

AIRPORTS

STE SCHOLASTIQUE—PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF AREA

Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion.

Can he tell us whether discussions are being held with the Quebec government regarding the development of the airport at Ste Scholastique or if, at least, agreements in principle have been concluded between Quebec and Ottawa?

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Mr. Speaker, there has been a meeting at the departmental level where we agreed upon the general outline of co-operation. There will be other meetings in the near future.

[English]

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

CONSTITUTION OF CANADA

APPOINTMENT OF SPECIAL JOINT COMMITTEE

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (President of the Privy Council) moved:

That a Special Joint Committee of the Senate and of the House of Commons be appointed to examine and report upon proposals, made public, or which are from time to time made public by the Government of Canada, on a number of subjects related to the Constitution of Canada during the course of the comprehensive review of the Constitution of Canada, which review was agreed upon at the Constitutional Conference of the Prime Minister of Canada and the Premiers and Prime Ministers of the Provinces in February, 1968, and alternative proposals on the same subjects;

That the Committee have power to appoint, from among its members, such sub-committees as it may deem advisable or necessary;

That the Committee have power to sit during sittings and adjournments of the House of Commons;

That the Committee have power to report from time to time, to send for persons, papers, and records, and to print such papers and evidence from day to day as may be ordered by the Committee;

That the Committee have power to adjourn from place to place within Canada;

That the quorum of the Committee be 17 members, whenever a vote, resolution or other decision is taken, so long as both Houses are represented and that the Joint Chairmen be authorized to hold meetings, to receive evidence and authorize the printing thereof, when 7 members are present so long as both Houses are represented;

That the Committee be empowered to retain the services of three specialists to assist it in its work; and that it also be empowered to retain the clerical and stenographic help deemed advisable by the Joint Chairmen;

That the papers and evidence received and taken on the subject in the preceding session be referred to the Committee and made part of the records thereof;

That the following Members be appointed to act on behalf of the House of Commons on the Special Joint Committee, namely:

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Messrs. Alexander, Allmand, Asselin, Breaux, Brewin, Dinsdale, Fairweather, Fortin, Gibson, Hogarth, Hopkins, Lachance, MacGuigan, Marceau, McQuaid, Osler, Ouellet, Roberts, Rowland and Woolliams; and

That a Message be sent to the Senate to acquaint Their Honours thereof.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion?

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the courtesy of the minister in allowing me to speak first, particularly for the reason that I will have certain propositions to put before him and he might well seek the chance, in closing the debate, to answer the suggestions I make. We already dealt with this matter very lightly last Friday when I indicated some preliminary objections which I then had to the motion in the form it is put. Because of that the government has now seen fit to introduce it in this way, it having been properly placed on the order paper.

By this motion the government has actively taken the initiative to re-establish a special joint committee to deal with constitutional problems. It is asking the House to vest in the committee the widest possible powers, including the right to travel in Canada. I interrupt my remarks on the subject to suggest that some hon. members might take this opportunity to travel outside the chamber and there continue the very important discussions they are having here.

A proposed itinerary which was discussed by the committee at the conclusion of its meetings last session indicates, as I see it, that the committee plans to be absent approximately 45 days, most of them sitting days, during the next eight months. This, of course, is a matter for the committee to consider and to propose in view of what it feels is its responsibility, and we have got to give the utmost consideration to its proposals, particularly having in mind that it is a joint committee. But that does not relieve this House of the ultimate responsibility, of the need to examine and accept or reject or even possibly modify committee reports. This, as a general rule, applies to any committee report.

I was one of those who first suggested six years ago the need to have a committee of this kind. I said it could exercise a useful and even an essential function in dealing with constitutional problems. If it had been set in motion at that time, or even three or four years ago, Mr. Speaker, I think there would have been a different climate and a different awareness of our constitutional problems today.

I was quite prepared for and, in fact, I advocated a reasonable amount of travel by such a committee—certainly at least its attendance in the provincial capitals possibly by the use of subcommittees, because in an area of this kind there was need not only for a pipeline from Members of Parliament to the people but for the people to be able to make known their thoughts to Members of Parliament through the committee. But I must honestly say I did not envisage a safari of quite the same dimensions as is now being proposed, with beaters, trackers