supracouncil is really an attempt to allow the federal government to do indirectly what it cannot do directly. That is the danger of the