

Housing

I wish to say to the Prime Minister there are many people in this country who are desperately anxious because of this crisis. I want to say to him that all the good effort of which he spoke could only provide—and this is admitted to be so in the task force report—housing for people with incomes of \$8,000 a year. The vast majority of Canadians do not have an income at that level. We have urged this government to do something for those people who urgently need housing. This is an area which requires direct government action. We are suffering today from 30 years of free enterprise laissez-faire in respect of this basic problem of our people. I admit that it will not be overcome in a little while, but it will never be overcome until the federal government assumes its full responsibility in this matter.

Every country of the world which has tried to deal with this matter has found it necessary to adopt a method for establishing public housing. We have failed miserably in this field. I take issue with the task force report suggestion that this is not necessary. As my colleague the hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis) pointed out, in the metropolitan area of Toronto alone there are 16,000 families on the waiting list for public housing. I have set up a small office in my riding and day by day, week by week, people come in who are desperately in need of housing. They are urgently looking for assistance in getting their names placed on the list for public housing. These people include widows, deserted wives, people with families and older people. These people are harassed by escalating rents. We do not need any statistics to prove this situation because we see it day by day in our experiences if we get down and meet the people whom we are supposed to represent.

Certainly, there is no need for the complacency which was contained in the speech the Prime Minister made today. I should like to deal with another aspect of housing which I think all too often is neglected, certainly in an urban area such as I represent. I say that the cities of this country are faced with the likelihood of growing decay unless federal action is taken in respect of the rehabilitation and the care of the existing stock of housing. The whole burden of taxation has a crushing effect in this field. Areas like my own—a very excellent place to live with very many fine people—are threatened with growing decay because of the burden of taxation and the burden of increasing costs which means that

[Mr. Brewin.]

the people are not in a position to maintain their own stock of housing. There is urgent need for initiative in this field.

I noticed only a little while ago that a gentleman by the name of George Cook, director of housing standards for the city of Toronto, told a national gathering of urban renewal officials that nothing effective would be done to achieve any improvement in housing standards until the federal government recognized the need to provide special loans and grants. In the Prime Minister's speech today we did not hear a single word about public housing and the urgent need for assistance in maintaining the stock of housing we have at the present time.

I wish to commend the Minister of Transport for his action. It is in accord with a sound principle which too often is neglected; that is the principle that if you differ from the policy of your government it is your duty to resign. I wish others had had the guts to resign when such a situation presented itself. As I have said, this debate is of vital importance to the future of Canadians. The desperate housing crisis should have a top priority in the consideration of the government. Not only does parliament hang on this, but also the whole concept of government in Canada.

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, you know I feel like shedding a tear on this momentous occasion because over the months here I had developed a rapport and certain dialogue with the Minister of Transport in charge of housing. I stand here today wondering what I am going to do in the future. I thought we almost had the answers to an urban renewal program. I was eagerly anticipating the guidelines for public housing which C.M.H.C. would accept and now I find my minister is gone. The Prime Minister delivered, in his usual inimitable and flowery way, a speech in which he said how great things are in respect of housing in Canada. At that time I scratched my head, because if things are so great why did the Minister of Transport in charge of housing resign. It is amazing to watch the Prime Minister throw a red herring across to the opposition.

● (5:00 p.m.)

The leader of the New Democratic party stood up this afternoon and with his usual brilliance said: I can see through this whole thing; we are dealing with housing but at the same time there is an issue here we must be concerned about this afternoon, and that is the constitutional aspect. There can be no