

*Environment*

it seeks to accomplish in terms of the human condition, and although I realize that many private members' motions lead to nothing concrete, it is nevertheless important, in my view, that from time to time an opportunity should be provided to discuss matters affecting the human condition.

I am happy to report to the House that this motion does not involve the setting up of a bureaucracy which would take any part of the decision-making process or advisory responsibility out of the hands of the public service. But it does give credence to the proposition that there is a split jurisdiction in environmental matters, among others. It is not intended to be an attack on the work which the federal Department of the Environment is doing, or on the work which any ministry in any provincial government is doing. As I said, it is brought forward so that members of this House can address themselves to a very important subject. This is not to say I would not be delighted if the motion, broadly based as it is, were to receive the approval of the House. But I do not rise in any anticipation that it will.

Mr. Angus MacLean, then member for Malpeque, introducing his motion on October 18, 1974, had this to say as reported in *Hansard* at page 537:

Mr. Speaker, I have no illusions that what I am about to say will cause a sensation . . . however, I feel a strong urge to put forth my views—

Anyone who knows the hon. member will appreciate the sincerity of his feelings on this subject. About the greatest compliment which could be paid to him was paid by the House leader of the New Democratic Party a few moments ago; just before we began this debate he indicated that this was an all-encompassing motion and inquired whether there was anything our former colleague had forgotten. I assured him he had not.

One of the things which concerns all of us today in this country is our preoccupation with bigness, whether it is big government, big organizations or large communities. This has created problems both for those who are directly involved and for others outside big complexes who have seen their populations and opportunities diminish. The sad fact is that today almost three quarters of our population live in cities and towns. This is not necessarily bad in itself, but it is predicted that by 1980 almost two thirds of the Canadian population will live in 29 major communities, almost one third of them in the three cities of Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver. Whereas at one time cities were places where communication was easy, transportation was readily available and services could be supplied in an inexpensive way, this is not the case today. One has only to speak to a city planner or to a transportation expert to be told that cities everywhere, even the national capital area in which we live, are plagued by shortcomings in the services I have mentioned. So we have to consider carefully the direction in which we are moving and try to decide whether or not that direction is appropriate. We must attempt to decide whether or not the fixing of an optimum size for city growth is appropriate and, if so, whether development should be restricted. Are we neglecting the virtues which are to be found in the smaller communities of Canada?

[Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton).]

Industrialists are gregarious. They like to move to places where other industries are already established. Thus, from year to year our problems are compounded and the development underlined in the statistics I have quoted is reinforced.

Many writers have pointed out that the rural areas are beginning to suffer from decay; they are exporting their best people to the cities where jobs are available. Consequently, the agricultural community is increasingly less able to provide commodities upon which other sectors of the economy rely. It is important we should not assess blame. We have simply allowed this to happen.

● (1712)

The problem is compounded by the shortage of agricultural land in the vicinity of great cities. Those who provide the sustenance of life, as far as our weather allows it to be produced, are leaving the farms. We tend to rely on technology to which there is a limit. Plainly, we have to look at where we are going.

The object of this motion is to create an institution outside of the political necessities of government. There are political necessities regardless of what political party one may be talking about. One level of government must discuss in co-operation rather than in opposition with the other the problems that we face.

We have come to regard the trend of centralizing in large cities as so much a part of our national make-up that our heads are down. We really are not looking at what we are doing. We should look at the experience in the United States with some of their cities. I know that none of ours have reached that size. All levels of government in this country must look at this problem while there is time. The purpose of this proposal is to ask the government to consider ways in which a new direction can be found, or at least a new insight into our problems.

With very few exceptions, communities around the rim of the city of Ottawa are growing as residences and ancillary to the city of Ottawa. Rather than growing in terms of themselves, they are becoming dormitories.

Small towns which have amenities which are useful to people who would live there and establish businesses with resultant employment are not growing to any great extent as the movement to urbanization continues. This is important to the kind of lifestyle we want in our country. It is important to the lifestyle of those who by necessity or otherwise must reside in our cities.

I am also concerned about the environment the cities create and the housing problems that are there. Whether it be housing for men and women with young families or housing for senior citizens, in the smaller communities of Ontario on a per capita basis there is a better quality and a greater number of senior citizen residences in the smaller communities than in the cities. There is an atmosphere of concern. The problems are apparent. That is part of the goodness of living in a smaller community. In spite of this, we still develop large cities with large problems. It is to this question my motion directs itself.