

Rochdale College

A third writes:

Every level of government has deplored and condemned this festering blot on the landscape—Cannot some authority evacuate and fumigate this nest and put it to a useful purpose?

Prominent leaders have joined these ordinary citizens in expressing largely the same convictions. Ontario opposition leader Robert Nixon, Alderman George Ben and former executive Alderman Tony O'Donahue are three leading Toronto Liberals who have called for a change. This is not a party issue, it is one which challenges the conscience of every decent citizen.

An even greater challenge, of course, lay in doing something about the situation. Since 1969, when it was first reported that the mortgage on Rochdale College was in arrears, spokesmen for the government have been promising that something would be done. I recognize that since 1971 these spokesmen have been claiming, and with some justification, that they have been trying to get that certain something accomplished. They have, on more than one occasion, been halted by court action in efforts they have been attempting to make. That is one reason for the concern I feel this afternoon. Will the government be stopped again in following its judicial route? Will it run into a roadblock? The strange thing is that Rochdale College has greater survival power than has a cat with nine lives.

In 1970, the then minister in charge of housing, in the midst of the kind of criticism and comment with which we have become familiar with respect to Rochdale, made an announcement in the press that he would very soon be deciding the fate of Rochdale. So many allusions to the fate of Rochdale being decided and so many announcements respecting its pending demise went out from Ottawa that the *Toronto Telegram* actually believed something would happen.

In 1971, that newspaper published an editorial entitled "Farewell Rochdale". Since that occasion, the *Toronto Telegram* has gone, but Rochdale is still here. It is one thing to say that Rochdale is going, but quite another to report it has gone. There have been all kinds of promises, announcements and assurances, but what we would say to the government is this: if you have the willingness and the determination to carry out these threats, we shall be behind you. We want action. We are willing to support you in whatever action it is necessary to take, through legislation or any other means, to accomplish the objective we all desire. But let's have the action rather than the assurances. We have had enough promises, let's have some performance.

Just a few years ago a receivership was appointed on behalf of all creditors involved with Rochdale College. It has recently been said that some control is being gained. For example, Rochdale security guards have been replaced by a private protective agency and we understand why this was necessary. For some time the appointed receiver could not collect the rents. He could not deliver an eviction notice. He had to send such a notice through the mail, so afraid he was of being harassed as he went through the buildings. Now, it is understandable that when there has been so much resistance to normal authority many suspect that the objectives of CMHC, the objectives of the government, may somehow be thwarted again. It is possible, for

[Mr. Stackhouse.]

example, that the appeal being launched on behalf of the College may be upheld, and that the attempt by CMHC to foreclose may fail.

We should be concerned, therefore, by the possibility of such a failure occurring, or, perhaps, by the possibility of the government being talked into some new arrangement with the people who have sponsored Rochdale in the past—and they seem to have gained from it throughout the years. Hence the value of the motion before us. It gives the House the opportunity to say to the government that it must act through legislation or by some other available means. It gives the government the opportunity to gain the support of the House in taking action if it should prove necessary.

The government may say it has no option if its action of foreclosure does not succeed. What we are urging the minister to do, with his colleagues in the government, is to seek through legislation or other available means another route. The minister has from time to time insisted that he has done everything the law permits, and within certain terms of reference I agree with that. But that is not good enough when compared with the efforts made by the government in other circumstances in which it has been determined.

In 1963, for example, the government was challenged by the Seafarers' International Union. As a result of that situation the government passed legislation to put the maritime unions under trusteeship. When that bill was introduced, some members of the House suggested that parliament had no constitutional authority to pass it. But parliament did pass it. Some people claimed that there was no authority given to parliament under the British North America Act to place union property under trusteeship, since property rights were a matter for the provinces. Nevertheless, the authority of the trustees was upheld. So we see, from these proceedings and others, that where there is a will on the part of the government there is always a legislative way. This was true then, and it is true today. It is demonstrated by the government's determination to keep the WFL out of Canada, even if it means passing legislation under the terms of the British North America Act. Somehow or other, the government is willing to tell parliament that action of this kind is necessary to peace, order and good government of Canada. Maybe it is—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): I regret having to interrupt the hon. member but the time allotted to him has expired. Would the House allow him a few more minutes in which to complete his remarks?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Stackhouse: I thank the House for its courtesy and I shall not trespass on its good will. The point I was making was this: if the government feels very strongly about the need to take a certain kind of action it can find the means of doing so. It claims that action in respect of the WFL is necessary for the peace, order and good government of Canada. If it can be taken seriously in this regard, how can one believe statements that it does not have the authority to deal with the situation at Rochdale?

An hon. Member: They are bluffing on the other, too.