

Housing

for the red tape on the part of the federal, provincial and municipal governments.

This is really the crux of the matter in the housing problem of this country and, I suspect, the problem which bothered the Minister of Transport—the inability at the federal level to cut down the red tape and, as someone said, to get down to the nuts and bolts and to help the man in the street. He does not care about the constitution; all he is interested in is a roof over his head.

I share the concern of the Minister of Transport. It is all too easy for members of this house to say, as the New Democratic party members have said today, “Disregard the constitution; the constitution is there to serve the people.” I have heard the ringing phrases of the hon. gentlemen. It is all too simple to say that the constitution is there and that it should be there to serve the people. If it does not serve the people because it is out of date 100 years later, it must be amended. I think we should all hang our heads in shame—and this includes all levels of government and all Canadians—that we have not even been able to find a formula to bring the constitution back to this country, or the amending of the constitution back to Canada. This is no more the fault of this government than it was the fault of the government when the opposition was in power and when, with Davie Fulton, they tried to find a formula. But perhaps hon. members opposite have short memories.

When I say I am at an advantage as a Quebecker in understanding constitutional problems, it is because I have lived there for 48 years. My disadvantage is in not being a member of the New Democratic party so that I am unable, no matter how many documents I have here and I have too many of them, to understand the philosophy of the New Democratic party on the constitution. Perhaps someone can tell me what it is, but I have six documents here and in each one there is a different version. I will try to pick out a few.

Just in case people think that the Prime Minister is hung up on the constitution to hide the frustration of the government or as an excuse for what is considered in some circles to be slow progress in the field of housing, let me make it clear that it is not only the federal government that is concerned about the constitution. The provinces are concerned about it. It is not only the province of Quebec that is concerned about it. As a Quebecker I resent the implication that it is only

[Mr. Mackasey.]

Quebec that is concerned about the constitutional problem. I know that the members from Halifax and others are much more familiar with the report of the task force on housing than I am, but I should like to quote from a Canadian Press release in a Toronto newspaper of February 24, 1969, with regard to a document that was submitted by the province of Ontario, not the province of Quebec although Quebec endorsed it, about the constitution. Part of the article reads as follows:

Position papers released by Ontario and Quebec delegates after the meeting indicated Mr. Hellyer was told the federal government should not expand much into the housing field—a provincial jurisdiction—

That is not the Prime Minister talking; it is not the backbenchers here using excuses; it is not the ministers explaining away inactivity. This is from the government of Ontario—a Tory government.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

An hon. Member: Never trust a Grit.

Mr. Mackasey:

—beyond the present role of providing most of the public funds.

That is the Ontario position, not the Quebec position. The provinces say: “Stay out of our affairs. Provide us with more money and we will do the job”. That is what they are saying. I share the opinion and the frustration of the minister who has resigned that the constitution needs change, and I will talk about it in a moment. Let us first get the decks cleared and try to understand who is complaining and who is insisting in 1969 that the constitution be respected in the field of housing. It is not the federal government but the provinces, not necessarily only the province of Quebec. I am quoting from the submission of the province of Ontario to the task force in February of this year. I will read some more of it.

Ontario's paper was brusque in warning Mr. Hellyer against any attempts to establish direct relationships with municipalities.

Who warned Mr. Hellyer not to come into direct contact with municipalities? Was it the federal government? Was it the Prime Minister? Was it the opposition? No, it was the provincial government of Ontario which, quite properly, pointed out that as long as the constitution is written as it is we should respect it. I have sat here and heard people from the opposition ranks say to the federal government, “Stay out of the field of provincial