

*National Housing Act*

does not believe that housing represents much of a problem for Canadians.

I have a good deal of sympathy for the position taken by the hon. member for York East (Mr. Otto) when he said last week: "I cannot understand for the life of me how we got into a constitutional question with regard to housing." The hon. member's real difficulty lies in understanding the Prime Minister, and I do not blame him for that. One day the Prime Minister says that under the constitution as it stands we are unable to attack problems of housing and pollution on any level of government. Speaking in the House of Commons on February 14 last the Prime Minister, in referring to the challenge of pollution and difficulties in the area of housing said, as reported at page 5524 of *Hansard*:

• (4:10 p.m.)

This challenge of pollution of our rivers and lakes, of our farmlands and forests and of the very air we breathe, cannot be met effectively in our federal state without some constitutional reform or clarification. It is important that we know which level of government is responsible and, if both, in what way they are ready to co-operate through the use of the spending power and other devices to permit these problems to be tackled properly.

I believe this is true of many other problems which are sometimes brought to the attention of this house, problems such as urban renewal of housing and urban transport. These problems cannot be dealt with properly because the present constitution is either silent or vague about the level of government which has the legal competence to tackle them. Until the constitution is brought into the 20th century in some of these respects, governments are to a large degree powerless to solve the problems either by acting alone or in co-operation with other levels of government.

On February 14, therefore, the Prime Minister expressed a viewpoint about certain constitutional difficulties. The former minister of transport believed that the Prime Minister held those views. On the one hand, the Prime Minister said that under our present constitution no level of government, alone or in co-operation with other levels, can do an adequate job with housing and urban problems. On the other hand, on the day the former minister of transport resigned his portfolio the Prime Minister said:

But the history of these facts will demonstrate that we took this position from the start, that most of the fundamental issues in this country could be settled under the present constitution through co-operation between the federal government and the provinces.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, is it possible to take seriously a Prime Minister who says in February that certain problems cannot be resolved until there is a constitutional change

[Mr. Stanfield.]

and who says immediately after a minister resigns that, after all, these problems can be solved under the present constitution through co-operation? I ask the real Prime Minister of this country to stand up. It is difficult for us to know which of these views he holds.

The Prime Minister may have important views affecting our ability to solve certain problems under the existing constitution. Nevertheless I must say emphatically that we cannot wait for constitutional reforms before making a serious attack on housing and other problems. Having read his remarks I have concluded that fundamentally the Prime Minister does not believe the solution of this problem is important. Neither does he believe that the problem of housing is urgent in Canada. As a result the government has dragged its feet for the past year and used constitutional difficulties as an excuse.

When the former deputy prime minister of this country who was in charge of housing resigned, what happened? There was a little flurry of activity which led to no effective organization of planning procedures. There has been no effective move to co-ordinate and develop housing programs and relate those programs to other valid programs dealing with poverty in Canada. Therefore the program the minister has introduced appears to be simply a reaction to his predecessor's resignation.

I say emphatically to my colleagues in the house that it is our duty to keep the heat on the minister and the government. The government not only must move forward with the type of housing program we need but it must also establish machinery that will deal with other programs related to the areas of pollution, poverty or what have you. It must establish effective programs that will deal with housing needs and with other related needs of the people. Unless heat is applied to the minister and the government the fear brought on by the resignation of the former deputy prime minister will quickly evaporate.

Our problems must be attacked effectively. We have suggested that planning ought to be brought under the authority of a department of housing and urban affairs which would co-ordinate research and planning and give leadership in developing policy in this field. Someone may have a better idea than this. The government may have something better in mind. If so, it ought to bring it forward. Certainly, sir, giving limited responsibility to a Minister without Portfolio, earnest though he may be, just will not do. Certainly any