

*Veterans Affairs*

unwilling to move was indicated by the fact that a quarter of the employees had members of their families working in the Ottawa area so that they too would be disrupted by the move.

Employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs were also concerned about the disruption to schooling. Many of the children from families affected by the move were enrolled in school systems either in Ottawa, Ontario, or in Hull, Quebec. The minister admitted himself that the department had not analysed the implications of the relocation on DVA staff, and that no employer/employee assistance policy had been adopted. In my opinion this is not the best way to proceed if we want to maintain morale in the department.

● (1732)

Of special concern to me was the subject of language. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien) on November 25, in connection with the decentralization plans into the province of Quebec, stated that the government was presently negotiating with Quebec. He said that if there is no agreement to permit English speaking public servants who will be going into Quebec to send their children to English schools, there will be no move. If there is to be decentralization in another province which does not provide for education in French for French speaking people, there will be no decentralization. He went on to say "except where personnel for decentralized units could be hired locally."

I questioned that move to Prince Edward Island. I put many questions on the order paper. I wanted to know what the department or the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Andras) had done to ensure there would be adequate French language schooling facilities available in Prince Edward Island. Prince Edward Island, which has four members of parliament in this House, one of whom is a minister, is smaller than the constituency that I represent and has far fewer persons living in it. Because it is a province, it has a lot more clout than my constituency. I would think it would be possible to make some arrangements.

We talked many times about what might have been done. After much prompting and a lapse of several months, the then president of the treasury board, now the Minister of Finance, was in communication with the premier of the province of Prince Edward Island. He stated that we now have to face up to the issue and asked what the premier was going to do about it. The premier stated that he was prepared to provide French language instruction in the province of Prince Edward Island for those children who needed it.

It is disappointing that we have continually to make these representations and bring pressure to bear in areas where these matters should be looked after in advance. In other words, before considering a move into Prince Edward Island, such subjects as language of instruction for children should have been looked into and some assurance obtained from the premier of that province. I know some will say the situation is different in Quebec because of their bill 101. I suggest whether or not there is language legislation, any province can in a

[Mr. Herbert.]

practical fashion exclude teaching in the second official language by not providing the facilities.

For many years in the province of Ontario, discrimination was practised with money. They did not need a bill 101. The same situation continues in many of the other English speaking provinces today. To say there is not the same problem in Prince Edward Island because there is no bill 101 just does not hold water.

There are many other areas about which we asked questions and where answers should have been given before an announcement was made. The department uses 660,000 square feet of office space. In Ottawa alone, about 180,000 square feet of office space is used. It costs \$800,000 per annum for the space they are presently utilizing. We all know of the concerns of the people in Ottawa because of the space that will be vacated.

I would like to know whether the relocation is going to affect, for example, Saint John, New Brunswick where 21,000 square feet of space is occupied at a cost of \$154,000 per annum. In Toronto, something less than 40,000 square feet of space is occupied at a cost of \$200,000 per annum. I could give similar statistics for areas of other provinces. So far these questions have been unanswered.

I also wanted to know the estimated cost of the relocation. I was told the total estimated cost is \$8½ million. Without any further explanation I am inclined to question the figure. I very much doubt whether any consideration has been given to the dislocating effect of such a move.

I was interested in whether there would be any organizational changes in those departments being decentralized. I asked the question whether changes were necessary in the organizational structure of senior management personnel in departments affected by decentralization. The answer was no. I asked whether decentralization necessitated a change in reporting lines and responsibility of such personnel. The answer was no.

As an individual who operated a company with offices in several provinces of this country, I find it extremely difficult to imagine a major move of this nature going ahead without some changes in the top organizational structure of the department or in the reporting lines of those personnel. Surely just distance itself will affect in some way the reporting lines of the senior personnel.

My concern was directed to certain other areas. I asked the estimated cost and the approximate number of square feet of the new building which is to be constructed in Charlottetown, P.E.I. The answer was:

—not known at this time as detailed accommodation requirements have not yet been identified by Department of Veterans Affairs.

I asked whether land had been purchased or an option taken on land in Charlottetown for the construction of the new building. The answer was no. I asked what amount of land acquisition and construction costs, if any, would be charged by the Department of Public Works to the Department of Veterans Affairs in connection with this move. I was told "none".