

*National Housing Act*

they were not latent defects, but patent. Indeed, they were blatant defects. My understanding is that except where Standing Orders provide otherwise, all members are equal in their rights. What Standing Order provides that the Chair shall not initiate objections on points of order against public bills introduced, or sought to be introduced, by ministers of the Crown? I shall say no more on this score for the time being, since before my time expires I must enter my response to the caveat issued by the Chair in connection with Bill C-6.

I should like to draw Your Honour's attention to clause 3 in this regard. I should like to point out that expenditures mentioned under this clause are to be provided only when, and as, moneys therefor are made available out of the public revenue by parliament in accordance with law. Thus, Mr. Speaker, even though I may be dealing indirectly with money, nothing whatsoever can happen until such time as the proper procedure is followed in the House of Commons and the necessary appropriation has been made according to law.

What really concerns me here is the difficulty in which municipalities are finding themselves as a result of urban sprawl. It seems odd to me that the definition of sewage treatment contained in section 50 of the National Housing Act should refer to sewage treatment projects as meaning projects consisting of:

(1) (a) A trunk sewage collector system, a central treatment plant or both for the collection and treatment of sewage from one or more municipalities, or

(ii) a trunk water main facility or system, a trunk storm sewage collector or system or both such facilities or systems, for serving one or more municipalities.

What happens if we extend that definition, if, in effect, we make loans in respect of trunk water mains and trunk storm sewage collectors, in addition? We now come to the gist of my submission; what I am talking about, now, is forgiveness. Forgiveness becomes extremely important in these days when the populations of our cities are growing so rapidly. I was speaking with officials in the City of Hamilton the other day. They were most concerned about the fact that they could not afford the services which a growing population requires for health and sanitation purposes. They feel it is time the government became aware of the fact that by the year 2,000, some 80 per cent of our population will be concentrated in cities such as Hamilton.

I mention Hamilton first because, as hon. members know, I have a special responsibility in that area. But what I say applies equally to Toronto, Winnipeg, Guelph, Calgary and our other major cities. The hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin) wants recognition for his city in this regard. That is natural. These are our major cities. When we are talking about sewage systems, as we must, we are only talking about 25 per cent forgiveness. It is high time we recognized the serious financial plight of our cities due to the fact that their tax base is so limited. They cannot get more money from the provinces, and the federal government, rightly at times, is reluctant to reach directly through the provinces to the municipalities. So the municipalities are looking to us for the forgiveness of loans under the terms of the National Housing Act.

[Mr. Alexander.]

I see, Mr. Speaker, that you are consulting Erskine May and Beauchesne and it would not surprise me if you were almost prepared to rule me out of order. Still, it is private members' hour, now; we are not debating government policy or the incompetence of the government and its lack of appreciation for the frustrations felt by ordinary citizens. In these circumstances I should like to continue my remarks for your edification. I know all hon. members will appreciate that what I am talking about makes a great deal of sense. What I am attempting to do is to bring the problem of the municipalities to a focus in this forum where I know I can certainly count on a sympathetic ear, even from the Speaker, who seems prepared to allow me to develop my argument, at least to a considerable extent, even though I might stray from the point of order.

I might say that my clause three is a negation of an appropriation. If Your Honour is concerned with my tampering with public funds or with the financial administration aspects of the House of Commons, then clause 3 should allay your fears in this regard. As I have said, nothing can happen until a bill comes before the House and the moneys are appropriated in due course, something similar to the provision we will shortly be facing in the near future with respect to miscellaneous estimates. That is money that has been set aside, through Governor General's warrants, for expenditure on matters of transportation, agriculture and so on. Every department is involved, and this money has to be appropriated by this House.

• (1710)

If I am right in this respect, why should the Chair be concerned? It is right that the Chair should be concerned; all I am saying is that this is the negation of an appropriation. It would not take one cent out of the public revenues of Canada if the bill were enacted and received royal assent tonight. Unless and until the Governor General recommends to the House the expenditure of funds to fulfil the purpose of the bill, and unless this House passes a bill containing a vote for that purpose, no public moneys can be spent.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, that I am making sense. I see Your Honour is still reading Beauchesne and May, but I hope my arguments are getting through to you. I submit this is nothing more nor less than a petition, and I would ask Your Honour to consider it in that light. This is a petition whereby I am bringing the plight of municipalities, both big and small, to the attention of the House and asking for the immediate consideration of the House. If the bill is adopted, then we can move ahead. If the bill is not adopted and there is no vote or royal assent, then nothing can happen. Therefore, why cannot hon. members discuss the bill?

There is no deeming clause in the bill, as there is in Bill C-124 in the name of the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Andras). Nor is there reference to a vote as authorized by this House. What I am trying to say, Mr. Speaker, is this. We are all aware of the plight we find ourselves in through pollution of the ecology. Indeed "pollution" and "ecology" are household words. An uncontrolled urbanization is playing havoc with our environment. This is so not only in the city of Hamilton, which is registering concern, but also in all the major cities to