

Alleged Failure to Cope With Urban Growth

a new model for Canadian cities of the 1970's, but this is urgently needed. Many things are urgently needed for the future. There are many problems. Will this government do its share? I doubt it.

I want to refer to one of the special features of life in Canada, the invisible city. You can touch it, walk around it, breathe its polluted air, get caught in its traffic jams, and once upon a time you could even buy a house in it. But so far as this government is concerned, the city does not exist. Most of the people of Canada live in cities but the municipal officials they elect cannot sit in on discussions about the future of the country, and too often cannot get the information they need about programs which directly affect their own development. Most of the problems of Canada are in the cities, but the government refuses to contemplate direct programs.

My colleague, the hon. member for Hamilton West, has referred to the constitution as a smokescreen. It is that. No one denies the difficulties which the constitution creates, but they can be overcome. The real problem is that the Prime Minister is not inclined to overcome them. That was the message of the resignation of the hon. member for Trinity. The Liberal government apologists can try to disguise it in any way they want, but the fact stands out that he wanted to act. He wanted to make the cities and their problems visible and the Prime Minister preferred to hide behind the constitution.

This government is committing many crimes against the people who live in the cities. Its basic crime is that it pretends the cities do not exist. That is bad enough in that it provides the government with an excuse for failure to act on distinctive urban problems, but it has another important effect. It hides several major problems which the country cannot continue to hide. One of them is poverty. The fifth annual review of the Economic Council of Canada emphasized the proportions of poverty in Canada and the degree to which it is an urban problem. It pointed out that serious poverty is only "a subway ride away" for residents of our major metropolitan areas.

The problem of the Indian people, of which the minister should be well aware and which was discussed earlier today, has become an urban problem as more and more people from reserves, or with official status under the Indian Act, are moving into the cities, particularly on the prairies. The mayor of Winnipeg, for instance, has said he is the mayor of "The

[Mr. Paproski.]

largest Indian reserve in Canada". To a smaller degree a similar kind of thing is happening in Edmonton. The problem is that many native people, out of work, are attracted to the city where they constitute a major expense and problem and there is, as usual, confusion about which level of government is to help them.

The problem of immigration is such that if the government had a policy that policy could not overlook the problem of integration of new Canadians into their communities which in most cases are urban communities. These are serious Canadian problems which we cannot afford to ignore. Yet we are ignoring them now because the federal government continues to treat the cities as though they were invisible. The Prime Minister came to office promising change.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Badanai): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but his time has expired.

An hon. Member: All he needs is another minute.

Some hon. Members: Go ahead.

● (5:20 p.m.)

Mr. Paproski: There has been a great deal of talk about participatory democracy. But look at the record. Time after time federal and provincial governments discuss major matters which are vital to the plans and expansion of various cities. City officials are not apprised; they are kept in the dark and the progress and plans for their cities are held up. A constitutional conference is held, and municipal officials request the right to attend. The Prime Minister claims that he cleared the way for them to attend. He cleared the way as he usually does, by passing the buck to the provinces. Certainly he did not encourage the attendance or participation of municipal officials.

So far as the cities are concerned, participatory democracy seems to mean the right to protest after something harmful has been done. Any positive steps in terms of solving urban problems in the last year in Canada have been taken by the cities themselves. The Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities in particular has shown outstanding initiative and deserves to be recognized. Several of the provinces have also been active. But it is a fact that the contribution of the Trudeau government to urban development in Canada has been entirely negative. They cut back the winter works program;