

National Capital

One of the options which is being spoken about with a great deal of emotion, because regional and provincial governments are involved, is the matter of the national capital territory. Some people say we should have one that is similar to Washington, D.C. Others say we should model ourselves on Brazil or on Australia. We do not have to copy anybody. Let us look at all the options and explore them. We might want to reject the option presented to us but I think the committee would be a good forum in which to consider all possibilities. If we decide to reject it, then let us reject it. We do not have to look at it in terms of what is done in Australia, Brazil or the United States; we have some ingenuity and can come up with what we think is the best form if we take the option, but whether we take it is an entirely different matter.

● (1620)

I hope we will go into each and every aspect of this question so that we will be set for at least 25 years. We must also look at some of the more mundane things, such as recreation, transportation, parks, bridges crossing the Ottawa River, decentralization of services, and so on. We must look into the questions of bilingualism, multiculturalism and the cultural facilities in Ottawa. We must consider these not just for the residents of Ottawa-Hull and environs but for all Canadians and give them what they want in their capital. This is the capital of the whole of Canada and we must respect the views of others, at the same time making it liveable for those who want to live here.

We must consider very seriously the question of decentralization. The city of Ottawa has certain boundaries, and although it has been designated as the capital there are people who are very upset that some of the buildings of the national capital region are across the river or that a museum is going to be built there. They are upset that buildings pertaining to the national government are outside the boundaries of Ottawa. But Ottawa is only so big, Mr. Speaker, and buildings cannot be stacked one on top of the other. Maybe a few more of the facilities of the national government should be put into Hull, Aylmer, Pontiac county, Gatineau, West Carleton, Nepean and Goulburn. In that way we would not be trying to bring everybody into a few acres in the centre of Ottawa between 7 a.m. and 9 a.m. and get them all out again between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m.

I applaud the moves that have been made in recent years, Mr. Speaker. I know there has been criticism about buildings going up in la belle province and the city of Hull which is in the national capital region. But we have to decentralize and it was a logical decision to put some of the buildings there. If we can get rid of emotionalism and make it work over the years the workers will be better off. As we decentralize, however, we must acknowledge that a number of people will have to work in the core of the metropolitan area and commuter services will have to be improved.

On a recent visit to Europe I was impressed with the mass rapid transit services that I saw and think there are many examples that we could follow. Studies are being made by the Outaouais regional council, the Ottawa-Carleton regional council, the municipality of Ottawa, the municipality of Hull, the province of Quebec, the province

[Mr. Dick.]

of Ontario, the federal government and the NCC to move people whether by subway, bus service, fast commuter trains, existing railway lines, and so on. We cannot wait another ten years until we have had innumerable studies and discussed them? The problem is here and now, Mr. Speaker. We should have commuter services from Arnprior, Almonte, Carleton Place, Rockland, Pointe-Gatineau, Aylmer, Lucerne, Deschênes: these should be in place now.

This committee would be a logical place to bring forth all the views of multigovernment committees at all levels. There must be parks and recreation for people who live in the centre of this area as part of the over-all scheme. A great deal has already been done by the NCC in this regard. I hope that in an unemotional and hard way, without turning away any of the options but looking at them all, we will come to a rational conclusion to expand our national capital and, if necessary, make a national capital territory.

Mr. Lloyd Francis (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that this committee is being established today. Much necessary preparatory work can be done during the summer recess to ensure that it will be in full operation when parliament reconvenes in the fall. As the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) observed, the committee may sit during the recess.

This committee's mandate is to review the future form of government in the national capital region. The growing federal presence in decisions which affect the local government of all residents of Ottawa must be analysed in detail.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, sometime ago, I was a member of the Ottawa city council. I remember how, on several occasions, the mayor of Ottawa and the chairman of the National Capital Commission solved many problems themselves and quite efficiently. I remember the time when the mayors of Hull and Ottawa were members of the National Capital Commission but because of the conflicts between Miss Whitton and the chairman of the NCC the mayors are no longer members of the commission. Since then, the population of the city of Ottawa and neighbouring municipalities has grown quite considerably. Urban and planning problems have increased but, to my mind, communications and relations between the federal and the municipal governments have not improved. That is not entirely the fault of the municipalities whose elected councillors have the right to be consulted.

[English]

The federal government is one of the biggest landowners in the national capital region, owning over 25 per cent of the land. At times the federal government has used this lever of land ownership to shape or to block proposed developments in this region. Sometimes, other levels of government were fully consulted in advance on projects and most were satisfied. This was the case in the development of the Ottawa River Parkway which is used by residents of both sides of the Ottawa River to get to and from work and to bicycle on Sundays.

At other times, as in the case of the Portage Bridge, the federal government has acted unilaterally without adequate consultation with the local residents or their elected