

*The Address—Mr. A. Stewart*

I would be the last to say that the government is eating its own words; but at least it would seem that it is starting to nibble at them. And I should hope that there would be some further enlightenment upon this matter of subsidies when legislation is brought before the house.

A year after that was said the then Secretary of State for External Affairs, who is now Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent), speaking at a meeting at McMaster university on November 4, 1947, said this:

I am against subsidized housing because it would be available to a few privileged ones.

There I say the right hon. gentleman showed a complete lack of appreciation of the housing problem, and how it can be handled in this country. Then he went on to say—and with a horrible reflection upon some of his colleagues—

It would be risking temptation to put into the hands of politicians a few thousand houses which could be given to certain persons. It would be a temptation to buy votes.

As I say, the right hon. gentleman knows his colleagues much better than I do; but I am certain of this, that with any adequate housing scheme in this country certainly members of parliament would not have the responsibility of allotting a few thousand houses to individuals here and there. If the job is to be done properly it must be done at the municipal level, and all that parliament can do will be to authorize funds and supervise expenditures.

The report of the speech of the then Secretary of State for External Affairs goes on to say:

He emphasized he felt it unwise to build and provide housing units at less than cost, repeating, "I'm against subsidized housing."

Apparently he has changed his mind—and the change, indeed, is a very welcome one. But there is another area in which there has been no change. At page 3688 of *Hansard* for July 22, 1946, the then Minister of Reconstruction and Supply said:

Slum clearance, however, is considered to be inopportune at the present time. The requirement for shelter is so great that the government cannot afford to permit the destruction of livable shelter of any kind. Slum clearance will come later when the pressing need for the occupation of every housing unit is lessened.

How late is "later"? When is a "pressing need" pressing? In my constituency I have seen people living in chicken coops, garages, basements, shacks, garrets and shanties. When is "later"? I say we are entitled to know that.

Yet the present Minister of Reconstruction and Supply takes roughly the same attitude by stating that the time is not opportune to take the people out of the slums; the time is

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not opportune to give the people that dignity about which the Liberal party spoke so glibly during the campaign. One of the planks in their platform—an admirable one indeed—was their belief in the dignity of man. There is no dignity in man when you compel him to live in a slum. There can be no dignity when you compel people to live in poverty. By the inaction of this government thousands of people must continue to live under these conditions. Does the government think that people like to live in slums? Does the government think that people prefer squalor, that they want to bring their children up under these wretched conditions rather than in decent homes? If so, it had better change its mind because such is not the case.

Yet the minister tells us that in 1949 although 100,000 new houses would be built in this country we would be barely keeping up with current needs and would be making no inroads into the backlog. In other words, the minister has condemned these people to live in slums and to continue to live in slums knowing that there is no method by which they can get out of them. If that is the policy of the government then it is time it was changed. The government has an unprecedented mandate to do the job; it has the power to do the job and there can be no excuse for not doing it.

I should like to give the minister a few facts about the situation in my own constituency of Winnipeg North. I am sure that the condition which prevails there is not unique to that city but can be duplicated in every city in this country. In one area, Point Douglas, 44 per cent of the houses have more than one person per room. When you have that situation you have overcrowding and, when you have overcrowding, if you have not a slum already you are starting to build one. But what is worse is the fact that in these overcrowded slum areas there is an obvious and serious increase in juvenile delinquency. As yet the only answer our society has for juvenile delinquency is to punish the delinquents. Those who should be punished are those who are responsible for creating the slum conditions which lead to juvenile delinquency. The answer is not to send these youngsters to prison; the answer is not to punish them; the answer is the awakening of the conscience of the community to the point where its responsibility is realized. We in this parliament of Canada are the voice of the communities of Canada and we cannot ignore our responsibilities.

Slum areas all across Canada are creating social casualties. Every time there is a social casualty who cannot be rehabilitated the responsibility must be laid squarely on the doorstep of this parliament, and especially of