

*Suggested Lack of Urban Policy*

governmental leadership toward finding solutions. The Minister without Portfolio (Mr. Andras) in charge of housing is here this afternoon. I wondered who was going to speak for the government with regard to urban affairs because we do not have a minister involved in the development of our urban constituencies. Possibly this is also the function of the Minister without Portfolio in charge of housing. Since he is here this afternoon, I suppose he will participate in this debate, but not as the head of an administrative body involved in urban development. I will wait to see in what capacity he speaks.

Urban dwellers sense that, despite growing affluence, the quality of their lives is deteriorating. Many feel hopelessly stranded outside the mainstream of Canadian life. They are becoming angry and frustrated. They are becoming less patient. And why not when one considers the conditions which confront them; inadequate urban housing, dirty and polluted beaches, sprawling freeways and expressways which congest traffic, too many slums, too few parks and lack of privacy yet personal isolation. Here is the rub. These urban dwellers are becoming aggravated as a result of the complacency and apathy of this government.

It is little wonder that on December 10, 1969, the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, which was created by President Johnson, strikingly pointed out in its final report:

Some ordinary citizens feel they can do nothing to influence the direction and destiny of their nation. But more and more Americans are proving this to be a myth. A growing number of our citizens have found that they need not stand idle while our cities rot, people live in fear, householders build individual fortresses and human and financial resources flow to less urgent endeavours. A new generation of Americans is emerging with the energy and the talent and determination to fulfil the promise of the nation. As it ever was the young—idealistic but earnest, inexperienced but dedicated—are the spearheads of the drive towards change and increasing numbers of adult Americans are joining their ranks.

In Canada also a new generation of Canadians is emerging with the energy, talent and determination to fulfil the promise of the nation. A national study of 19 major cities, released in March of this year, has revealed the existence of 215 citizens' groups, primarily comprising citizens with low incomes with almost no previous experience or involvement in committees or organizations. Politicians at all levels are becoming more aware of the importance, effectiveness and impact of such groups. To their embarrassment, they note

[Mr. Alexander.]

these groups are demonstrating leadership in finding solutions to urban problems. In short, the required motivation is coming from the grass roots as a result of federal, provincial and municipal governmental buck-passing, aggravated by the so-called constitutional hang-up about which the man on the street knows little and cares less.

Notwithstanding the federal government's reluctance to be involved in urban affairs in a direct manner, it is interesting to note that the Minister without Portfolio in charge of housing has once again made the government's presence felt when he indicated in his statement on public housing:

Duly constituted public housing tenant associations will be assisted with grants. As these groups develop, it is apparent that, for the most part, they are reasonable, articulate and informed. This kind of self help activity deserves to be encouraged.

As a result of that move, it is now apparent that the federal government is listening to the official opposition when it states that there is no visible shield keeping the federal government out of the cities. It is very much involved in charting the direction in which our cities are going.

I wish to give some illustrations of this involvement. The hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby (Mr. Broadbent) indicated, and I have said this 100 times since I was elected, that much of the activity within our cities, including many of the vital determinants of urban growth, fall within the legitimate sphere of federal power. There is a long-standing tradition of federal involvement in such areas as housing, urban renewal, public housing, assistance for sewage systems, air and rail transit, health and welfare grants, and programs which influence industrial locations and labour supply, pollution and a vast array of public works. I could go on and on. What do we hear? We hear about constitutional hang-ups. Ottawa must begin coordinating its activities with those of the other levels of government, otherwise it might do more harm than good. Federal and municipal programmes are fragmented and their value is often lost or dissipated through lack of cooperation, buck-passing and sheer ignorance of what other levels of government are doing. The government now believes it is necessary to recognize the value of tenants associations. Surely, it is time to realize that the growth and the demands of cities to the extent obvious today were never envisaged in 1867?