

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): The question is on the motion by the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy). Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion?

Mr. Knowles: No.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Knowles: On division.

Motion agreed to on division, bill read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration.

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ECONOMIC COUNCIL OF CANADA ACT

RELOCATION OF GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The House resumed, from Tuesday, May 20, consideration of the motion of Mr. Cosgrove that Bill C-13, respecting the relocation of government agencies, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates.

Mr. Bill Domm (Peterborough): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that has been of major concern to the people of Canada is the history of the performance of the Liberal government as it has proceeded to enact legislation affecting relocation of government agencies in Canada. This concern rose out of a suspicion that the relocation of government offices in Canada has been used as a means of pork-barrelling, should the opportunity arise; that is, it would serve a political advantage for the government of the time to suggest a relocation of a government agency or a regional office to a Liberal riding. The record speaks for itself on a number of occasions.

● (1720)

I could mention to the House the recent fiasco in the riding of Durham-Northumberland with regard to the relocation of Eldorado Nuclear. Eldorado, a Crown corporation with its head office in the area of Port Hope and with directors appointed by a Liberal government, suggested that it would be advisable to put a refinery in Hope township. I remind hon. members that this occurred during a Liberal government. No action was taken, but commitments were inferred during the election campaign.

Immediately following the election campaign, the Conservative government came into power and a decision was made to act. Eldorado acted, and they located, with intent, on property in Hope township. Another election came along and the Liberals were returned to office, and the decision was made to move Eldorado out of a Conservative riding to a Liberal riding in the north.

That is not the only case. There are a number of cases in history. We do not need to go back very far, just to 1977 at which time there were 13 proposed relocations of government offices, all but one to Liberal ridings. We can come closer to

Decentralization

today's date and discuss what was recommended first in 1973 by a Liberal government, that the regional office of Parks Canada located at that time in Cornwall, which was serving the province of Quebec, would move to a Liberal seat in Quebec. At the same time it was proposed by a Liberal government that the Ontario regional office would be moved out of Cornwall into a then Liberal riding, Peterborough.

Only one thing went wrong with those plans. The Liberal regained his seat in Quebec and the regional office was moved from Cornwall to Quebec City, a more central location for serving the needs of Quebec. This was a commendable move which was thoroughly studied. The proposal to move the Ontario regional office of Parks Canada from Cornwall to Peterborough was also thoroughly studied. The move was first studied by hon. member for London West (Mr. Buchanan) who was then a Liberal minister of the Crown. It was recommended by the minister that the regional office should be more centrally located in order to serve Ontario best. The two locations under consideration were Guelph and Peterborough, both ridings were held by Liberals.

The only thing that went wrong with the move of Parks Canada from Cornwall to central Ontario, where it could best do the job for the most people in Ontario, was that the Liberals were unsuccessful in holding on to the seat held by a then cabinet minister in Peterborough in the 1979 election. It became politically astute to call the move off when they regained power in the current government. That is just one more case of the proposed centralized legislation which we are reviewing today, as it affects Hull and other regional offices.

Such questions should be carefully studied and reviewed with a great deal of concern as to whether these moves, in terms of history of performance, have been moves to satisfy the desires of Liberal members of government or whether the moves have been made to best serve the people of Canada. To be more specific, during the election campaign of 1980 it was claimed by the then member of Parliament for Cornwall, a Liberal, that the regional office would go to Peterborough, to use the member's exact words, "Over my dead body".

I would remind the people of Canada that to keep that same cabinet minister alive, it will cost them some \$2 million or \$3 million to call off the move of Parks Canada to Peterborough and to move the regional office back to Cornwall, after the premises had been rented in Peterborough. The premises are a large facility of two storeys and many thousands of square feet. It is located on the main intersection of Charlotte Street and George Street in Peterborough, and it is now vacant. The facility was leased at a cost of \$160,000 a year for a period of five years. The merchants located in that building were evicted to make room for Parks Canada. The keys were turned over to the government.

However, the new Liberal government decided to bring everything back to Cornwall where it still enjoys a Liberal seat. The reason given to the employees of Parks Canada for keeping the office in Cornwall was because it would be in the best interest of the morale of the employees. I can tell hon. members how enthusiastic the employees of Parks Canada in