

Suggested Lack of Urban Policy

Faced with this kind of problem, I think Canadians should look for alternatives, and in doing so we should proceed with humility and with the acknowledgement that actually the great minds of our time have not grappled with this problem. Very little research has been done. Very little thinking has occurred on this basic question of what should be the shape of Canada in the future. In the short time I have at my disposal there is very little I can say by way of practical suggestion as to what we might do in face of this great problem. First of all, and most obviously, it is something which requires research, study and thinking. There are signs that this kind of basic thinking is indeed taking place in our country. For example, the Canadian Council on Urban and Regional Research has undertaken at least the formulation of the questions which have to be answered. There is a centre for urban and community studies at the University of Toronto.

As the result of a speech I made in this city a few months ago, I found that there are a number of very concerned citizens across Canada interested in this basic problem—architects, town planners and economists. I found there are little groups of people meeting in various parts of the country, without any so-called expert guidance, simply to talk about this problem which challenges the minds of all Canadians. I make the suggestion, Mr. Speaker, that we must reverse a lot of the traditional thinking that has exercised us in the past. We have to decide that it is no longer something to be desired to create the largest city in North America. We have to be prepared not only to create incentives for necessary types of industrial and social development, but I suggest in many cases to create disincentives so that we will not face the continual piling up of population, industry and commerce in the large centres of Canada.

We have to undertake research on the motivation of people and on the motivation of industries. Why is it that new industries, new enterprises always gravitate to the large centres of the country? Is it really the fact that there is so much of an economic and social advantage for them to go there, or is it simply the inertia of past history? What can we do to uplift this country by giving hope to many small towns which in themselves are excellent communities? Why is it necessary to pile population into large centres when throughout many parts of our country we have lovely towns which are well equipped in many ways to accept new people, to provide a

[Mr. Blair.]

foundation for new industry, and moreover to give the people who go to those communities an opportunity to live a decent life?

There are many other things which undoubtedly hon. members have said and could say about this problem. I make the suggestion as forcibly as I can that we will fail in our duty to the people and we will fail in our duty to posterity if we look, as it were, just down the tunnel at all the urgent social problems which now exist and if we do not take advantage of the opportunity we have, as legislators and leaders of opinion, to try to lift the sights of the Canadian people. We must try to give them the vision of a country which need not be one large, solid, urban mass but which with proper planning, proper direction and right thinking can become a happier country for all of us to live in.

• (9:20 p.m.)

Mr. Doug Rowland (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, I could not agree more completely with the concluding remarks of the hon. member who has just finished speaking. I can only say to him that it is exactly the lack of that kind of planning in developing policy that this motion condemns. I should like to draw the attention of the House once again to the wording of the motion before us. It reads as follows:

That this House condemns the government for its failure to establish an urban policy for Canada.

The motion does not say that the government stands condemned for its failure to solve all the problems of the cities. It does not suggest that there are simple solutions to those problems. It does not even suggest that through the intelligent application of the resources available to us, all our urban problems are solvable. Yet that is the straw man which the Liberal members representing urban ridings have set up and set about attacking.

The motion is simply not the puerile, simplistic Utopianism that the Liberals would have the people of Canada believe. It condemns the lack of a policy. It condemns the total absence of the kind of policy to which the hon. member who just spoke referred. It condemns the lack of any well-defined, coherent and rational approach to the problems which have resulted from the social revolution which has gripped Canada; the same social revolution that is shaking the foundations of virtually every nation of the world and most especially of the industrialized na-