

● (4:10 p.m.)

We have been urging for a long time that the department, acting in consort and consultation with the provinces, should see to it that representatives of our urban centres are integrated among those taking an active part in future constitutional conferences. We have been talking about this for some time. We have tried, and I say this with respect, to be constructive and to suggest alternative courses which the government could take—means by which its actions as they concern the urban environment could become more credible. We have urged a tri-level conference at which the various representatives could sit together and ascertain where their responsibilities lay, and how best each could serve. At such a conference, the people who are concerned about the ultimate destiny of this country would be able, as reasonable men, to consider and adopt viable solutions.

It is time, also, to understand that the co-ordination of all federal activities which vitally affect the direction and nature of urban growth calls for the appointment of a full minister of housing and urban affairs. I referred earlier to the desirability of a standing committee on urban affairs. The setting up of such a committee would give us an opportunity to hear directly from those who are deeply concerned about these matters. How can the minister possibly give money to a tenants association without involving himself to the extent of giving the association a pipeline through which advice and information can be passed? How can he grant money on one hand and say to them on the other: "Leave me alone."?

It is reported that Canada has experienced the fastest rate of urban growth among the industrially advanced countries. The Economic Council has stated that in 1980 out of a total population of about 25 million, 80 per cent will live in cities and 15 million in 27 major cities each of which will have a bigger budget and a larger population than one or more of our present provinces. It has also been forecast that by the year 2,000 over half of the population will live in five megalopolises. The immediate concern of this government should, in these circumstances, be to cut through the constitutional camouflage and integrate the vast array of federal powers and responsibilities into a coherent federal policy towards the cities. Unfortunately, the government appears to have no policy on this issue. I ask the minister: how can this government pretend to take an interest in urban renewal

Suggested Lack of Urban Policy

and the problems of urban growth when, almost unilaterally, it has ended its involvement in the work of urban renewal? Let me read something for the record. I have here a cutting from the *Globe and Mail*. This will indicate that such a decision challenges belief.

One day this week, Robert Andras, minister without portfolio responsible for housing, announced that the federal government would spend no more than \$4 millions on urban renewal projects in Toronto in the next five years.

He made that decision even before the study of the problems of the cities had been well launched.

It is a shocking decision for the people who live in the decaying areas of the city, who know that if the rot is not stopped soon it will be beyond stopping. It is a shocking decision for the municipal and provincial specialists who are halted in their tracks—and for five years. Such a delay leaves this burgeoning city in a state of ill-health from which it may never recover.

As I have told my constituents in Hamilton, Ontario, which seems to have been continually shafted by this government, such an attitude has led me to suggest that our larger cities should join the United Nations and apply for foreign aid. If ever they were to do that, the government might come up with the necessary funds from behind the table in time to bring salvation to our cities.

I am disturbed by what the minister has said about housing—disturbed by the implication of his statement that he stands behind the government's anti-inflationary policies which have resulted in unprecedented unemployment and an alarming decrease in housing starts. He has indicated that starts will reach approximately 180,000 this year; the Economic Council has stated that at least 250,000 starts are needed.

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) does not like the expression "Building Societies". The Minister without Portfolio in charge of housing recently returned from an informative trip to Europe. He is now impressed with the possibilities which building societies present. I asked a minister a question on this subject the other day in the committee on National Health and Welfare. To be fair, I do not remember whether the hon. gentleman replied. I ask him whether, since "Thirty buck Benson" is not interested in it because of the tax concessions, whatever that might mean, the minister would now approach his colleague the Minister of Finance and put this program to him so that moneys might be made available for housing since, apparently, the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation will not lend any more money and we have not been able to persuade the provinces,