

Suggested Lack of Urban Policy

hospital region is not of the same size as the sewage disposal region, or of the same size as the garbage collection region. It is not of the same size as the region for the distribution of hydro electricity or for the administration of assessment services. The difficulty with the services that must be provided in the city is that the optimum levels and size of an administration unit vary greatly from one service to another.

Provinces have attempted to grapple with this problem by devising several levels of government at the local level, at the larger urban agglomeration level and at the regional level. They have by no means found a uniform pattern, because every city is different. It is different through the physical environment in which it was born and in which it grows. It is different in terms of the people who live in it and in terms of what they want. It is different in terms of the social and cultural values on which the people in that city insist as part of the standard of living. The solution to the problem of urban growth is not the simple creation by the federal government of a department of urban affairs, although I think such a step will come. One of the things that has impressed me about the present minister is the way in which he has attempted to set his goals and priorities and to understand them before he moves.

There is no question that basic, fundamental research in urban problems is very much lacking. Until we have some concept of the kind of cities we want, whether they be vertical or horizontal, cities of low density scattered through rural areas—the type of city which was talked about in the last century—or high density cities with fringe green belts around them, research will continue to be necessary. We will want to know what kind of city we want to live in, whether it will be above or below ground, whether it will have large or small buildings or have a high or low density of population.

There is an astonishing amount of disagreement, in terms of these very basic goals, among those who make it their lifework to study the cities. Our friends would say that the federal government moves, it creates a department and other things will flow from it. I am one who believes that the problems are infinitely more complex and that the city planners will have to be much more imaginative.

The hon. member for Scarborough East (Mr. O'Connell) said it is an intergovernmental problem. I could not agree more. The dif-

[Mr. Francis.]

iculty is that the provincial legislatures, which according to the BNA Act have the power of life and death over the charters under which municipalities act, are still largely rural dominated. No more striking example of this could be found than my own province of Ontario. The province of Ontario lives in a state of fear of the great city state of Toronto. It does not know what to do with it and what to do about it. It lives in the fear that somehow this great city state will displace the province itself in future years of this confederation. It lives in the fear—and it is not the only provincial government that lives in this kind of fear—that perhaps the constitution of Canada for the next 100 years must be a constitution that builds together in a type of federated action perhaps four, five or ten city states, major urban agglomerations which represent the centres of dynamism, growth and the good life.

Mr. D. Gordon Blair (Ottawa-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, like my friend, the hon. member for Ottawa West (Mr. Francis), I welcome the posing of this problem to the House because in my opinion it is perhaps the most serious issue of our times. When we approach the question of urban growth we have to admit that to a very large extent we are prisoners of past attitudes and past habits. I think these attitudes and habits are common to all parties and to all people in this country.

Throughout the history of Canada, and indeed of the western world, there has been a movement from the country and from smaller centres to the cities. We all know that the great aim of our society has been growth. The importance of communities has always been pictured in terms of the number of their people, the number of their industries, the number of their educational institutions and all the other services and facilities which we relate in our minds to large centres and to large cities.

As I approach this question tonight I would suggest that perhaps there are three problems which we face. The first, and indeed the most urgent, is how to cope in Canada with present-day problems of urbanism. The creation of great cities carries with it the creation of substantial problems. Industry, wealth and many other things which in our society we consider important congregate in cities. But the mere congestion of people and of institutions carries with it tremendous social problems of housing, of maintaining decent living standards, of crime and even of violence.