

Constitution of Canada

the costs I referred to earlier which must be added on. Last year roughly \$100,000 was spent by committees on travel. I bring these facts to the attention of the House because I sincerely believe that travelling by committees is getting out of hand. It is costing altogether too much.

● (12:50 p.m.)

I am sure that you, Mr. Speaker, are very interested in this because I believe the money comes out of your budget. I am sure you must have felt that it is getting out of hand, is costing altogether too much and that some curtailment will have to be made sooner or later.

I am glad this motion came before the House at the earliest possible time in this session so that we as responsible representatives of the people can give serious thought to the matter before we issue this kind of a blank cheque for this committee. I find I shall not be able to support the motion in its present form. If the committee could say that trips would only be made to the capital of each province and would also set out some sort of a reasonable budget, I would consider agreeing to it, but in its present form of a far-ranging open-ended blank cheque I would find difficulty in supporting the motion.

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I should like to speak in favour of the motion before the House. Before I finish I should also like to make some comments concerning the remarks we have just heard from the hon. member for Wellington (Mr. Hales). Before dealing with his remarks I wish to remind the House that this particular special committee was appointed after urging over many years by various members of the opposition parties including the party represented by myself and the party represented by the hon. member for Wellington. In my view this committee may be able to make—indeed it is probable—a vitally important contribution to the remaking or renewing of our Constitution. In the event that anyone should think this is an impractical proposition, I suggest that the unity of this country may very well depend on it. If anyone suggests that the making or remaking of a constitution is something of an academic exercise without practical value, I should like to say that subjects such as pollution, urban development and so on which were not considered at the time of the making of our original Constitution are the type of practical subjects which require being dealt with in the constitution. Such subjects which intimately affect the government and the welfare of this country are the type of subjects which this committee is asked to consider.

I believe that however disillusioned the people of Canada may be about the process of constitutional amendment to date it is possible—I do not say it will certainly happen because it may not—that if this committee, which represents all parties and all regions of Canada, can arrive at a consensus it may be able to make a vital contribution by renewing the fabric of unity of this country. I suggest it is important that this be done, and in the carrying out of this function and in doing what is essential to the carrying out of this function the people of Canada must be consulted. I suggest that the

[Mr. Hales.]

committee cannot consult the people effectively by remaining in Ottawa or by merely visiting the capital cities of the various provinces. I suggest it is necessary to go to the people in order to hear what they have to say.

As a member of the committee I would find it very informative and interesting to hear the points of view of those in the different sections and regions of our country. Travel is, of course, an inconvenience. It is an inconvenience to the people who travel. It involves some degree of expense. It has the effect of depopulating an already depopulated House of Commons when members serve on committees that travel. This is all very true. It is also perfectly true that travel can be expensive. I believe we can rely upon the committee itself to use restraint in respect of the degree of travel. I do not believe the committee would travel for the sake of travel but rather for the sake of consultation with the people of Canada.

I must say I found the attitude of the hon. member for Wellington to be that of a penny-pincher. If this committee does not do a job any money spent on it will be wasted. The committee may try very hard and not achieve anything. This is a possibility. But as long as there is a real possibility that through the process of consultation this committee may arrive at conclusions that are valuable in respect of the future of this country and the remaking of our Constitution, then I suggest the expenses which are being discussed are picayune and trifling in relation to the benefits which could result from the functioning of the committee.

With regard to the suggestion that the committee should confine its travel to the capitals, may I say I happen to represent an area which is the capital of the largest province but I want to say that Toronto is not Ontario.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brewin: I wish to say that if the committee should just visit Toronto and listen to the organizations represented there the members of the committee would not hear the full viewpoint of the people of Ontario. I believe Toronto is a very important place to visit and I presume the committee will go there and hear some very valuable briefs. I think, however, the committee should visit northern Ontario and spend some time in Ottawa. I believe there are various parts of the province I represent which ought to be heard from.

I find, Mr. Speaker, that it is close to one o'clock and I shall conclude by saying I hope this House will not place limitations on the motion before the House but will pass it and encourage the committee to do the important job that is being entrusted to it.

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Very briefly, Mr. Speaker, may I say that I found the arguments of the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin) somewhat superfluous in that no one has contested the purpose of the committee. The fundamental point is the control of