

Housing

need them in this country, people in the moderate and low income groups. There has been no subsequent action of any kind until the task force was hurriedly set up and travelled across Canada.

I am beginning to understand fully why the Minister of Transport decided to head the task force. I know of no other commission or committee of this type which has ever been headed by a minister. In my view it was a very strange thing to do, but I think I know why the minister did it. When a government does not like the recommendations in a commission report, frequently it pigeonholes it. I rather suspect that if an independent commission had gone across this country and the government had not liked the recommendations of that commission, that is what it would have done. So, the Minister of Transport decided not to run that risk and he headed the task force himself. Then, he hoped that the government would like the recommendations of the task force. However, the government was not even prepared to accept the recommendations of this task force headed by a cabinet minister. The resignation of the minister in charge of housing, in my view, marks the complete and total failure of the government to deal in any way with housing in this country.

The thing that most appalled me in the Prime Minister's speech this afternoon was the total lack of consideration which he displayed for people with moderate and low incomes. Even worse than that was the total lack of any knowledge of how people, apart from those in the upper income levels, have to live in Canada. As he spoke I could not help thinking of the time when Marie Antoinette, prior to the French revolution, was told that the people had no bread to eat. She replied, cheerfully and logically, "Let them eat cake". Today, the Prime Minister, when told that these people had no homes in which to live, said, equally cheerfully and gaily in effect, "Let them go to Bugabook, or the West Indies, or some place else. There is no housing crisis in Canada".

● (8:10 p.m.)

As a matter of fact, we are reminded of an incident which took place not many weeks ago when the Prime Minister, in an exercise of participatory democracy, headed down to la Petite Bourgogne, a housing project in Montreal. He was met by a group of tenants who noisily demanded housing, and the Prime Minister had absolutely nothing to say to them. He left, and participatory democracy

[Mrs. MacInnis.]

was left behind. He had no housing policy to give them. He did not even know that for these people there was a housing need. This is what we should be worrying about in Canada. The Prime Minister is worrying about the constitution and using it, as prime ministers have done over the years, as an excuse for doing nothing. This is nothing new on his part. For a long time the constitution has served as a shield for inaction with regard to pressing problems at the federal level. Instead of spending his time worrying about the constitution and using it as an excuse for inaction, the Prime Minister should start worrying about the people of this country, particularly the wellbeing of those who are in the low income brackets and are unable to look after themselves.

Consider the Hellyer Report for a moment. It says bravely that every Canadian should be entitled to clean, warm shelter as a basic human right. Yet the government knows, or should know, that private enterprise cannot possibly meet the housing needs of the great proportion of the two-thirds of Canadian families whose annual income is below \$7,500 a year. The government is also aware that its own agency, the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, has provided in the past largely for the needs of the income group covering the upper 15 per cent in this country, though it is supported by all the taxpayers of Canada. The government knows that more than a million Canadian families have incomes of less than \$5,500. It has been told by every housing expert in the country that public housing oriented to the needs of low-income groups is the only way in which people with low incomes can hope to have decent housing.

Despite this, the task force made a recommendation to put public housing in a deep-freeze until its less desirable features could be removed. Even so, the government was not willing to accept the report. Mr. Speaker, I come from Vancouver where there are two big urban renewal projects for which the city has been preparing. The architects and others have been working on them for two years.

Mr. Francis: May I ask the hon. lady a question?

Mrs. MacInnis: I do not want a question right now. Ask me at the end.

Over and over again, the green light has been sought from this government in connection with these projects so that work could go ahead to rehouse people who so badly need modern, decent housing. These efforts have