

Housing

Prime Minister, was not caused by frustration and failure to carry out what he felt had to be done in the field in which he was given responsibility. I do not happen to be a great follower of the Minister of Transport, and I do not happen to think very highly of the task force report which he produced. I do not agree with his totally free enterprise approach. I do not admire Mr. Hellyer, as a house builder, being so chummy with that less desirable element in housing. I do not happen to be an admirer of his, but that is irrelevant to the strange situation that the relatively conservative Minister of Transport could no longer accept the conservatism of the present Prime Minister of Canada.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member but his time has expired. Is there unanimous consent to allow the hon. member to continue?

Some hon. Members: Continue.

Mr. Lewis: I thank the hon. members for allowing me to continue. I only have a few more sentences to complete what I wanted to say, and this is the only reason I am taking advantage of the kindness of the house.

My leader dealt with the constitutional problem mainly because this was the reason the Minister of Transport gave for his resignation. Indeed, our motion emphasizes the resignation of the minister. We are not merely debating the question of housing, important though that subject is in this debate, but we are also discussing the government and the inaction of this government. It is a debate about the constitutional immobilisation of this country by the Prime Minister. That is what the debate is about. It is a debate about the lack of initiative and leadership of this government in the entire urban problem. I do not have to remind this house about the importance of this problem. Some 50 per cent of Canadians now live in about 18 municipal urban areas of this country. Over 70 per cent of the Canadian people now live in urban areas, the smaller as well as the larger ones. In about five years, our statisticians tell us, over 80 per cent of our people will be urbanized, and in about 20 years 85 per cent to 90 per cent will be urbanized. These housing problems, these transportation problems and these pollution problems will multiply as the growth of our cities and towns continues. If the government of Canada does not now have the leadership, the courage and the wisdom to start tackling these problems with energy, they will get out of hand and our country will

[Mr. Lewis.]

be faced with the kind of violence on the street with which the country to the south of us is faced. This is why we take this problem so seriously. This is why we say there is a housing and urban crisis in Canada, not only because of the number of housing units now needed but because of the growing problem of urbanization in Canada, because of the growing threat to the quality of life of the vast majority of our people. If this problem is not tackled now, it will get out of hand to the point where there will be no evolutionary democratic solution to it.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Don Valley.

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Has-tings): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. I should like to point out that so far two members of the New Democratic party have spoken but only one member of the official opposition has had the chance to speak. I should like to ask for your permission to allow a member of our party to speak at the present time.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I appreciate the point which the hon. member raised but there has been one speaker on the government side and, according to my list, four on the opposition side. Therefore, I think it is only fair that I recognize the hon. member for Don Valley.

Mr. Robert P. Kaplan (Don Valley): Mr. Speaker, I am afraid that in the discussion of federal responsibility for housing and urban affairs resulting from the resignation of the Minister of Transport (Mr. Hellyer) the country is losing sight of the fact that the primary responsibility for our cities still rests with the provinces. I hope this situation will change and that the federal government will be able to obtain, with the co-operation of all provinces, some direct access to our cities. This is a priority subject for federal-provincial constitutional discussions.

In the meanwhile, I should like to look at the provincial role in housing to assess the responsibility of the federal government. One major aspect of the housing crisis, the urban crisis if I can put it more broadly, is the status of the tenant. Whatever solution emerges to the housing shortage, there will be a growing number of tenants in Canada.

It is a shocking fact that until recently some municipalities in my riding and elsewhere denied tenants the right to vote in local elections. Not only was their civil status