

Suggested Lack of Urban Policy

has been stated, incorrectly, that the government has invoked the constitution in an effort to escape its share of responsibility for the development and re-creation of our urban areas.

The resolution before us is unfair. Implicit in its intemperate wording is an accusation of disinterest and indecision directed toward the government and the minister. They can be acquitted on both counts for they are now grappling with a concept which besets the entire world, the new concept of the city, once again as an entity and as the projection of a guiding authority; the city, less a playing field for the exercise of economic talent and, more, a household with concern for the well-being of all its members. In the process of determining what the concept of Canada's urban areas must be, we must decide how our resources are to be distributed, how much money is to be allocated to competing needs, how the threats to mankind's physical and mental well-being are to be met. I say this because there are psychological conditions among those who live in our cities which are not apparent in those who live in the rural areas.

Mr. Alexander: Environmental malaise.

Mr. Perrault: I am confident that the coming months will see some dramatic and exciting chapters in urban policy unfolded in this House—

An hon. Member: Oh boy!

Mr. Perrault:—chapters which I suggest will make the terms of this resolution even more redundant, unfair and baseless than they appear to those who are called upon to debate them at this time.

Mr. G. H. Aiken (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Mr. Speaker, I want to express a few ideas concerning urban policy and the related question of environment. We have heard a good deal of debate in the last few weeks on the subject of urban affairs and pollution. Our discussions appear to cover the same ground many times. Hon. members make proposals and the government responds in one way or another, often in a negative way but sometimes by proposing legislation which at least recognizes the need for an environmental program.

I ask myself continually whether we are making any progress by debating subjects which have been discussed so many times before. Are we getting anywhere? Are the ideas which are being presented finding

[Mr. Perrault.]

acceptance? Are they getting to the public, and is public pressure resulting in legislation or administrative action? I am afraid we are wasting our time in a considerable area of effort. It seems to me that some protest groups are displaying nothing but folly when they march around proposing changes in the law but never follow up their proposals by examining what is actually being done in Parliament.

There are many places outside Parliament where these subjects have been discussed time and time again. But never do these people know what happens here; never do they know what representations have been made during the debates, what points of view we put forward and whether or not their ideas are gaining acceptance. It would seem that not many of the groups which are so concerned about our environment realize that it is in Parliament that decisions are made at the federal level. They are not made on street corners, in meeting-halls or at conferences. They are made nowhere but here.

In every case the action has to begin outside Parliament, of course, and I believe that a good start has been made in recent months by many groups which are concerned about the environment, about the conditions in which we live in the cities and about pollution generally. But these groups never seem to follow up their efforts by seeking to learn what happens, what action has been decided upon. Any fermentation which takes place on the streets must find its expression here, otherwise time has been wasted. Enthusiastic support of pollution control ideas, the ability to stir up the people, to demand new lines of government action are all extremely important. In the end, though, all that really matters is whether or not laws are passed.

• (8:40 p.m.)

I intend to be somewhat critical of the press, though not of the press gallery because I think it covers pretty broadly and well the proceedings of Parliament. When individual members of the press gallery do not get their stories, Canadian Press generally covers the subject. However, I am concerned that the newspapers do not print the important parts of our parliamentary debates and procedures. Time and again I have seen ideas expressed and bills presented and passed with hardly any mention in the press, presumably because they do not seem to be exciting enough. Sometimes bills making fundamental changes go through this House with never a mention.