

National Battlefields at Quebec

might some day crumble, and fall upon the inhabitants of the quarters situated below the hill, thus wiping out a substantial Liberal majority.

In those days the Liberal party had not achieved the state of respectability which it now enjoys, and those of us who wished to be returned sought and obtained considerable support from below the hill—or “below the track”, as they would put it in other constituencies. The result of these representations was that, within a short space of time, moneys were voted by the Department of National Defence for the repair of these walls. And by strange coincidence, once every four years more moneys were voted, with the result that the Quebec walls, taken by themselves, are today in a reasonable state of preservation.

But it did take over 30 years for the government, as a whole, to be moved to the point where the control of the upkeep and maintenance of these historic monuments was taken out of the hands of the Department of National Defence and transferred to a civilian department. This took place some time in 1950. It was announced that, from now on, these properties would be looked after, maintained and kept by the then department of resources. But unfortunately, I believe through some slip, or perhaps because the military mind was not existent in the civilian department, in the transfer there was an oversight in that whereas the walls themselves, that is to say, the mortar, the rock and the brick, were turned over to the department; the approaches, the fortifications, which I believe to the military mind are part of an entire fortified city, such as the glacis, the clearance made for the path of fire, and so forth were transferred to the national battlefields commission. The result is that today we appear to have two authorities dealing with what, in the opinion of many, should be exactly the same property. I am going to suggest to the minister, not for immediate action, because I realize that there will be many obstacles to overcome, that he take under the immediate control of his department both the actual concrete buildings, walls, bricks and so on and the approaches thereto consisting of the glacis, the cleared terrain which lies in front of it, and that having the two together he might proceed to the development of this great historic site of Canada in a manner which befits the government of Canada.

May I suggest to him that he has very valid reasons for undertaking this in his department. The national battlefields commission of itself has neither the facilities, the personnel nor the equipment to undertake anything like reasonably large capital expenditure such as the building of approaches and the giving

of access to the more important parts of the fortification. I would suggest to him that he do not at once abolish the commission, but that he retain it in a consultative capacity within his department, and that the one or two permanent employees—and I do not think there are more than that—be also taken over and become employees of his department.

Should he—and I think perhaps he may—meet with some local prejudice, may I suggest to him that if he looks over the debates which took place in this house at the time of the creation of the national battlefields commission in 1908 he will find that at that time there was some objection, and serious objection also, from a great leader of public opinion in our province, the late Armand LaVergne, who objected to the creation of such a commission with a constitution as laid down in the act, which I believe is still in existence, whereby persons from other countries and from other provinces could on the subscription or contribution by that country or province select a commissioner on the national battlefields commission. Mr. LaVergne raised the question in this house, and as a matter of fact divided the house on the subject. It may be that at that time there was considerable justification for the constitution of the commission as it was then formed, since the figures given to me by the department indicate that outside of the contribution of the government of the day, which was I think \$300,000, there were gifts from provincial governments amounting in all to \$260,000; gifts from Canadian municipalities; a gift from New Zealand; gifts from teaching institutions in Canada, in Great Britain and in other parts of the empire; gifts from historical societies, from commercial institutions and so forth, amounting to \$556,787.24, which was certainly to some extent a justification of the peculiar constitution of this particular commission. But I submit, sir, and suggest to the minister that at the present time the function of this commission is restricted almost wholly to that of maintenance. There are eight or ten commissioners, I do not know which, all of whom are men of standing and prestige in the community, and it is hardly likely that men of that particular executive capacity and standing would do very much in the way of attending to the work of laying out paths or deciding which particular type of shrubbery, be it mistletoe or holly, should line the different paths, byways and roadways in this particular park.

Again my suggestion to him is that he retain the services of these very eminent and estimable persons as consulting authorities in matters relating to this great national battlefields park, and that his department