

Suggested Lack of Urban Policy

new urban policy in many of the municipalities. I find myself at variance with some of the solutions he proposed, but perhaps on the fundamental question I agree with him.

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I should like to open my remarks by commending the Parliamentary Secretary for an extremely thoughtful and worth-while contribution to the debate. I think the answer to the question put by my colleague, the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby (Mr. Broadbent), saves me the necessity of getting into any controversy with the Parliamentary Secretary, because as I understand it he does not deny the importance of a federal presence in the total picture when dealing with urban problems: he merely emphasizes the importance of provincial and regional contribution. In that respect I agree with him, but I put the emphasis on the federal contribution.

I am very glad to have an opportunity to speak in this debate because my constituents are deeply concerned about urban problems. In my opinion, one of the weaknesses of this government has been its lack of attention to urban affairs. I believe new structures and new energies are required and, if need be, new constitutional provisions making clear that the federal involvement in matters of urban concern is not unconstitutional. I think there has been a dragging of feet in this matter.

There are three aspects of the matter that I wish to discuss, although I know time is limited. The first is housing, the second is transportation and the third is pollution. These three fields affect the quality of life of the great majority of Canadians. In each of these fields there is a necessity of close co-operation between the different levels of government including, as the Parliamentary Secretary indicated, new regional levels of government. That degree of co-operation will have to be something quite different from what has existed in the past. I do not know whether this fact has been mentioned in the debate, but it is anticipated that in ten years 80 per cent of all Canadians will live in urban areas. There is urgent need for co-ordinated planning for the future and need for effective consultation with and participation by the people themselves in any plans made on their behalf.

To take the problem of housing first, few will deny there is a crisis. There is a crisis of gravity in many cases—even a crisis of tragedy, as I have found in my own constituent

[Mr. O'Connell.]

cy. This crisis will not go away easily, because it has been built up over the years. I sent a questionnaire to my constituents and more than 80 per cent of the 600 people who answered in considerable detail agreed that there is a serious housing crisis. I know they are right. The situation is spelled out in statement by the Canadian Welfare Council's housing committee, dated April 26, 1970. The situation is desperate, especially for pensioners and for those just starting to establishing a home and family who find there is no place in which they can afford to live. Rents are increasing rapidly. I was told that in one year in Toronto rents have increased by 12 per cent.

The annual rate of starts in the first quarter of 1970 was 160,000, as against 250,000 units required to create a sufficient stock of housing in five years. The main villains of the piece have been the increased rate of interest and the escalation of land costs. As practically everybody here knows, the February, 1970, interest rate on NHA institutional loans was 10.5 per cent and the prime conventional rate 11 per cent. The minister has said—and I am sure that what he states is correct—that he recognizes the need to concentrate on housing for low and moderate income groups. He acknowledges this, but so far the acknowledgement has not been followed by any great performance.

• (5:50 p.m.)

We are encouraged to note that there has been a substantial increase in support for low and moderate housing, which accounted for 7.9 per cent of all starts in 1969, about double the 1966 proportion. Nevertheless, there is need for a vast expansion in this sector. In 1969, of all the housing that was built only 3.9 per cent was subsidized public housing. This is a deplorably low figure. The waiting list of the Ontario Housing Corporation for the metro area of Toronto is over 16,000 and is constantly growing. There is need for a new housing subsidy program. Last year, 1969, the government spent nearly \$20.9 million on government housing subsidies, that is, a federal contribution of \$12.6 million or 60 cents per capita. This is totally inadequate and shows a wrong sense of priorities. There is need, not only for a new subsidy program but for a rent supplement for low-income residents who are residing in non-profit and co-operative housing, and for subsidized interest rates to support home ownership for low-income families.