

Business of Supply

out of the report on which, as he said, he believed urgent action was required. So this government apparently thinks the matter of housing is so urgent that when its own minister in charge says he has urgent recommendations we have to wait for more than five weeks to have any sort of report at all on the attitude of the government to any of the recommendations, including the recommendations described by the minister himself as urgent. As I said, it is nearly five weeks later and no statement is forthcoming from the Prime Minister, nor have we heard a statement so far from the Minister of Transport himself.

We are left in complete darkness as to which of the various recommendations the minister considers require urgent action. We are left in ignorance as to the reaction of his colleagues. We can guess the reaction of the Minister of Finance to some of the recommendations, but we have no information as to what action if any the government proposes to take to meet the crisis or to implement the recommendations of this highly-touted report that the minister and his task force produced.

In the absence of any information from the government on this admittedly urgent crisis, the opposition can only comment on the report itself. I suggest that seldom has a commission, a task force or any other fact finding body under any other name or description had such a fanfare, such a beating of drums and such a crashing of cymbals as accompanied this task force report. It is my view that the report contains one or two useful recommendations, for example the recommendation for the creation of a department of housing and urban affairs.

It hardly needed however, an expensive task force to travel across the country to see the need for such a department and for a minister to devote his full time to this urgent subject. Indeed, this proposal has frequently been made in the house. It was made by my former colleague, the then hon. member for Danforth, Mr. Reid Scott, and it was often repeated in the house by my colleague, the hon. member for Broadview. It is a good recommendation and we would like to know what the government proposes to do about it. We also heartily approve the recommendation for a capital gains tax on profits derived through land transactions. It is long overdue. Indeed, it was recommended, as members of this house know, by the Carter Commission as part of a general tax on capital gains. We are all in favour of this and say it should

have been adopted years ago to cut off exorbitant speculative profits made by certain people. The task force urges the removal of the 11 per cent sales tax on building materials. This has been advocated by opposition parties on innumerable occasions as well as by hundreds of organizations and individuals outside the house.

● (5:40 p.m.)

I should like to know how likely the government is to implement this recommendation now that the Minister of Transport supports it. Can we expect anything different? I imagine it is anybody's guess whether the government is likely to do anything about it. I have observed the stern, upright rectitude of the Minister of Finance in opposing any suggestion of this sort and I suspect the plea of the Minister of Transport will fall on deaf ears. Will the worth-while recommendations of the task force remain a dead letter and gather dust like the useful recommendations of so many task forces and commissions in the past?

As to the report as a whole, despite the fullsome publicity surrounding it, the document, in my judgment, is a colossal flop. I am being more polite than the hon. member for Broadview who described it as a colossal fraud. While I do not dissociate myself from him, I would substitute the words "colossal flop" for "colossal fraud", perhaps because of my habit of understatement.

Mr. Benjamin: It is the minister who is a colossal flop.

Mr. Brewin: Why do I say it is colossal flop? I cannot do better than use the words of Dr. Albert Rose of the University of Toronto, a well known expert in the housing field, as they appeared in the *Globe and Mail* of February 4. The minister shakes his head, probably in disapprobation. I am sure he has read what Dr. Rose has said, but I should like him to do so again. He wrote this:

These recommendations will do little or nothing to meet the housing needs of the two-thirds of Canadian families whose annual incomes are below \$7,500.

If it is acknowledged that the major need in housing is felt by those earning less than \$7,500. If these recommendations will do nothing to help such people, to call the report a colossal fraud or flop is to use very moderate language. In other words, once again it is proposed to take government action in the field of housing to help those in the top