

*Housing*

**Mr. Steven E. Paproski (Edmonton Centre):** Mr. Speaker, the motion before the house is of great importance. We are dealing with more than the resignation of a minister; the question facing us involves basic questions of government policy. When the minister resigned, he gave a press conference and made charges against the government of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) more serious than any made from this side of the house. He has brought into question the whole area of government policy on major matters affecting many millions of Canadians living in urban centres.

The Minister of Transport has placed before parliament and the people, in the most public way possible, a basic disagreement within the cabinet about the government's constitutional position. He has stated that he cannot accept the narrow and inflexible position taken by the Prime Minister, which has the effect of preventing action in the fields of housing, urban renewal, pollution and all the other matters affecting the populations of our great cities.

The minister has brought to light a basic and serious disagreement on policy. To do this, he resigned. That does not settle the question. It does not free the Prime Minister from the onus of placing before the house his views on these matters and reassuring the people of Canada that he has not, in fact, adopted a position which is not consonant with the great problems which we face in these areas. The problems affecting the urban populations of our vast metropolitan complexes such as Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Calgary, Halifax and Ottawa are the most serious, urgent and vital problems which we have before us today.

**An hon. Member:** And Cornerbrook.

**Mr. Paproski:** My hon. friend says, "And Cornerbrook".

**Mr. Alexander:** And Hamilton.

**Mr. Paproski:** And Hamilton. Parliament has voted hundreds of millions of dollars. We have witnessed a number of conferences at the federal-provincial level, and many of us have attended conferences designed to come to grips with these problems. It is a fact that when the government invited the provinces to Ottawa on these questions, shortly after the Prime Minister assumed his high office, the provinces went away empty-handed and disappointed. We know now why this was so. The reason was simply that the government refused to recognize the problems.

[Mr. Harding.]

It is obvious that the Prime Minister suffers from some kind of mental block when it comes to urban problems. The minister in charge of housing, transportation and urban problems is a reasonable man. He has held important and responsible portfolios; he was the architect of the unification of the armed forces; he was the chairman of a housing task force with which he allowed himself, as minister, to be actively identified. There is no question about his sincere appreciation of the problems involved in the urban field.

One can sympathize with and understand his feeling of frustration as month after month went by and nothing was done about the extremely serious problems affecting Canadians living in the big cities. In the face of the inertia and steadfast refusal of the Prime Minister to take the problems seriously, the minister, who is an honourable man, resigned. Because of that resignation we see the problem affecting this country today. That problem is indecision at the highest level; indecision about taxes, indecision about housing, indecision about inflation and indecision about pollution.

What of the old people eking out a miserable existence on \$120 a month, while this government spends \$50 million on a concrete shell in the city of Ottawa, and the Prime Minister disappears to Bugaboo Lodge, as my colleague the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander) said? It was the Prime Minister's indecision which finally became a bugaboo for the Minister of Transport. He was the No. 2 man in the cabinet. There was no room in that cabinet for a No. 2 man there was room only for a No. 1 man. The No. 1 man is the Prime Minister, and don't you forget it.

● (8:00 p.m.)

Well, when the No. 1 man cannot make up his mind, what does the No. 2 man do? He resigns.

I, for one, am ready to give the Minister of Transport credit for a courageous act. We have seen the growth of ghettos transforming formerly attractive cities into sad and debilitated areas. We have seen pollution transforming attractive waterways into open sewers. We cannot go on selling out our heritage for a mess of pottage. The minister knew that. Yet, nowhere in that cabinet could he get any sympathy for his point of view.

The Prime Minister says, "We are spending a lot of money". No one will deny that. What are we getting for it? It is not the number of