

Alleged Failure to Cope With Urban Growth

doing something about urban redevelopment but the criminality of having frozen those programs, and having raised the freeze on only 12, leaving 148 requests—I think that was the number he gave—waiting for his attention, let alone his action. It is not sufficient for him to boast that he is putting extra money into housing programs. There is the fact that over the years we have dealt so inadequately with housing problems altogether.

Above all, the minister has to explain to the people of Canada what kind of arid, legalistic mind could have thought up the idea that we cannot have a minister of housing and urban affairs but we can have a Minister without Portfolio in charge of housing. What kind of arid, legalistic mind could satisfy itself with that kind of interpretation of the constitution, with the result that instead of leaving a department of housing and urban affairs, instead of having adequate staff to deal with the things that I am sure the minister is anxious to deal with, he is hemmed in through lack of adequate staff, not to mention the fact that he takes a cut in his salary, undeservedly, Mr. Speaker? However, I am not offering to negotiate that for him. He ought to do that himself. He ought to refuse to be treated this way. That is his business, not mine. He does not have the department he requires in order to deal with the problems with which I am sure he would like to deal.

The minister has to explain what kind of arid, legalistic mind can refuse to set up a national council for urban affairs, as requested by the Economic Council of Canada, to deal precisely with the kind of problems that the minister has outlined.

The minister quite rightly said, "We in the federal government cannot deal with the size of the cities, the bylaws regarding land use, the problems of where to go, in what direction, and so on. These are provincial-municipal matters that the federal government cannot do anything about by itself." But what the Economic Council indicated, what we suggested a year ago, and what has been suggested many times from this side of the house is that the federal government take the initiative to call the provinces together, and the major municipal regions of Canada, to discuss some of these problems, and not merely to discuss them but to make some kind of plan. But for that is necessary a ministry or department of housing and urban affairs.

[Mr. Lewis.]

They should also discuss the establishment of a national council of urban affairs, on which would be represented not only the federal and provincial governments but also the major municipal regions of Canada, as well as organizations such as the Federation of Mayors and Municipalities. It is for the absence of any of these agencies, and it is for its refusal to accept any responsibility for leadership in all of these areas that we condemn the government.

We do not condemn the government for not performing miracles or solving the problems overnight. We know the problems are difficult and will take time to solve. We do not condemn it for not passing municipal bylaws; we know it has no authority to do so. But we do condemn it for its refusal to recognize that its role is not and must not be merely the role of the largest treasury in Canada, making money available for housing or urban renewal, for its refusal to recognize that the role of the central government of Canada must be a deliberate, determined and conscious attempt to find solutions for the urban problems facing Canadians from coast to coast. I say it is a good thing that the federal government—

Mr. Andras: Would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Lewis: Sure.

Mr. Andras: This is purely for contribution to the debate and for clarification. Is the hon. member aware that in December, 1967, and I think subsequently in the spring of 1968 at the federal-provincial housing conference the government did in fact suggest the establishment of a national council almost identical to that referred to by the hon. member, and found a less than enthusiastic response from the provincial governments? Further, I would like the advice of the hon. member as to what action he would take in such a case. Would he ignore the stated objections of the provincial ministers who attended that conference?

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, I am not questioning the minister's veracity but all I can say in answer to him is that my memory, from watching the conference and reading about it, does not gibe with what he has said. It is my impression that the proposal for a national urban council was not made with very much heat or enthusiasm, that it received some *pro forma* brief discussion and then the matter was let go. I think my memory is right, and if that is what happened then I am not the least bit surprised that the provincial governments