

Adjournment Debate

he would consult with the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Richardson) in view of the precedent this government set in the transfer of the Jericho lands in Vancouver, lands which were returned to the city of Vancouver for the price originally paid by the federal government.

Let me give a very brief history of this Burnaby property, for in order to see the injustice that is probably being rendered to the municipality of Burnaby one has to look at the history. When this land was acquired in 1945 for \$70,000, about 75 per cent of its market value, it was acquired because of the war emergency and the many veterans who were returning and in severe need of rehabilitative facilities. At that time the facility was very successful, but in course of time, of course, the number of veterans who needed this facility diminished. Therefore, negotiations were commenced for the acquisition of the main veterans hospital on the lower mainland, the Shaughnessy hospital, and with that went the George Derby site.

The problem is simply this, that in its negotiations with the municipality the federal government incurred either a legal or a moral obligation to include the municipality in the transfer negotiations, and the government has a moral obligation, I submit, to return a substantial part of this property. I think it is key to the position that I take that we are not asking that the whole site be returned. What we are asking is that the site exclusive of the hospital area itself, the Derby site, be returned to the municipality.

Why is this desirable? It is simply that this area is one of the fastest growing areas, in terms of population, on the North American continent. It is absolutely bursting at the seams and the need for recreational and park facilities is simply tremendous. If this land does not go back for that purpose, there is no doubt that the municipality will have received a severe setback, not only in respect of its planning but the whole lower mainland will receive a severe setback in terms of providing green recreational space for the one million population of the lower mainland.

● (2210)

Somebody once said that confederation set things up so the federal government had the money, the provinces had the jurisdiction and the municipalities had the problems. With the present attitude of the minister, he is not doing a great deal to solve the problems of this particular municipality. I can understand that the minister has difficulty. He is being pressured by the municipality and the province and in a sense he is in the middle. I can appreciate that it is a sensitive and a difficult problem for him; but with the greatest respect, the solution is staring the minister in the face. The solution is to subdivide the Derby section of that site and include the municipality in the negotiations for the retransfer of this land back to the municipality at the price the federal government paid. Only in that way, it seems to me, can we solve this situation.

It is interesting to note that in 1959 correspondence was exchanged between the municipality and the Department of Veterans Affairs and in one of those letters this was written:

Certainly during the negotiations Mr. Ker intimated to the council that in the event of the government abandoning any portion of the

[Mr. Leggett.]

land this corporation would be given first opportunity to repurchase at approximately the price per acre finally agreed upon.

That was contained in a letter from the municipality to the ministry. That was never rejected and never commented upon, and certainly the municipality at that point was left to believe that would be the kind of treatment accorded the municipality; but in the long run this has not been the case. There is either a moral or a legal duty, in these circumstances, to return this land to the municipality. We are talking in terms of \$5 million in property, so it is a matter of vital concern to the whole lower mainland area and not merely to the municipality of Burnaby.

I would urge the minister to reconsider the position he has taken. That position, by the way, was set forth in a letter from the minister to the municipality on November 9 in which it was stated:

We have also agreed that the departmental property, both in Vancouver and Burnaby, will not be partitioned in any way as long as negotiations are in process for the transfer of Shaughnessy Hospital.

What I am asking through you, Mr. Speaker, is that the minister reconsider that somewhat inflexible position, involve the municipality in negotiations and agree to the partitioning of the Burnaby site so the hospital itself can go along with the Shaughnessy complex, obviously a logical conclusion, and that the rest of the site, being in the neighbourhood of 160 acres, be returned to the municipality. The municipality cannot afford to burden the people who reside there by increasing taxes in order to obtain more recreational land. We can no longer treat municipalities as poor cousins of confederation. This government should set forth a decent and consistent policy in respect of the disposition of surplus Crown lands acquired in this way so that municipalities are no longer discriminated against as they have been in the past.

Hon. Daniel J. MacDonald (Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, in talking about George Derby centre I think it must be made clear at the outset that we are talking about Shaughnessy Hospital since George Derby is considered as a wing of that hospital even though it is located a few miles away. The George Derby property was acquired by the federal government after the war, and the municipality and other owners were then paid the full market price for it. As hon. members know, a decision to transfer veterans hospitals to the provinces was made ten years ago. So far three hospitals have been transferred and negotiations are under way as far as some of the others are concerned.

Negotiations with the government of British Columbia have been going on for a number of years concerning the transfer of Shaughnessy Hospital. Ever since negotiations have been under way it has been made clear that the George Derby property was offered as part of the negotiations. Of course, as was the case in other transfers, the value of any property that is attached to the hospital transferred will be fully taken into account.