

*National Housing Act*

legislation unless there is going to be put behind the administration of such legislation such drive as we have not had hitherto.

On Monday I pointed to some of the cases in my own city of Toronto where delays, although not entirely attributable to the lack of action on the part of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, showed quite clearly that a substantial measure of responsibility does rest on Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. This relates very directly to the subject which I have no doubt occupies a principal place in the thinking of hon. members in regard to the measure now under discussion. I refer to the hope of more rapid action in slum clearance in Canada.

I hope there is not an hon. member in this chamber who is going to pretend that we have no slums in Canada today. If any hon. member thinks there are no slums in Canada today he has not visited areas of our substantial urban centres. Today the minister did review some of the things that are needed in relation to the development of municipal plans and programs in regard to slum clearance. Obviously there must be on the part of municipalities a substantial measure of concern reflecting itself in municipal initiative in connection with these matters. We agree with that; but in my humble submission it is folly to talk about the initiative that rests upon the municipalities in connection with these matters if the municipalities are going to be hamstrung in the matter of revenues. What is the use of talking about municipal initiative in relation to the clearing of slums in our urban centres if the municipalities concerned are denied adequate revenues for those purposes?

The great difficulty and the great drawback about the National Housing Act in relation to slum clearance is that nothing can be done without co-operative action on the part of all three levels of government concerned. It takes only one level of government dragging its feet in these matters to thwart any hope of effective action in regard to slum clearance in any particular place. When you try to get three governments together, when you have to bring them on common ground, not only in regard to the purpose of slum clearance in an area but in agreement on the many details which enter into plans for slum clearance, then you have a problem indeed to begin with.

No one in this house is so innocent as to believe that where action on slum clearance depends upon co-operative and concomitant action on the part of three levels of government, you are going to have any great measure of speed in dealing with them. But

if the federal government is going to continue to say, as the minister said today, that any attempt to grapple with the problem of slum clearance or redevelopment in our urban areas depends upon municipal initiative then it is high time the government said at the same time that it is going to make it possible for the municipalities to take the initiative by seeing that they shall have adequate sources of revenue for the purpose, which they have not today.

In the meantime, as long as these delays continue we are going to be witnessing the same things that have existed since there have been slums; that is, human decay, moral, physical and mental. Every hon. member of this house has a responsibility in relation to taking measures about slum clearance. It is not enough that we should attempt to hide behind any choice coined expression about "municipal initiative". If the present legislation is inadequate for the purpose, and I think it has shown itself to be, then something better must be devised.

We welcome the changes that are proposed to be introduced into the National Housing Act by the present bill. I commend the changes that are introduced with respect to the slum clearance provisions of the act. Anything that offers any contribution at all toward this problem on a sound basis is bound to command the sympathy and, I trust, the support of the house. Greater flexibility in these provisions is afforded by the present bill, and to this extent it is altogether commendable; but even with these changes we have not yet discharged our full responsibility in relation to slum clearance and in relation to the cost in humanity as well as in dollars and cents that characterizes the existence of slums.

I made some reference on Monday to the benefits that have been achieved through slum clearance in the Regent Park North project in Toronto. Other benefits have flowed from that project than simply improvement in housing conditions. There are those secondary benefits that have been achieved and that are noteworthy and praiseworthy; the reduction in health, police and other municipal expenses. These are net savings that are afforded as the result of slum clearance and redevelopment.

The minister struck today a note that will, I think, be echoed throughout the house, when he indicated that our plans for slum clearance ought to be viewed as part of a general municipal planning program. The areas it is sought to redevelop cannot be detached or isolated from the rest of the city; they should be seen as part of a well integrated municipal program. But I still say that we have to do