

Housing

family in any apartment dwelling in my constituency, with the exception of those very fancy families in fancy apartments, which does not feel the increase in rates eating into the available funds for food, clothing and the bringing up of children. These are the facts.

The fact is that in respect of public housing in Canada there are only 40,000 units, about $\frac{1}{3}$ of 1 per cent of total housing starts in Canada. Those are the facts the Prime Minister and the government have to face. Those are the facts the Prime Minister did not mention. Instead of that, he cited figures which are literally irrelevant to the situation in respect of a large part of the Canadian people, although they may be relevant to the total situation.

The Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation issued its report for 1968 and at page XIV we find a statement I should like to draw to the attention of this house with the hope that the Prime Minister will read it, if he has not already had it drawn to his attention. This report says, at the page I have mentioned:

● (3:50 p.m.)

However, the likelihood is that a program as high even as 250,000 units per year would not create a sufficient stock within five years to bring an end to over-crowding, doubling up, and the continued use of deficient dwellings.

Even 250,000 units per year would not really touch the housing crisis of this country. The price of homes and the high level of rents is a problem that remains even if the total housing stock is increased. It is with this knowledge of the crisis, the knowledge of these relevant facts, relevant to the lives of Canada's people, of Canada's old, Canada's young and Canada's new families, that my leader dealt with the constitutional problem. No matter how many words the Prime Minister may use here or elsewhere, he has encased himself in a constitutional strait-jacket. Since he is the leader of the country he has, therefore, encased the country in a constitutional strait-jacket. Like every rigidity of this sort which is imposed upon a dynamic and flowing situation within a country or a society, it is inconsistent; it just is not so. Whatever the Prime Minister has said is contradicted by something else that has happened.

For example, even today he made a great point, if I understood him correctly, about the question of making funds available for the assembly of land by the municipalities. Says he, do we do it directly with the

[Mr. Lewis.]

municipalities or do we do it through the provinces? Heavens above, what is he talking about? The fact is that in section 35 of the National Housing Act we have provision for public housing and in another section we have provision for urban renewal. The plan has to be arrived at in consultation. The federal department has to approve of it or it will not be put into effect. Of course the provincial government enters the picture in channelling the funds and paying its 10 per cent, in most cases, or 25 per cent, whatever it may be, of the balance that has to be paid after the federal funds have been allotted.

I cannot think of a more picayune attitude—I say this as a person who has great respect for the Prime Minister's intellect even though I have not for his concern for the welfare of Canada—than to raise the constitutional problem on this point. Who, in heaven's name, cares whether the funds go through Queen's Park to Toronto or directly to Toronto? I do not. If it makes Mr. Robarts happier, I do not care if it is done that way, as long as the people who want public housing and want to be able to buy land at a relatively decent, honest price, instead of the usurious prices which they have to pay now, are able to do so.

It does not matter how the federal funds get to the party assembling the land. If the Prime Minister, by stating that example, is trying to tell members of this house that this is so great and tremendously difficult a problem that he has been unable to persuade the provinces to agree where the cheque is to go or how the funds are to be funnelled to the municipalities, I simply do not accept that statement; I would have to think that every provincial premier is devoid of any intelligence at all. I do not think they are the most brilliant men in Canada, any more than I am or anyone else is, but, by gad, they are not unintelligent.

I cannot believe that the Prime Minister, making an honest and conscientious effort to solve that picayune problem, would not have succeeded by now. To attempt to tell us that is the problem is to throw sand in our eyes and throw an argument into the conversation that is not there.

The words of the Prime Minister with regard to the constitution, I say to hon. members and to anyone else who is interested, even though today, he used words very carefully to indicate that he was not thinking of less federal-provincial co-operation, made me shudder for the future of our country. He