

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. Is the hon. member rising on a point of order?

Mr. Stackhouse: Yes, Mr. Speaker. The minister has been very concerned about rebutting a point which actually I did not make. I was interested to hear his representation in respect of this point to which I did not refer. He is correct in saying it was part of a speech I circulated, and I know he read a copy of it; but I did not make it in this debate. I stand by the representations and take seriously what he said about them, but it was not part of this debate. In respect of the remarks which I did circulate and which the minister has read, I suggest he should acknowledge that in those remarks I said that the money that would be spent on expropriation would return to the public purse, going from one agency to another.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. The hon. member is becoming involved in debate. He can correct a statement made, but he should not go into the detail of the document to which he refers.

Mr. Basford: Mr. Speaker, I draw the point simply to show we have considered, and do consider, all possible legal means in respect of Rochdale College by which the government can obtain vacant possession, as the lawyers would say. We are proceeding in a way in which we can do that pursuant to the law and as quickly as possible. We have examined it and are ready to examine all other suggestions concerning how that could be done more quickly. However, we are proceeding in accordance with the law as fast as we can. I very much resent implications from the opposition that somehow we are not doing that.

We live in a society which believes in the rule of law, and that is as binding on the minister and on Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation as it is on anyone else in this society. We can only foreclose and gain vacant possession in accordance with the rule of law. That we are doing. The conditions at Rochdale College are intolerable and, to me, inexplicable. Vacant possession of the building should be granted as soon as the law allows. I hope that will be the result of our legal proceedings.

Mr. Ian Arrol (York East): Mr. Speaker, one of the most popular statements that Charles Dickens had one of his characters make, a statement which has echoed down through the years since it was made as a response to the slow way in which the law may work in aid of justice, was "the law is a ass". This might be a response to statements such as "all that can be done is being done", "the situation is complex" and, as the minister just said, "the government is taking every legal means to obtain possession of Rochdale College" and also "foreclosure is not a simple matter". We also know that in the case of a clever lawyer who has a client who may be guilty of no matter what—absconding with funds, or committing murder—there may be a time when that lawyer would find a way in the interest of his client.

● (1750)

In the case of Rochdale College, the crime is not one committed by the public but against the public, and surely a way can be found to obtain redress for the innocent victim, in this case the people of Toronto. In response to

Rochdale College

the possible question, "What would you have us do; break the law to enforce the will of the people?" the answer must surely be that the government is not now serving the people of Toronto well until some way is found of serving the general will. "Close Rochdale" is the call of the people of Toronto.

It is with a great degree of satisfaction that we recognize that the letter which the minister wrote on March 8 resulted in the report in the *Globe and Mail* of March 16 headed "Receiver will attempt eviction of Rochdale". But if this fails, the government should not say, "We have tried everything possible and are not able to close down Rochdale," not until the federal government takes the initiative of saying, "This problem is big; this problem must be solved; this problem may be larger than the powers of the federal government to cure it." I suggest, then, the federal government should meet the municipal and the provincial authorities and should not say, "It was your fault," or, "In the year such and such you said it was O.K."

Let us all admit, municipally, provincially and federally, that we now have a situation which must be cured, and where there is a will there must be found a way. It could involve the co-operation of the police department, the health department, the attorney general of the province, the Minister of Justice of Canada—but whatever is needed to close this mansion of ill-repute must be done before the people of Toronto feel and fear that the government cannot act on their behalf. The federal government cannot solve our national problems, we cannot solve all world problems; yet when in our midst there is a cancer, and when in our midst there are people who want action and when the federal government has the fundamental responsibility, let us act to say jointly to the municipality and to the province, "Let us find some way to close Rochdale".

Mr. Barnett J. Danson (York North): Mr. Speaker, I see that other members from Toronto ridings wish to say something, so I shall try to be brief. I think this is a matter which concerns all of us who represent Toronto ridings and come from the Toronto region. I believe it is a silly argument to compare this matter with other legislative priorities. I do not think we gain any marks by comparing it with the World Football League.

This reminds me of a letter which I received from a friend and constituent today about the World Football League. He said that we have our priorities all wrong. I replied that it was him who had his priorities all wrong. He did not write to me about unemployment insurance, about capital punishment, about old age pensions or about veterans' allowances. I cannot buy those sorts of arguments any more than I can the argument that this is a great national issue and that the law should be pushed aside. It is a matter of intense concern to those responsible to the people of Toronto, but you do not push aside laws, which hon. members opposite have helped us to write, to cure situations such as this.

The most important interjection in the debate today was that of the minister when he quoted from the letter he sent to Mr. Biddell, the receiver. He wrote:

To me it is intolerable and inexplicable that the present conditions in Rochdale should be permitted to continue throughout this further period of lengthy legal proceedings.