

*Housing*

frustration. To this state of frustration has been added the tragedy of a man who has put a great deal of enthusiasm into trying to do something about the housing situation in Canada. He has been frustrated and his reward is to depart from a high position in public life.

Since two o'clock this afternoon, we have debated many aspects of the situation. Two of the most important aspects are the government's approach to the constitution and, what has been hardly touched upon, the reorganization of the government departments as well as the related question as to whether they can reach decisions easily. It seems one of the by-products of the approach of the present Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) to government has been to make the decision process more cumbersome than it had been previously.

We heard the Prime Minister speak this afternoon. He put forward the best face he could following the resignation of his senior Privy Councillor. When the Prime Minister's speech was finished, Mr. Speaker, the fact still remained that the body was still at the scene and so was the Prime Minister. I suggest that with the Minister of Transport continuing to occupy a seat in the house, the Prime Minister will find himself very much like MacBeth who was haunted by the ghost of one he had slaughtered.

The Prime Minister has not given us an explanation of the differences between himself and the Minister of Transport. No explanation has been given, yet this is the real purpose of the debate. If we cannot get the information inside the House of Commons, we can look at what happened over the past few months. We can look at the statements made by these gentlemen outside the house and get a pretty clear idea of what has happened.

The Prime Minister has mentioned the proposed amendments to the National Housing Act. This was the legacy from the Minister of Transport. I listened carefully to the Prime Minister on this point. He seemed to deal with specific aspects of the housing problem, but not with the heart of the problem. The heart of the housing problem is twofold. The first aspect of the problem is the cost of housing, and the other is housing for people with lower incomes. With neither of these core problems has the government been conspicuously successful in arriving at good solutions.

As the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. MacInnis) noted, housing has been

[Mr. McCleave.]

an additional portfolio. What has been done by the various ministers? Mr. Nicholson carried out a series of symposia from coast to coast. The right hon. Mr. Pearson held a dominion-provincial housing conference which was one of the more monumental fiascos in these parts. Following the last election, the Minister of Transport enthusiastically travelled around the country heading up a task force.

The task force has made its report, but what actual changes have occurred in housing policies since the last election? There has been some extra home building as a result of a \$170 million windfall. This was simply a diversion from public housing because that money was not spent for public housing, but used for home building.

Secondly, there was the cut in public housing because of sociological and other distressing factors. The Minister of Transport promised he would bring in the criteria for acceptable housing projects. This has not been received yet, and today was supposed to be the last day this would be presented. For historians of this rather interesting occasion, I refer to *Hansard* of last Thursday in which there are exchanges dealing with this criteria. On Tuesday of this week I asked the Minister of Transport when those criteria would be available. He did not say "by the end of the week", but "fairly soon".

I suspect the failure to win acceptance for this criteria may have been part of the minister's frustration. An announcement was made with regard to a start on two housing projects for lower income people in Ottawa. I think these will be very worth while. I certainly hope they achieve what the minister had in mind. However, it is a very small experimental start on what is really a very severe national problem.

One specific act in the field of housing is the provision for more flexible National Housing Act mortgages with periodic reviews. A person is not faced with the prospect of having to settle for one fixed interest rate over a long range mortgage but can have a short range mortgage which will be negotiable at the end of five years at whatever interest rates prevail at that time. I suggest this really means people are asked to gamble, to guess, or both. If any of us in this chamber five years ago could have guessed what type of mortgage position we would be in today, I think we would be horrified. Five years ago no one would have anticipated mortgage rates of 10 per cent and second mortgage rates of almost double that.