

National Capital

Holt to prepare a development plan for the national capital area.

As far as I know, Sir Robert Borden never voted for the Liberals and never was a Liberal, but I admire him for the action he took. And it was the Conservative government again which, in 1958, had the legislation adopted. I hope this will continue and go beyond the stage of rhetoric, because the legislation which governs us now was proclaimed by the government in power in 1958, and it was not a Liberal government. I wonder why today there is so much hoopla when the elected federal Liberal government has decided by mutual agreement to do something. They did not do so unilaterally, they held consultations at the 1969 conference on the constitution. All premiers agreed on the fact that henceforth Hull and Ottawa would be Canada's national capital. We must therefore continue in that direction. In my opinion, the rest is simply automatic, technocracy, a kind of technique. Transport, roads, parks, land development, are all only technicalities which can be discussed and developed by others than the Commission or under the act which will come out of this committee proceedings.

What I mean is that it is often all very well to say: the provinces must be consulted, and so forth. The provinces have already been consulted. This leads nowhere. Here is an example of this: if the federal government had not made the decision to build Portage Bridge and had waited for the Quebec government to meet with the Ontario government and for Ontario to meet with Quebec, this bridge would never have been built. We would have roads but no communications over the river. Thus, I hope that we will shall down at the table quietly in order to discuss sensibly and logically and that we shall remove the blinkers that have obstructed the view of some of my colleagues. Do not worry, those who say that Ottawa is the capital of Canada are wrong. In theory it might effectively be the capital of Canada. When Queen Victoria decided that Ottawa would be the capital she made a random choice because she was afraid of Americans. She did not want the capital to be Kingston to avoid that Americans take the capital first. Then, a place more in the interior was chosen. I am sure that it was to please everyone that neither Quebec, nor Toronto nor Montreal were chosen.

Kingston had the preference but, because of the circumstances I just mentioned Ottawa was chosen. But Ottawa in 1857 is not Ottawa in 1975. If you wish to get into geography and history and be more precise I would say that Ottawa, the capital chosen by Queen Victoria has geographical limits dating back to 1857. Then, today, with the assent of various committees, and I should say the intelligence of parliamentarians, from any party, we succeeded in getting the present National Capital Commission structures, that saw to the development and the improvement of the area for so many years. In fact, the cities of the national capital region did not have the means to pay for urbanists and even less for planners.

I hope that now we shall be able to study the problem, and maybe to improve the structure of the present National Capital Commission because it has changed and that is what we did in 1957. We passed the law that governs the National Capital Commission we have today. I hope that we shall not stick to narrow structures. Do we want the

national capital region, as stipulated in the 1957 legislation, to be the capital of Canada? If not, let us say so and we will take the necessary measures. I do not see why we should establish structures as the National Capital Commission for the development and the improvement of the national capital if we do not intend to follow some guidelines for the future of the national capital region.

It is a pity, Mr. Speaker, that time is running short, since there are so many other topics to develop. I could talk about different things, but I am short of time and I hope that in committee we will be able to put questions to the witnesses, the group representatives who will come and testify, in order to achieve a consensus. I note that everybody in this august assembly, Mr. Speaker, seems to be in favour of what the hon. member for Genville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) referred to a few moments ago, that is the get together. So I hope that once for all we will say to the people concerned: "Here is what we want for the National Capital area, what we learned from the witnesses". We will try to follow that policy which will certainly lead to a legislation that might be in the best interests of those who have been victimized for more than 100 years and who live in the National Capital area, both Ontarians and Quebecers.

[English]

Mr. Paul Dick (Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, it is with interest that I enter this debate, particularly because of the fact that the national capital region comes within the boundaries of my constituency but also because for a long time before becoming a member of parliament I was interested in the national capital. I believe that the minister in his opening remarks—perhaps I heard him wrong—said we must look into all aspects of the national capital. With reference to the remarks of the last speaker, it is still under the constitution of the city of Ottawa, not that it should not be, but I understand that a recommendation might be made that it be amended if necessary. I suggest that we should look beyond the national capital to the national capital region.

I hope that this committee will not face the problems which many committees of the House are facing, and I hope it will be a completely non-partisan committee where people express their feelings and their thoughts so that we can get to the very heart of the problems and set out where we might go.

I know this is an emotional topic with a number of Canadians. People ask: What is the capital? Should we be spending money within this territory, within this boundary, or outside? There are also other questions. We must try to diffuse any emotionalism, racism or partisan emotion so that we can come down with a practical course as to where we should go. I enter this debate with no preconceived ideas and I hope that if I have the honour to be on this committee all its members will have no preconceived ideas. I believe we should consider each option open to us. Even today I felt that certain people were trying to back away from certain options. We may be faced with an option which at first appears to be preferable, but then for different reasons we may find we cannot adopt what seems to us to be the ideal solution and we will end up with a compromise which is a little short of the ideal solution but which in fact will do the job remarkably well.