

Housing and Urban Renewal

we are allowed to ask the committee to take the minister's words into account.

[English]

Mr. Speaker: By unanimous consent, Mr. Olson, seconded by Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale), moves:

That the Standing Committee on Agriculture be empowered to consider and report its recommendations on or before February 17, 1970, on alternative programs designed to utilize the funds available for dairy support in the forthcoming year in such a manner as to bring dairy production and consumption into better balance, thus increasing the net income of industrial milk producers through decreasing the cost to them of moving quantities of dairy products into export.

Motion agreed to.

HOUSING

STATEMENT ON URBAN RENEWAL

Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister without Portfolio): Mr. Speaker, after personal meetings and discussions with the responsible ministers from the provinces I announced on August 14 that:

Until a more well defined and logical long-term Canadian urban renewal policy can be formulated and enunciated, municipalities with urban renewal schemes presently in preparation will have to elect either to suspend further study or, alternatively, to complete their work in the knowledge that additional federal funds for implementation of the schemes may or may not be forthcoming.

At that time, also, I approved six projects and authorized negotiation for limited participation in six more. Shortly following that action, all municipalities preparing urban renewal schemes were informed of this announcement by letter.

More recently, Monday, December 8, I informed hon. members in the House that we have launched a full inquiry into the whole process of urbanization in an attempt to establish a set of rational objectives and a co-ordinated policy and program framework at the federal level, involving consultations with provincial governments and other interested parties. Our basic concern is to see that the causes and not just the symptoms are dealt with and that existing or proposed new interventions are related and productive. The urban renewal program, as administered under the National Housing Act—1964 amendment—is but one small component of the broad and complex process of urban redevelopment. Urban growth reflects the actions of

three levels of government and numerous private market forces; yet this one intervention—urban renewal—particularly, has not been linked with these other actions.

The program is an extremely rigid instrument. It is rigid in its requirement for a three-stage process—study, scheme, implementation—and in the resulting commitment to action in a tightly designated small section of a city. The process is tortuously long, resulting too often in stagnation and, in its final focus, removing the flexibility of a municipality—for example, in applying resources to a series of perhaps dispersed but planned interventions for clearance, rehabilitation and redevelopment.

Moreover, in the absence of clearly defined economic and social goals, including the provision of housing for the most disadvantaged income groups, the program appears to have served a multitude of often contradictory purposes which were never foreseen in the original definition. For example, as a result of urban renewal activities to date, there has been a net loss in low income housing stock.

As I said on December 8, we are embarked upon a deep study of the urban process—identification of the determinants of urban growth, the causes of urban problems, the inter-relationship of governmental action at and between each level, and the other forces at work. At this stage, I admit quite freely that we are impressed mainly by the complexity of the social systems that cities have become. The finding of solutions will be a major undertaking involving much expertise, all governments and the public—consultations which we will seek and welcome.

● (2:20 p.m.)

In the meantime we do not see the wisdom or justification for an expansion of government intervention, of major new dimensions, in programs such as urban renewal, some forms of which are doubtful in their results. We see rather a need for more emphasis on low income housing and such investments that provide clear and more immediate benefits.

If, Mr. Speaker, I accepted only those urban renewal schemes about to be brought to the implementation stage, the federal treasury alone would be involved in ultimate expenditures approaching \$400 million and loans up to two-thirds of the total grant. Provincial and municipal expenditures would have been on a similar scale. No rationale could be