

Alleged Failure to Cope With Urban Growth

prevent the erosion of our cities, to prevent the type of development we are witnessing at the present time in the United States of America? What a confrontation that is. It is not only black versus white; the whole society is in an uproar.

• (4:00 p.m.)

What is needed is a federal model of the ideal city. What is needed is a well thought-out conception of what Canadian urban life should be like during the 1970's and 1980's. Only when the federal government has developed a carefully articulated model of city life, of what the total environment of the majority of citizens might be, can the present contradictory and self-defeating bumbblings of the various departments be replaced by a co-ordinated, planned federal effort in Canadian cities.

Only if such a conception is developed will the other levels of government know what the federal government is likely to do that affects them. Only then will they be able to develop over-all plans tied directly to federal transportation plans, for example. Only then will they be able to plan total city development without the constant fear that now exists of the whole appercart being upset by sudden and sporadic federal intervention. Only in this way will we be able to eliminate squabbles and hassles such as those surrounding the selection of the site for the new Montreal airport. Only in this way will residents of the golden horseshoe of Oshawa, Toronto, Burlington and Hamilton be able to obtain an effective, co-ordinated transportation system involving rapid surface transit, regional jetports, local urban city airports, and so on.

Let me emphasize once again, Mr. Speaker, that the people of our provinces and cities have a right to know—indeed they have an absolute need to know—exactly what the federal government has in mind for our cities of the future and what the quality of life is expected to be, if we are to have effective government and political participation at local and provincial levels. We still have a chance in Canada. I am not pessimistic in this regard; in fact, I am optimistic because we have a very potent opposition. That is the only reason I am optimistic. We have a chance which is denied to many unfortunate souls locked into many American cities. We have a chance to save our cities. We are in a battle against time. But most of all, we in this house are in a battle against massive federal indifference to the fate of our cities.

[Mr. Alexander.]

Here I am making a major speech on the problems of urban expansion and I am speaking to only four members on the government side of the house. Can you beat that, Mr. Speaker? This is the type of participatory democracy we are going to have.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member but his time has expired.

Some hon. Members: Carry on.

Mr. Alexander: I shall be only about 30 seconds more, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to allow the hon. member to continue?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Alexander: In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I say that the price of failure in these battles is disaster. I refer to the battles we face in connection with the problems that exist in our urban centres. If the federal government refuses to take up the challenge of the cities, it and millions of us along with it will suffer the fate of all those who remain in clouds of smoke, whether they be constitutional or otherwise. All will suffer a fatal cancer, in this instance a terminal case of cancer of the cities.

Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister without Portfolio): Mr. Speaker, the federal government has a significant and pervasive stake in the future of the urban environment of Canada. There is no doubt about that. Its decisions and activities touch communities all across this country. Its record shows it is aware of the responsibilities inherent in that fact. The role of the government has been an effective one, one that has been largely accepted by provincial, and municipal governments and authorities throughout Canada. This effectiveness and acceptability arise in large part out of the influence of the National Housing Act.

The National Housing Act has financed or guaranteed the financing of a substantial portion of new residential construction. The size of this contribution, to get the facts on the record, can be seen in the fact that half of Canada's existing stock of 5.4 million dwellings has been built since world war II. Forty per cent of these, many of them in urban centres, were aided under one or another of the provisions of the National Housing Act. That act has influenced not only the number