

Suggested Lack of Urban Policy

minister all responsibility for urban research, innovation and development, as well as the commission to deal with the provinces in areas where co-operation on urban matters is established. The federal government must be ready to co-operate with the provinces on urban affairs. The urban fact will not stand still pending renegotiation of the constitution. The federal government must equally be organized to co-operate most effectively. I, for one, certainly hope that the importance of his responsibility, as well as the manner in which the Minister without Portfolio (Mr. Andras) has carried out that responsibility, will be appropriately recognized by the creation of a portfolio.

Mr. Alexander: The hon. member has echoed my words, and has done a better job than I did in this regard.

• (5:10 p.m.)

Hon. J. A. MacLean (Malpeque): Mr. Speaker, I rise to take part in this debate because it is a subject about which I am greatly concerned and interested. The motion states:

That this House condemns the government for its failure to establish an urban policy for Canada.

In those terms, I think a fairly wide leeway might be given in interpreting what is meant. I think that my concern falls within the ambit of the motion. I refer to the type of the development that is taking place in Canada. I am concerned that virtually all of our growth is taking place in a few large urban centres. Generally speaking, the larger the urban centre the faster its growth.

Economists and others cite graphs and extrapolate. They point out that at the rate things are happening, in X number of years, depending on how far one looks into the future, 90 per cent or 95 per cent of the Canadian people will be living in urban centres. They accept this as some inevitable fact over which we have no control. I am not a fatalist to that extent. I think if the Canadian people feel that this is not a beneficial trend as far as our nation is concerned, they will be prepared to change or modify it to some degree.

Although I have lived most of my life in the country, I have also lived for periods of time in fairly large cities, including Ottawa and Brussels. I deeply regret the fact that many Canadians born in our cities are condemned in many cases to live their lives in large cities because this limits their oppor-

tunity for self-realization. While it is true that a certain percentage of our population in our large cities can live a bountiful and even luxurious type of life, a larger percentage of the people in the cities cannot look forward to appreciably bettering the conditions into which they were born. I deplore the realities of life in our modern cities as compared to the expectations of young people for their future. Life in the average modern city produces frustrations based on the very nature of the city.

A person may work hard for X number of years, looking forward to the future when he can afford an automobile or a better house. In the meantime, his cost of living increases at such a rate that he finds he is on a treadmill, making no progress whatsoever. As his income increases, his cost of getting to work increases. The municipal taxes increase rapidly. Costs rise at a much greater rate than the individual's capability to cope with these increases. When this person eventually can afford a car, usually there is nowhere he can park it. He spends an hour in a traffic snarl getting to work and back. When more auto routes are built to relieve this situation, the taxes increase. These new auto routes are immediately clogged and the situation is no better than before. There is increasing pollution of air and water. A dweller in a modern metropolitan area is subjected to an ever increasing barrage of noise. This increases at the rate of a decibel each year. He finds himself in a frustrating and unnatural environment. This is something we know too little about.

It is assumed, I believe with false premise, that the good life may be achieved in a large city. We have an automatic worship of bigness. Bigness is equated with quality. This is applied to our large cities. There are people who are proud of the fact that they come from the largest city in the county, the country or the world. In my judgment, this is an ill-founded approach. We worship bigness, but bigness is not a virtue. If it were, the dinosaurs would probably still be around.

Mr. Stanfield: Some are.

Mr. MacLean: You are not talking about the actual ones, but the figurative ones. It can even be argued that civilizations collapse when they become over-urbanized. I am not going to pursue that line of thought. There are people who argue that point. In many cases that can be cited, the two things went