

Environmental Pollution

development in 1967 by the Prime Minister of that day. Right Hon. Lester B. Pearson said this:

The organization, structure and amenities of our cities already have far-reaching implications affecting the opportunity of Canadians to enjoy a good life.

The need to improve access for the individual and the family to this opportunity in our urban environment has become one of the most urgent challenges confronting every level of government in this country.

The broad facts and forecasts about urban growth are well known to all of us.

Almost three-quarters of our population now live in cities and towns.

By 1980 nearly two-thirds of all Canadians will live in 29 major urban communities; one-third will live in Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver.

At least 500,000 acres of new land, including much of our best farm land, will be needed to accommodate the physical expansion of these 29 urban centres by 1980; three or four times that much if we don't make more efficient use of land in the future.

This, briefly, is a forecast of what is to happen with regard to urbanization in Canada during the present decade. I do not believe it is necessary for Canadians to sit by and allow these things to take place in an unplanned and unorganized fashion. After all, cities were invented thousands of years ago because of the conditions of those days. They obviously offered an advantage as far as communication was concerned when communication was by word of mouth or writing only. Transportation was by muscle power only. So a city in those days had an advantage as compared with dispersed settlements. Then there was the matter of defence—one could be relatively safe inside the walls of a city in those days.

All these considerations are now on the debit side of the ledger. Large cities complicate the process of transportation. Today, instantaneous communication can be established with any area, no matter how remote it might be. I had the experience of sitting in my own living-room and watching a man set foot on the moon, and I live in a relatively remote part of Canada—indeed, it is so remote that 50 years ago it took a whole day before the majority of the local inhabitants were informed that the first world war had ended. This illustrates the dramatic change which has come about in communications during a relatively short time.

Urbanization on the scale presently contemplated ignores the fact that man is part of the balance of nature. Very high concentrations of human beings give off pollutants, and in a modern civilization the amount of pollutants given off is larger per capita than it used to be. The amount of pollutants given off is so high and in such concentration that it cannot be assimilated or purified by the processes of nature. Water, soil and air pollution result, to say nothing of pollution by noise. Many of our unplanned, rapidly growing cities are, if you will pardon the malodorous pun, committing "sewericide."

I believe there is an optimum size for cities. I do not know what it is, but I have the notion that many of our larger Canadian cities have probably passed that size already. For a city to boast that it is the most rapidly growing unplanned community in the world is like some-

one saying he has the fastest growing cancer in town. It is nothing to be proud of, in my judgment. The time has come when we should be astute enough to recognize that size is not a measure of quality, that because a thing is big it does not necessarily follow that it is better. The dinosaurs found that out, and they are now extinct.

Some of our cities are already collapsing under their own weight, from an economic and administrative point of view. The cost of establishing such necessary facilities as schools is now so high as to be almost unbearable, with the result that the provinces have to subsidize the cities and the federal government has, in turn, to subsidize the provinces. People living in smaller communities and in rural areas are in fact subsidizing those who live in the larger urban areas.

A great deal of work needs to be done to establish not only the optimum size of urban communities but also the best environment for people to live in. It does not follow that the best environment for people is the most comfortable one. If this were so, one would have to conclude that animals in a zoo were the happiest: after all, they have the equivalent of three square meals a day and all sorts of security. But anyone who knows anything about zoology realizes that animals are best in their natural environment. Environment does, of course, affect human beings as well, and we may be totally unaware of some of these effects.

• (4:10 p.m.)

I believe we are not fully aware of all the effects of overcrowding and stress have on human beings, either from a psychological or from a physiological point of view. There is statistical evidence, in growing amounts, which would seem to indicate there is an effect. For example, the impact of crime seems to be highest in urban centres. Drug use seems to be highest in urban centres. We seem to have the highest rate of emotional instability in urban centres, especially where they contain slums and poor environments; and we have the reasoned phenomenon of riots, protests and urban guerrillas. Indeed, it could be argued that civilizations of the past collapsed after they became urbanized to an extreme extent.

What has to be done about this is an important question. Cities are the creatures of the provinces, but if we become a highly urbanized country this will be a federal problem, as it is now. There is divided jurisdiction and, of course, this complicates the matter. I believe that urgent, joint action is required in this matter. I recognize at once that at the federal-provincial conference on housing and urban development in December 1967, the Prime Minister of that day made the following suggestion:

Before we can make any real progress toward an improvement in our urban environment, we must first improve the planning of that environment.

The need for such improved planning has already been widely recognized.

To help meet this need, I would like to propose the establishment, jointly by the federal and provincial governments of a council on housing and urban development whose functions, generally, would be to gather and publish comprehensive, objective, and regular assessments of housing and urban development

[Mr. MacLean.]