

National Housing Act

As a new minister I intend to keep an open mind, receptive to and seeking constructive suggestions and advice from all sources inside and outside government departments, inside and outside governments. Particularly, I will welcome any and all suggestions hon. members may wish to make and it is my hope that each will add his own valuable contribution to the debate.

• (3:40 p.m.)

Mr. Robert McCleave (Halifax-East Hants): Mr. Speaker, before the minister concludes his speech may I ask him a question. At page 23 of the text provided he has stated he would be introducing the amendment to deal with land acquisition at the report stage. Can he not do this earlier when the bill is in committee? I think everybody would agree we could examine all its ramifications there. Would he agree to taking that course?

Mr. Andras: Mr. Speaker, I would be agreeable to seeking the passage of that amendment at the earliest possible stage but the procedural advice which I received, and that I conveyed to the house earlier, was that I should do it at the report stage. However, if there is any way to speed it up I will be delighted.

Mr. McCleave: Mr. Speaker, Mr. and Mrs. John Parsons of Halifax have had to spend many days recently in cold spring weather living in a tent in a backyard in Halifax. They have read with interest, and very considerable scepticism, the comment of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) that there is no housing crisis in Canada. When one considers that the Parsons, like a good number of other families, have an income from which they could devote approximately \$125 a month for accommodation, one realizes that something is seriously wrong. I shall get into the seriously wrong things later in my contribution.

First, I would like to compliment the minister upon assuming a very important portfolio. Actually it is a "without" portfolio, and I wish I could compliment him upon being minister of housing and urban affairs. However, he is to be a Minister without Portfolio, although seized with this very important matter of housing, and there is not a soul in this chamber who would not join with me in all good wishes to him. I think I can say, although perhaps I am offending the oldest political rule in the book by being kind to an opponent, that his characteristics of earnestness and sincerity will stand him in good

[Mr. Andras.]

stead in the years ahead as he tackles our housing problems.

One year and one day after the Prime Minister became prime Minister his righthand man in English speaking Canada, his righthand minister in cabinet, resigned. I refer to the former minister of transport who also had been seized with housing matters. I hope that the former minister, who performed a useful function for Canadians by working on the task force on housing, will take part in this debate, although I do not see him in the chamber today.

Sir, when that minister resigned he stated, and I quote from an article by him in the *Toronto Daily Star* of May 10:

I find myself unable to keep my pledge (of meeting Canadians' urgent housing problems) because of a concept of federalism espoused by the Prime Minister which, in my view, prevented action not only to meet the housing problem but to deal as well with a number of other issues which I believe to be of major concern to Canadians.

In the letter that the minister sent to the Prime Minister at the time of his resignation on April 24, he said:

I feel there is a lack of initiative in using federal powers to deal with issues such as housing, pollution, inflation and urban development which are so vital to the needs of ordinary people in our modern, industrialized society.

Later on, sir, I will be making an argument based not only on what the former minister of transport said but on other factors that I feel would compel this parliament to establish a ministry of urban affairs. I do not think we can possibly advance into the 21st century and solve our problems without it, particularly the growth problem that, believe it or not, is going to turn the area between Milwaukee and Quebec City into the world's greatest megalopolis within some 30 years. I will unveil that portion of my speech later on.

Now, back to the view of the Prime Minister regarding the constitution, and back to the problem that caused the former minister in charge of housing to resign from the cabinet. No housing crisis? Of course, Mr. Speaker, the housing crisis is not a general crisis across the whole range of housing except in so far as costs and inflation are a general factor everywhere. But certainly for the poor people of Canada there is a housing crisis, and a housing crisis of major proportions.

Recently the Prime Minister visited Calgary and met with certain people who protested a new development in that city. Five houses were being demolished to make way for a new high rise apartment, and it was the