

Supply—Mines and Technical Surveys

was desired, in an area isolated but easily accessible. I am sure I speak fairly for the people of the Okanagan area when I say they would welcome the establishment of such a telescope there. I hope the minister will give us some information in this regard before his estimates are passed.

Mr. Benidickson: Mr. Chairman, I do not think I have received more correspondence from members of this house about any subject within my purview than I have about the construction and location of this large optical telescope of advanced design which, when constructed, will put Canada in a very up to date position in comparison with other countries of the world. We in this department feel that the establishment of such a telescope would be an appropriate project to honour the centennial of our confederation. There are so many members of parliament from that area where the telescope will probably be located, according to advice from my officials, who have communicated with me, that in my remarks I may overlook some of their names and suggestions. However, I should like to point out that certainly the last speaker, the hon. member for Okanagan Boundary, has discussed with me the desirability of his area as a location, as have the hon. members for Kamloops, Kootenay East, Okanagan-Revelstoke and others. I can assure them all that our plans have not advanced beyond our thinking that nothing more wonderful could be done by our department to celebrate the centennial than the construction of this telescope. The final proposition has not gone to treasury board, let alone to the cabinet, and I can assure hon. members that this is such an important technical project it would probably necessitate the expenditure of something between \$9 million and \$10 million, and once constructed would be one of the two or three of the greatest existing in the world today. I can assure hon. members of this committee, particularly the seven, eight or ten who have indicated their interest in a location for this telescope, that if I am the minister at the time the site is chosen, it will be chosen on a strictly technical basis as the best possible location, so that Canada can move forward and maintain its longtime position in this scientific field.

Mr. Pugh: Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to hear the minister say that the final decision as to the location will be made on a technical basis, and I am sure that regardless of where this telescope is located in British Columbia, no one in the interior will point a finger at

the government and suggest favouritism, because they are aware of the great number of exceptionally well qualified men in his department.

I do not think the telescope would ever be put in an improper place, and probably this would be the best place in the end. I was pleased with the minister's statement that this would be a rather wonderful centennial project. Of course it would. Compared with all the ideas for smaller projects that have been put forward, I feel it is of such importance and is such a magnificent venture that it should be brought to fulfilment. I hope the minister will press his colleagues strongly in this regard because every dollar spent on a project of this type will mean a return in human interest and keeping our country abreast of the times in this field. I do not think any other project can compare.

Mr. Benidickson: Mr. Chairman, I can assure the hon. member that this project has really touched my interest very much since it was presented by the research people of the department. I think a large optical telescope would be something that would make Canada pre-eminent in this field for quite a long time after our centennial in 1967. But I would point out to all members that some of the technical features are elevation, access roads, community settlement and a requirement for a dry and relatively clear climate in an area which has a record of lack of turbulence of any kind in the atmosphere. The scientists are considering these matters. To those who have spoken to me about this project in the knowledge that it would be a unique asset to their particular regions I have pointed out these factors. We have a general idea that the proper place is somewhere in western Alberta or British Columbia, but until we get an indication that this particularly large expenditure will be approved by the government no commitment can be made. However, I have assured everybody who has written me that our technical people certainly will visit each and every area that has been suggested.

Mr. MacEwan: Mr. Chairman, I have a few brief remarks to make on these estimates. I travelled to Sudbury during the past year in a party of 30 members of the House of Commons. For the record may I say that the trip was made at no cost to the taxpayers of Canada. It was organized by the amiable member for Sudbury. The Minister of Mines and Technical Surveys and the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources accompanied us. As a result of the camaraderie