

*Business of Supply*

the general Canadian concept of social welfare and security. I say this is rubbish. It is perfectly true that Canadian governments have lagged miserably in the development of public housing. Federal funds have provided for only 38,000 units of public housing. In a population of 20 million which is suffering from an acute housing crisis, this is a deplorable record and represents a mere drop in the bucket. Certainly, we have not had too much public housing; indeed we have had too little. No other industrial nation, including the United States, the home of free enterprise, has attempted to deal with its housing problems without making a massive effort in the field of public housing. The same is true in Canada; without a massive effort the problem will not be solved.

This task force does no service to Canada and to housing as a whole when it denigrates the idea of public housing. Who benefits from public housing with rents that are adjusted to ability to pay? In metro Toronto alone 35 per cent of those who benefit are mothers on small incomes with a family who are alone and have nobody else at all to support their family. If there were no public housing, to whom would these mothers with small families turn for shelter for their families?

There are 14,000 pending applications for public housing with the Ontario Housing Corporation in metropolitan Toronto alone. This means that some 30,000 people at least are on the list waiting for housing. Hundreds of thousands of others who require public housing do not even apply for it because they know the situation.

I know something of this desperate need personally. In co-operation with the provincial member I have in my constituency what we call a service centre. We invite people with problems to come to us. There are no more tragic problems about which we hear than those raised by people looking for housing, who are desperately asking for advice as to where they can get housing. These are people with large families, people to whom landlords will not rent premises. They do not know where to go.

I want to pay tribute to the Ontario Housing Corporation. The minister speaks rather disparagingly of the provincial efforts from time to time. I am no friend of the provincial government, as he knows, but the Ontario Housing Corporation is the only place to

which people can turn in their search for public housing. There is a long waiting list and a points system is in operation. One has to be in the position where one is about to be evicted from one's house before getting enough points to qualify for accommodation.

I wonder why the task force did not discover this? I wonder whether they bothered to inquire from the people who are really in need. Certainly, there is no sign in their report that they did. I should like to inform this house that families are regularly being broken up because of the lack of an adequate supply of public housing—not because there is public housing but because there is an inadequate supply of public housing. These are not problem cases; these people are steady workers of moderate means. I repeat, we need more public housing, not less.

Public housing does, of course, present certain difficulties, but the solution is not to throw out the baby with the bath water and abolish public housing, or even restrict it. It is, as the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants said, necessary to provide proper management, adequate recreational facilities and to give people in public housing some control over their circumstances so that they can develop a community spirit. We have not scratched the surface of the real problem here. The task force rushes in and says that there are psychological problems involved and away with public housing. Although it would like to abolish public housing, the task force thinks that that would be going too far and it just proposes to slow it down.

Public housing should not be considered a refuge for failures and misfits. Tenants should be given every encouragement to have a say in the management of their own residences. We have a lot to learn in this field. In my view, the major problem facing Canadians today is housing. I prophesy that this is going to turn out to be the Achilles heel in the record of this government. The Prime Minister seems to be bedevilled in this field with constitutional doubts.

**The Deputy Chairman:** Order. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but his time has expired.

**Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale):** Mr. Chairman, I wonder if I could have the consent of the committee to report progress and to revert to motions for the purpose of putting a motion