

Some people are asking that there be a greater investment by the federal government in our cities and that the federal public sector be enlarged. Other people have recognized that there are already a large number of programs of the federal government which are carried out in the cities. They are asking that, in respect of this new ministry, these programs be co-ordinated and that policies be established which would comprehend all of the programs of the federal government within the cities. It is also suggested that there be new programs.

The third approach being taken by members and other people commenting on the Speech from the Throne has been based on constitutional considerations. It has been observed that the federal government is not the only government with urban responsibilities. The constitutional questions have been considered. The participation of other levels of government is being considered. A wise government policy, as the minister himself observed, would be a national policy, not just a federal policy, planned, agreed upon, and implemented at all levels of government. A number of members have made suggestions concerning tri-level political instruments focusing on housing, airports, harbours, or urban ground transportation.

● (9:50 p.m.)

Hopefully all these ideas I have itemized can now be considered in a broader context than before, when the minister was nominally only responsible for housing. The reference to urban affairs in the new title of the minister is in itself encouraging. To me it suggests what I hope will be a new focus, broader than housing and broader even than the term "urban development" which was the expression used in the past. These limited terms of reference, that is housing and urban development, seem to be oriented to the idea of growth and a concept of futurism rather than to intensification of the use of existing facilities and an interest in the present condition of urban life. This is the subject I should like to discuss in the short time available to me. The reference to urban affairs reflects recognition of the potential that urban life presents for Canadians.

I should like to suggest that Canada become an urban nation and that we should commit ourselves to giving all Canadians the opportunity to be urban people, whether or not they live in cities. I refer to urban in the sense of being plugged in and aware of the opportunities there are for experiences of the type which always draw men to live together in cities and which have characterized the great cities, that is opportunities to communicate, to learn, to grow as people; opportunities to make choices of life styles and choices of association; the opportunity to have access to the greatest variety of experiences, of goods and services, leisure activities and entertainment.

In a recent speech the minister responsible for housing, the hon. member for Port Arthur (Mr. Andras), who will become the Minister of State for Urban Affairs, proposed new terms of reference as his criteria for future urban programs. He asked this question: Does the program pay in terms of social comfort and stimulation of people?

#### *The Address—Mr. Kaplan*

Does it quicken the pulses of the large cities that are becoming the homes of most Canadians? This is an intriguing question and may imply, as I hope it does, that there will be new standards for government action along the lines I have outlined.

Ottawa in the past has searched for a handle on the urban environment. It has been natural to look to the BNA Act for something that would give Ottawa the right to play a role in shaping the cities. Transportation, housing, and sewers are the subjects Ottawa has chosen to use in the past. I should like to suggest that our past approach has been too much obsessed by the hardware of city life and not enough by the software. We have thought the answers to urban problems lay in physical solutions, such as a better stock of housing, more rapid and efficient transportation systems and better sewage treatment.

These programs are important and there should be no reduction of our commitment to them, but I believe we are putting too much faith in hardware. In addition, hardware solutions imply the destruction and replacement of what we are already living with and these "scorched earth" approaches are beginning to revolt even those people in the cities whose physical surroundings are the worst.

Lately there has been a trend to downgrade physical growth as a valid standard of urban progress in favour of a new standard which has been given the name "Quality of Life". But even this expression has come to mean something physical and a new kind of hardware. It is used to refer to the level of pollution, the conservation of wild life and again, it is a growth standard, but in this connection growth of public capital investment. These so-called quality of life priorities are also important, particularly the attack on pollution. We must fight pollution and fight it with hardware until we reach what the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry (Mr. Davis) has called the plateau at which further deterioration of our environment is arrested. We must assure the preservation of a liveable environment for ourselves and for the plants and animals on which we depend. But, Mr. Speaker, concentration on these physical priorities has dominated government thinking about cities and urbanism itself has been forgotten.

All the programs I have described are designed to produce physical comfort and, as important as that is, it is different from the minister's phrase "social comfort and stimulation". I suggest that if physical improvement alone were the answer we would already have a great urban life in Canada because it is a fact that we are the world's best housed nation. I do not say this in a sense of complacency. On the contrary, there are big urban problems in Canada, but there are worse problems in our large cities than physical comfort and standards. There are problems manifested even in those areas of large cities where physical standards are adequate and more than adequate. There is a growing feeling that there is a lack of contact with the environment, not just the natural environment but the urban human political environment.