

The Address—Mr. Andras

the first world war, Germany was in real difficulty. So what did they do? They took the humble potato and from that potato they refined gasoline which they used to run war machinery. If you can do that with a potato, what can you do with wheat? I criticize those who lack the mental air conditioning to put forward ideas in this field. This is what will put Canada on the road to being a great country.

If we continue to be presented with Speeches from the Throne such as the one before us, with its lack of imagination, lack of program planning and lack of foresight, this country will not move ahead. It will stand still.

Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister without Portfolio): Mr. Speaker, I should like very much to join with previous speakers in this debate in congratulating the mover (Mr. Trudel) and seconder (Mr. Douglas, Assiniboia) of the address on their comments as well as all previous speakers who have made reference to housing and urban affairs.

One of the important things we are talking about in this debate is choice—the ability and the responsibility to support and to continuously re-create in this country, in myriad ways and at every level, choices as to the kind of Canada Canadians want it to be.

Canada began under that imperative, Canada is evolving under that imperative, but a new ethic insists upon consideration of two chief things. First, that the traditional decision-makers of power must move over a little so that choice devolves upon the greatest numbers of people, people who are well enough informed to choose on considered merits; and, second, that the bases of choice have changed for many of us along with the growing material wealth, complexity, and concentration of our society. There is a growing recognition, for instance, that economic growth for growth's sake, to put it crudely, must be increasingly tempered by considerations, by choices, which put growth at the service of the social comfort and stimulation of Canadians.

These are not quite yet truisms for everyone but they form the goals of this government and, I believe, of other governments in Canada. Certainly they are at the very heart of the proposed formation of the ministry of state for urban affairs and housing. They are both its reason for being and the guidelines within which it intends to operate. Choices, evolved with a degree of understanding never before reached in Canada, must urgently be made as we move at rather an unnerving pace into a Canada which, it is predicted, will be 94 per cent urban within the next 30 years. We see a Canada developing, 73 per cent of whose population is likely to be established in only 12 major centres, a Canada whose population will soon have doubled, about 45 per cent of that doubled population living in only three great foci of national power, Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. In these three places will be found vast numbers of people, if that is what we want, like New York, Chicago and Tokyo.

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the minister but it now being one o'clock I do leave the chair to resume it at two o'clock.

At one o'clock the House took recess.

[Mr. Hales.]

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

Mr. Andras: Mr. Speaker, before lunch I was making reference to the need for all of us in elected office to provide the mechanism whereby Canadians can exercise their choice under all reasonable conditions. I was also referring to the demographic projections for this country over the next 30 years, to a Canada with double its present population, 45 per cent of which would be located in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. I was comparing that series of events within the profile of what has happened in large cities south of the border and in other countries.

We start the question leading to choice by asking whether we want our cities to look like those cities, and whether they should act as cities have been acting in places like Chicago, Los Angeles, Detroit, New York and Tokyo. The whole process of rapid urbanization is pretty well inexorable. The sharpest pace of that growth is upon us now, in the decade 1970 to 1980. In the next three decades we will have to build a capacity to cope with what will be, in terms of numbers, a second Canada. We must now ask ourselves whether this urban Canada is to continue just to grow relatively uncontrolled, in a misshapen and unclean way, in a way that is too often inequitable.

Instead, I would prefer to think of a Canada of choice, of many co-operative choices; a Canada informed by consultative and co-ordinated efforts to create our own distinctive excellence. It can be a Canada that avoids the widespread social despair and the awful social unrest that growth run rampant has brought to other areas and which we have seen in very recent days so very close to us. This is not, let me emphasize, "airy-fairy" idealism; it is a pragmatic and practical approach, one that is within our competences.

In this country we still have the time and the resources to write our own urban history in terms of our own vision, rather than just have it happen. We can begin to give our environments a shape and a humanity of our own. We can choose environments that have clean spaces for people and that have deliberately blurred lines of social cleavage; environments that provide for the weakest a crucial sense of worth; environments that provide personal and family privacy while giving a sense of belonging, a sense of community without which few of us can cope with life.

Let me repeat the words I have just used—consult, co-operate, co-ordinate. These are meant to be neither soothing motherhood words nor words to gloss over any supposed lack of real intentions by this government. They are, in fact, precise indicators of how we will approach the problems posed by rapid urbanization in Canada at the federal level, as well as in our dealings with the provincial governments, who bear the primary responsibility, and with the municipalities that exist in the provinces.