

*National Centennial Act*

on March 19, 1957, there was reported in the newspapers of the country a speech that Mr. St. Laurent, who was then prime minister, had made the day before at Hamilton. In this speech he took up the theme and suggested that if we were going to celebrate our country's centennial in a proper manner we would have to start planning right away.

There were these several voices. I have named, among others, Mr. Walter Mann. I have referred to my own resolution and to my own remarks on the subject. I have referred to Mr. I. Norman Smith. I have referred to the former prime minister, Mr. St. Laurent. Here were these voices in the early and middle fifties saying that 1967 was just around the corner and it was time we got started. Finally, on December 9, 1957, for the first time, in the light of what happens to private members' resolutions, the resolution I read a moment ago was reached for debate. It is interesting to note that as soon as I had moved it and uttered this one sentence: "Mr. Speaker, the resolution which I have the honour to present to the house speaks for itself," there were two interjections which read as follows, as will be found in *Hansard* of December 9, 1957, at page 2084:

Mr. Byrne: It certainly does.

Mr. Pickersgill: We shall take it as read.

After I had made my speech urging the House of Commons, the parliament of Canada and the country generally to begin planning without delay for the celebration of our 100th birthday, the first speaker was Mr. John B. Hamilton, then the member for York West and also the parliamentary secretary to the minister of citizenship and immigration. The whole tone of his speech was that I was wasting the time of the house by bringing in such a resolution and that it was obviously nothing more than a resolution full of ideas which my party wished to see enacted. This was the kind of treatment given to my motion. It did not come to a vote; it was talked out.

It was interesting to read the press reports on the debate which took place that day and to read the headlines which the papers put on the reports. I have here a copy of the *Montreal Gazette* of December 10, 1957, and the headline on the Canadian Press story is: "C.C.F. Urges Bold Plan for 1967 Centennial". We often quarrel with the use of headlines but I am grateful for that headline; I think it caught the spirit of the resolution and of the speeches we made in support of it. The *Toronto Globe and Mail* of that morning ran the same story but gave it this headline: "P.C.'s spurn C.C.F. Plan for '67 Program". Well, I suppose that was a good headline, too, because if the one in

[Mr. Knowles.]

the *Gazette* caught the spirit of the resolution, the one in the *Globe and Mail* caught the attitude of the government toward the whole project. Thus it was that back in those days, probably because the idea came from some of us in this minority party, the major parties rejected it. It was then we lost the chance of having a celebration of the kind which the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker) now says we ought to have. In 1957 the Progressive Conservatives spurned the plan. Finally, however, four years later, in 1961, under the leadership of the hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) who was then prime minister, the legislation we are now being asked to amend was brought in. But it took another year and a half before people were appointed to carry on the work, and about all they have done so far is to look for office space, recruit personnel and make at long last, a decision that the time to start is now.

In the meantime, as far as references to this matter in the house are concerned, very few have been made to the legislation we now have before us. Most of the attention has been paid to the legislation respecting the world fair which was passed last year and, as hon. members are aware, there does seem to be a great deal of turmoil over that. But I suggest the turmoil surrounding the arrangements for the world fair points to the fact that I was more of a prophet than I realized when I expressed the hope in my resolution a decade ago that we would plan this event in such a way as to make sure that when July 1, 1967, came we might have, not just fireworks and speeches, but a land of health and abundance of which we could be justly proud.

I admit I have offered these remarks in a spirit which is something less than hopeful. I think we as a country lost our chance to have a proper 100th birthday celebration because neither the Liberals nor the Conservatives were prepared to look at this thing in the terms I. Norman Smith suggested in his article in the *Ottawa Journal* some years ago or in the terms of the speech which the former prime minister, Mr. St. Laurent made in Hamilton, or in the terms of my motion. Indeed, it might not have been considered at all if the provinces and municipalities, realizing that 1967 was coming, had not pressed Ottawa to give a lead. However, in spite of the fact that my observations have not been altogether hopeful, I do express confidence that because the subject has been raised today and because this question is out in the open and we must of necessity take stock of the situation, we will pull up our socks and begin to do something to make this