

Decentralization

right, the decision has been made, but my plea today is very clear. The decision having been made, if extra money has to be spent and extra persons have to be employed, be they doctors, clerks or what have you, so that veterans will get the same service from the department which is partly here and partly in Charlottetown as they would have got had the department stayed here, let those employees be hired and let that money be spent.

That is my plea, and probably it can be made with respect to some other departments as well. The superannuation branch is in Moncton now. That is not closely parallel to the case of the veterans, but there too, if this results in delays in dealing with superannuation cases, let us try and make up for those delays by employing whatever staff is necessary.

That is the comment I wish to make on this bill. I hope the problem of my friend, the hon. member for Sarnia (Mr. Cullen), or the problem of anyone else in getting over to the East Block will be resolved. I hope the principle will be established soon that these things are decided before they take place and not afterwards. I hope that in so far as the Department of Veterans Affairs is concerned it will get all of the help, backing and money it needs to provide the services to our veterans to which they are entitled, wherever the headquarters of that department may be located.

● (1650)

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Mr. Speaker, I will just take one or two minutes to make a comment on the bill we are discussing today which will change the word "Ottawa" to "national capital", a change which, of course, reflects more accurately the country in terms of where the headquarters of certain government agencies, such as the Economic Council of Canada, and others are situated. I just want to say one or two words about the national capital and about the public service while we are discussing this bill.

I am very concerned as a person who comes from western Canada that the national capital be as reflective as possible of the country as a whole, that institutions be as reflective as possible of the country as a whole and that the departments of government be reflective of this whole country.

One of the problems we have, and this was said just a short time ago by the Speaker of the other place, the Hon. Jean Marchand, is that our country is extremely large, with a majority of Canadians now really getting from one region to another, whether it is from western Canada to Ontario or Quebec, let alone the Atlantic provinces, or vice versa. Because the country is so large I think it is doubly important that the people who work in this city for the taxpayers, those who work in Hull or in any part of the national capital area, try to be good mirrors of the country as a whole, or as reflective as possible of the country as a whole.

I said in this House a few weeks ago that often the centre tries to impress its values on regions of the country rather than the regions channelling their values and attitudes to the centre, having the centre reflect the entire country. A former very

respected judge in Quebec, Robert Cliche, talked about a certain situation a few years ago. He mentioned the fact that CMHC was designing houses with very small kitchens, and one of the problems was that in Quebec the kitchen is the centre for socializing, a family centre and a place where everybody gathers and has conversations. Apparently that is very traditional for Quebecers. CMHC had not recognized this fact. The kitchens of houses were designed here in Ottawa by a central agency and were uniform right across the country. Apparently what was good for the designers in Ottawa was supposed to be good for the country as a whole.

That is just a little example of what I am trying to say. This is a country with many communities, which makes us something much more than the totality of them all. To make this country, which is really fantastic, more reflective of those communities, we must find that reflection here in this city. All those values and all those differences which we cherish should be reflected here.

One or two other things along that line I feel are important. When the government, Crown corporations or agencies of the government are hiring people, they should include, along with the merit principle and everything else, the idea of hiring people from various regions and from among the various peoples of Canada. For example, the Indian people of this country have the need to be more directly represented in the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. In other words, there should be more Indian people having more of a say over governing departments and agencies that directly affect their lives.

I happened to notice the other day a report from one of the government agencies which indicated that the Quebec people, the Atlantic people and the people of western Canada are underrepresented in the federal public service in terms relative to their numbers in the population as a whole. That is one thing the people who do the hiring in the federal government should be thinking of in trying to bring more people from all regions into key positions in the government.

The same thing should take place in respect of Francophones in the public service. We have a special committee of the House now looking at bilingualism and Francophones in the public service. I will not go into details in that regard. Many of these problems were catalogued by Max Yalden in the official languages report. It showed that, in terms of middle and upper echelon positions in the Government of Canada, Francophones are vastly underrepresented.

I did not want this bill to go through without making a few of those points. We have to strive very hard to make the national capital a reflection of this country. Such a reflection was summarized very well by the Pepin-Robarts report of a year or so ago. It referred to duality and regionalism. That is probably as good a report as any to summarize what Canada is really all about. The things referred to in that report should be symbolized here in the national capital. In other words, the national capital should become as much as possible a microcosm of the country as a whole. I know that is very difficult to do in a country so vast and geographically so