

Alleged Failure to Cope With Urban Growth

regarding this motion. It is extremely unfortunate that the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) has seen fit to leave the chamber because I was going to wish him a happy birthday in terms of his first year in office, but as he is not here I will not do so. However, I think it is in order that we in the opposition congratulate hon. members on the other side, particularly new members who have completed their first year in parliament. As a new member myself I cannot say I am too happy with the progress that has been made. In any event, in my own charitable way I would like to wish this house a happy birthday.

In thinking of the date June 25 I recall that I was sent here as a representative of a portion of the great city of Hamilton, and I know that city sent me here to project the urban image, to be concerned about the need for leadership in regard to housing, pollution, the plight of old age pensioners and the problems of transportation. I must be concerned about the poor, and about how inflation and the high cost of living have drastically affected those on fixed incomes.

This past year has been very enlightening to me as a new member. I am very proud to have the opportunity to stand in this hallowed chamber in order to give some encouragement to the government and, as a matter of fact, some leadership. The government has failed to give leadership in the whole sphere of urban problems. In fact I suggest that during the past year the government became concerned about matters about which the Canadian people could not care less.

An hon. Member: Damp wheat?

Mr. Alexander: An hon. member mentions damp wheat. It has been of some concern, but I am vexed that as a result of the government giving first priority to the omnibus bill amending the Criminal Code we spent so much time debating homosexuality and abortion. I am also concerned about the fact that the government believes the official languages bill is a must for the betterment of all Canadians. Perhaps it is, but at a time when urban problems are of such vital importance I believe the government should have given priority to bringing forth ideas, leadership and enthusiasm to tackle the problems of urbanites.

The government stands condemned for its callous disregard, indecision and inaction in the face of one of the greatest challenges that modern Canada must meet. It has failed to provide the vigorous leadership required to meet the challenge of rapid urban growth.

[Mr. Alexander.]

Let me put it this way, Mr. Speaker: There is no greater area of concern to Canadians because we are increasingly becoming an urban people. The real problems which the great majority of our people face are problems related to urban life and the quality of that life. We seem to have forgotten the men, women and children who live in the cities. They have problems that, as I say, can only be resolved by farsighted government leadership, leadership which the present administration seems unable and unwilling to produce.

The facts of Canada's urban nature are well documented, and I do not have to go into them at any great length. The fourth report of the Economic Council of Canada has pointed out that Canada has the fastest rate of urban growth of all industrially advanced countries. By 1980 we will live in a society that will be 80 per cent urban. By that year 60 per cent of all Canadians will live and work in a total of 20 Canadian cities, of which Hamilton will be one.

When I think of how the government is trying to emasculate the role of the individual Member of Parliament, first with its proposed infamous rule 16A and now with its proposed rule 75C, I am concerned, and I believe it is necessary that I rise to plead the problems of the urban dweller with the government. There is no way that we on this side of the house can continue to stand by and allow the government to erode the function of a Member of Parliament who represents some 89,000 people.

The people of Canada are demanding action from the government. They want a government which is aware of the pressing needs of urbanites, which has enough compassion to care about their problems, and which is willing to exert vigorous leadership in the fight to enhance the quality of urban life. Does the present government meet any of these specific requirements? I submit that it does not have compassion. I submit that it does not have the leadership qualifications. I submit it has neither the will nor the interest.

Let no one deny the dimensions of the problems of our urban centres. Their dimensions have been clearly outlined by the government's own advisory body, the Economic Council of Canada. In its fourth report the Economic Council of Canada painted a dark