

*Alleged Failure to Cope With Urban Growth*

the minister's remarks, the cities of this country have problems, lots of them. And they will get much worse in the near future unless the federal government stops its constitutional shilly-shallying. The government's hiding behind the British North America Act can have only one result. It means that the people of this country's urban areas will suffer. They will enjoy a much poorer kind of life as a direct result of the government's lack of leadership, its lack of action, its lack of foresight and in fact its absolute lack of almost any kind of common horse sense when it comes to doing something about the problems faced by our cities and their people. It is time the government stopped horsing around with this constitutional bit so far as our cities are concerned. That is all they are doing—horsing around trying to hitch up 19th century horse and buggy ideas to get our jet age cities ready for the 21st century.

Constitutionally the government is involved in the problems of the cities up to its neck. It just will not recognize it. It pays no attention to the good advice and all the startling facts that were laid before it by the Economic Council of Canada in its fourth report. What do we have to do to wake them up? The time of the walled city is gone, Mr. Speaker. There was only one real walled city in Canada—Quebec—and it has long since burst those bonds to expand far beyond its original boundaries, as has virtually every city in my part of Canada. The only walled city left in this country is the walled city of the government's closed mind, the walled city of the limited concepts of the night watchman state which this government uses to try to deal with what is essentially and primarily an urban and urbanizing culture.

We of the big cities need, indeed demand, a constitutional breakthrough. We demand that the government recognize the close connections between all of its policies and the way our cities develop. We insist that it see, that it realize, and that it act on the intimate relationships which bind our cities to our rural areas. Everything the government does for the farmer, everything it does against the farmer too—and here I am speaking as much or more about the modern agricultural industrialist as I am about the family farm—all federal policies relating to wheat surpluses, to the oil and gas industry, to the potash business, all their policies relating to construction, mining exploration, and so on, have very direct and immediate effects on our cities and their people.

[Mr. Paproski.]

The federal government's failure to sell Canadian wheat has meant commercial depression in some of our prairie cities and trading centres. The government's feeble-hearted attempts to persuade inflation to go away are felt with agonizing effects in our cities. Consumers in Edmonton, Calgary, Toronto, Montreal, in fact in all our cities, are completely at the mercy of the booming rise in food prices which the government permits by its inaction. No longer can the government deny its responsibility for our cities and their problems. They like passing the buck to the provinces on this question, but no longer. It is time they stopped trying to pass on these inflated Benson bucks to somebody else and tackled the problems themselves.

It hardly seems necessary to emphasize the rapid growth in our urban areas and the undesirable developments that accompany such unco-ordinated growth. In only five years, from 1961 to 1966, the populations of our large urban centres increased by almost 20 per cent. The smaller towns, with populations between 2,500 and 100,000, increased only 11.4 per cent, and the rural population actually went down. My own province of Alberta, as most of you know, is one of the most rapidly growing. Our capital city, part of which I have the honour to represent, increased in population from 337,500 in 1961 to 400,000 plus in 1966 and is now well over that. Calgary's population is booming as well and the favourite eastern image of our province as a land of farmers must disappear at once if the west and its problems are to be properly understood here. I must confess, however, there seems little hope that the inward-looking, walled city mentality of the present administration will ever make an honest effort to look west to understand us.

If our major cities were already working models of efficiency and high quality living, urban growth of the proportions I have indicated would not tax their existing facilities very much. But our metropolitan areas are conglomerations of mounting deficiencies and heavy backlogs of essential works still to be done. The government has been warned about the problems often enough. The Economic Council of Canada, which it appointed, outlined the situation with great clarity in its fourth report. But let me give a quotation from another government document:

As each year thousands more Canadians seek city space and service to work and live and play and drive, one must wonder whether the existing