

National Capital Commission

Of course, this house was acquired by the federal district commission by expropriation several years ago.

All that was said in the house on that occasion, on September 30, by anybody who spoke in the house was that the idea that the government should provide at the expense of the country an official residence for the prime minister was approved; but no one went beyond that. Whatever has been done in regard to selecting this property, whatever has been done in the way of expenditure of vast sums of money upon it to try to modernize an ancient house, has been done solely on the responsibility of the government and without any approval on the part of this house.

Then, later, on the same page he had this to say:

What did the government do, entirely on its own responsibility? I have said in the first place that by order in council they set aside a government-owned property for this purpose.

Mr. Chairman, I just want to contrast the words of the Minister of Finance and his attitude to the problem and his chastising the government, as he said, for setting aside a property as a residence of the Prime Minister of Canada by order in council only with what has been done with respect to the Prime Minister's summer estate. I know the Prime Minister has a great appreciation of history, tradition and the customs of the past. I know that from experience. I am going to tell a little story with respect to the Prime Minister. I was going out of the house some five or six years ago and the Prime Minister was then in opposition. The session had ended. I might explain that the Prime Minister had gone down toward the Chateau Laurier. He will remember this. I was behind him. He turned around and walked back to the front of the building, had a look at it, and then walked away again. Do you know what he said to me? The Prime Minister will remember it. He said to me: "I had to come back for another look at the old building. I love it. It stands for such great traditions in Canada." That is why I know the Prime Minister thinks a great deal of history, tradition, practices and customs.

While I am only a humble member of this group, being quite content to leave the major issues, such as the distribution of box cars and the shape of Churchill's legs to other more brilliant members of the group, I do notice these little things.

I am somewhat lacking in intelligence, have a somewhat meagre education and humble background. I often go by instinct and I know from instinct that the Prime Minister of Canada has a great respect for these things. I know his approach to problems. I can almost visualize his mental processes, and I am quite sure that he will recognize what I

[Mr. Herridge.]

am saying is correct. Therefore, Mr. Chairman, in concluding my brief remarks I do suggest that because we all realize that an official country estate is necessary for a person carrying the burdens of the prime minister's office in this country the occupancy should be regularized by the introduction of a bill such as was introduced in connection with the official residence; first to avoid any unnecessary criticism and, second, to avoid any unpleasant public clamour on the part of the owners, who are the people of Canada and, shall I say, using that good old Anglo-Saxon phrase, for the quietening of title to provide for quiet possession by the Prime Minister himself on all occasions and future prime ministers.

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, in concluding this rather rambling statement of the legal problem, which is somewhat beyond my capacity, I urge the Prime Minister to give this matter consideration and introduce a bill at the next session of parliament somewhat after the form of the bill that was introduced by the former government so that he and his successors will have an official summer residence to enjoy. In doing so, Mr. Chairman, he will put himself in the long line of succession from Solomon to the present day by following the historic practices, traditions and customs of all those who sit in the seats of the mighty.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Chairman, one cannot but congratulate the hon. gentleman for the degree to which he has engaged in research.

Mr. Caron: Mr. Chairman, is the Prime Minister closing the debate?

Mr. Diefenbaker: No. This is an interlude of humour brought into the discussion of a serious matter. I could not allow the occasion to pass without congratulating the hon. gentleman on the degree to which his research might well be described as love's labour lost because in point of fact there has been no such establishment. Throughout the period of some seven years since the property was acquired the federal district commission has made arrangements from time to time with private individuals, and at no time has it been established nor is there any reason for its establishment as a country home for the Prime Minister.

I understand that there are two pieces of property, one given to the state by Mr. Mackenzie King. I understand that that is being occupied today by one of the officials of parliament. There is no occupancy on the part of the Prime Minister of the place in question. Unoccupied as it is, I have spent few week ends there. If the hon. gentleman