

*Urban Affairs*

Canadians will live in the three large centres—about 6.5 million in Toronto, 6.25 million in Montreal and 2.3 million in Vancouver. The new bureaucratic structure the government is proposing today should start at once to alleviate some of the negative effects of this polarization in our country.

Can Canada still be viable politically if our people are centred around only three dominant cities? Would it be possible to maintain a clearly defined Canadian identity in these circumstances? The responsibilities of this department will be to see that the growing dominance of large metropolitan areas does not mean the death of the rest of the country. Working with the Department of Regional Economic Expansion, the department of urban affairs should try to find ways to direct this growth in order to strengthen the forces which bind this country together. I think we all agree with that.

Can we allow growth and prosperity for one part of the country, and economic stagnation for other parts? Can the population of our cities range from super rich to super poor, with the poor locked into intercity ghettos and the rich locking themselves into private enclaves to defend themselves against the disorder around them? All these questions, Mr. Speaker, will have to be answered by the people who today have the responsibility to define the priorities of this new department.

● (8:30 p.m.)

Despite our vast land area in this country, unfortunately our rock, muskeg and climate conspire to compress our people into all too few areas. These areas that are favoured by both mother nature and economic factors are the areas in which we see our large cities. We deplore the piano-box housing of some more southerly countries, but they live close to nature in compensation. Sanitation is their main problem as, indeed, it is a major one of ours. But we have more problems even as we strive to build better shoe-box housing in the sky in these areas of Canada.

To commune with nature in the cities of this country is becoming rapidly more difficult for the city dweller. One can understand such development on the relatively small and hilly island of Hong Kong, but for cities such as Toronto surely we can expect proper, modern procurement, planning, servicing and construction. Surely we can save them from becoming mazes of jammed, arid canyons like Manhattan, where a few wind up with millions, where many wind up as rubby-dubs, sleeping on the sidewalks, and where the quality of life for all deteriorates. It is no wonder that Mayor John Lindsay of New York city has been talking about taking his city out of New York state. That might come to pass. The major reason is that New York is in financial trouble and is not allowed to run its own affairs as great cities in other parts of the world customarily do. Our big cities are in exactly the same position save that for some reason Montreal seems to be able to assert more autonomy, more successfully, than Toronto. Legislators from all over Ontario tell Torontonians what they should do, yet rural and small town Ontario is quite a different world from metropolitan Toronto.

[Mr. Ryan.]

The cry is that the cities spend too much money and that is why they are in trouble. The truth is quite the opposite, since both our federal and provincial governments milk the cities for the benefit of others. I would like to know how many dollars are taken from metropolitan Toronto by the province of Ontario for the benefit of outlying towns and the countryside, and how many are spent for the benefit of the city. I would like to know even more the "take" from metro Toronto by the federal government and the amount returned, because I am certain that its "take" is far higher than that of the province and that its return is far lower.

In the last couple of decades the great mechanization of farms and the encouragement of abandonment of marginal farms and occupations has destroyed the jobs of thousands of farm and other workers. They were driven to our cities for survival. Their need for housing, joined with that of migrants from other lands, called for the rapid growth of suburbs. This has been encouraged by federal housing loans and has resulted in great servicing and transportation burdens for the cities. Now, with the added long period of unusually high unemployment under this government it has become necessary to lower the welfare standards in our cities in an effort to hold the line. They have good reason to cry out for a fair share of the wealth which they still manage to provide.

Mr. Speaker, it may not be too long before the demand for provincial status by our largest cities will become a major issue in our confederation, for while their need and their production of wealth is the greatest of all levels, they have the poorest access of any level of government to tax revenues. This demand for provincial status will not be lessened, but will become all the more vociferous if the present Minister without Portfolio responsible for housing and urban affairs (Mr. Andras), who is minister designate for urban affairs, makes many more statements like the one he made in his speech at Halifax on May 17 when he said:

Economic and demographic patterns are happening in Canada that, I believe, must be constrained and re-channelled to some degree. Otherwise they will further the dominance and powers of the urbanized, industrialized centres and the regions surrounding them.

Mr. Speaker, the minister has misconceived the reason for any needed constraint or re-channelling. The fact is that dominance and power are with the mandarins at Ottawa and in the provincial capitals. Look at the battle over the white paper on tax reforms! It was fought out mainly between the mandarins at Ottawa and the federal cabinet on one side, and the big businessmen, Parliament and the provinces on the other. There was unreasonably long delay, confusion and disruption destroying much and accomplishing very little—and of participatory democracy there was none. I note with interest these words in the Speech from the Throne for the current session:

To foster co-ordination of the activities of all levels of government and to contribute to sound urban growth and development, the government proposes the reorganization of its urban activities under the direction of a minister of state for urban affairs and housing.