

Immigration

I find quite unacceptable. It is a line of argument that I just do not buy.

I would not, perhaps, have taken this initiative to make my point concerning what I feel has been the renegeing of the government on its urban priorities had it not been for my strong concern about some of the other backtrackings that have occurred. I will touch upon these briefly, and I should like to give a little background about why I am particularly critical of the government's lack of direction and inability to pursue a course that will benefit over the longer term some 85 per cent of our population which now live in the urban areas of Canada.

● (1620)

I should like to refer back to the period after World War II when Canada had an opportunity not only to ensure adequate housing for its population but adequate planning for that housing. The original personnel who made up the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation in the early fifties had a very clear concept for the future of Canada, that it would be well planned. Unfortunately, those far-sighted individuals were not given an opportunity by the government of that day to use the government's lending power to that end. The government was practically the only body lending money for housing at that time.

Had that lending level been used to force better planning for our suburbs, we would have had a totally different situation today. We would have avoided massive speculation with the results we are all aware of. We would have had communities planned around transportation facilities not totally dependent on highways. We would have had basic planning involving things such as sewers and water. The result would have been far less expensive for our taxpayers in the long run, and a much healthier municipal tax situation across the country than we have now. Mind you, that is water under the bridge. The federal government did not do what it should have done.

In 1968, when our present Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) was running for the leadership of his party, there was hope that he was someone who could see what the country's priorities were in the form of better living conditions for the areas where most of our people live. The hope for getting more out of this government was encouraged. At the beginning there was a slow period, but by 1972-73 there was a hope that finally the government was seeing the error of its earlier ways and was going to move in a direction to link transportation planning with redevelopment planning. A prime example of that is the Railway Relocation Act. It is a vehicle which allows the federal government to contribute on a 50-50 basis with the provinces, or even higher.

I am referring to regional transportation plans and the regional development plans which must precede transportation plans desired by particular urban or suburban areas. This type of direction is more necessary now because of the energy crisis, and it seemed to be on the point of being pushed by the federal government and a consensus had almost been reached with the provinces. The provinces have matured substantially in their

[Mr. Watson.]

treatment of regional and city planning. The need is not as great as it was in the late fifties and early sixties for a federal policy guidance input. But along came a new areas of necessity resulting from the energy situation, and the federal government realized there was a new opening for their presence because the provinces were not showing an adequate appreciation of the long-term consequences of what energy shortages would do to our urban and suburban societies. It was not only there for the grabbing; it was there for grasping by the federal government. No one else was doing it, and by not doing it we are putting our people into a more and more precarious situation from an energy consumption point of view and from the point of view of our long-term energy balance with the rest of the world.

From 1972 to 1974 the situation was one of hope. We were finally going to move to a central policy planning push which was needed and useful. The transportation development agency was in existence, and we were going to develop an industry, with government encouragement, to standardize transportation equipment in this country. The industry would have had a fantastic export potential. But on that, too, we have moved way from any concrete action: we are talking; we are not doing anything.

Under the National Housing Act, we have had laws which encouraged land assembly from as early as 1953. Some lands were assembled in Toronto at that time. One can imagine the consequence for house prices around Toronto had the federal government pushed its program for land assembly. After the provinces were embarrassed, Ontario finally moved to assemble some land. Several years ago the federal government moved toward a new cities program which also has disappeared into the woodwork somewhere along the line. There was southeast city in Ottawa. The Pickering airport land was conceived of being for airport use and for the potential use of a new city. These efforts were to be examples for the rest of the country.

The new city concept and land banking could have had an enormous effect upon the inflation situation in Canada. House prices in Ottawa are a direct result of the lack of proper city planning for the expansion of Ottawa suburbs. Had our new cities program been in effect, or had we pushed a land assembly program around Ottawa with that possible lever at our disposal, land and house prices could have been anywhere from 25 per cent to 35 per cent lower than the last few years. Thus, public servants would have been faced with lower costs for housing which might have alleviated some of their demands for higher wages.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Order.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: The hon. member is making statements not related to this bill.

Mr. Watson: From the beginning I have attempted to underscore the federal government's backing away from a number of urban priorities, including the one referred to in this motion. These priorities would have encouraged immigrants