

*Housing*

nation of ours. He said that the Prime Minister's "classroom brand" of federalism was hobbling the country. Most of all, he said, it was holding up housing; it was delaying action on pollution; it was crippling urban development; it was stalling urgent action on many other gut issues. The Minister of Transport said he could not accept this situation.

When we examine in detail the statement which the minister made yesterday, it would seem it is high time that everyone sitting in this house did a little more thinking about the direction in which this government is taking Canada and Canadians. I have been here since September. I have heard a host of promises from ministers of the government. I have heard them tell us what they were going to do about the housing problem facing Canadians.

● (7:40 p.m.)

Let us see what the minister in charge of housing, the key man in the government and the number 1 expert on the housing problems of this nation, had to say yesterday. What he said was, that he could see "little or no chance in the coming "weeks or even months", of any of his housing task force recommendations being accepted by the government." He went on to say, as reported in the *Ottawa Journal* of April 24:

I say housing is a matter for the federal government. It always has been. It should be now, with Ottawa giving strong leadership.

This afternoon we heard member after member from the Liberal side of this chamber repudiate the statements made by the former minister. We have had an indication since September that strong leadership would come from the present administration. Suddenly, we find that it has not come and apparently there is little intention on the part of the present administration to give effective leadership to the Canadian nation in the field of housing.

The minister went on to discuss another phase other than housing and said:

My constituents, many of them poor people, can't wait.

The kids who tried to swim at a beach in my riding last summer can't wait for somebody to decide who should clean up the pollution.

I say that we, as Canadians, cannot wait any longer for this ineffective, weak, vacillating government to take action in the field of pollution. For too long we have had these important problems in respect of housing, pollution, urban development and unemployment hanging over our heads like millstones.

[Mr. Harding.]

Finally, in desperation one of the key men in the government party had to throw in his resignation because he could not accept this inaction any longer. Hon. members in the Liberal party should give a lot more thought to standing up to the Prime Minister and demanding that changes be made, particularly when we are heading in a direction that is not good for Canadians.

Let me spend a few minutes more discussing one or two statements made yesterday, because they are vitally important to Canada. We in this party have been critical, as we are being critical today—perhaps more so than ever before—of this government. Let me refer to what the former Minister of Transport, who was in charge of housing, had to say as reported in the same article. The article reads:

Now, he has found himself stymied by a Prime Minister who insisted that "constitutionally many of these things are not federal responsibilities."

He was referring to urban problems, problems in respect of housing and pollution.

During the election last June, this government gave every indication to the people of Canada that it was going to deal with these problems. When we arrived in Ottawa we found that the Prime Minister and his cabinet had deliberately misled the Canadian people. They did not tell Canadians during the election campaign last June that they were going to abandon the housing problem and place it on the shoulders of municipal and provincial governments. They did not say last June that they were going to throw housing and pollution problems over to municipal and provincial governments. They never told the people last June that they were not interested in the urban problems facing this nation. They did not tell the people last June that this was the direction in which they intended to proceed. I suggest it is high time every member in this house did a great deal more serious thinking about this resignation and this statement than has been done in the short period since it was made.

The minister made another statement which I think is worth reading into the record. He said:

The Prime Minister's constitutional theories sound fine in the classroom—the trouble is they just won't work.

People expect the federal government to provide full employment—without this insidious inflation—to take action on clear air and clear water. These are the bread and butter issues. But these are the issues the Prime Minister says must be left to the provinces while he sorts out the constitutional priorities.