

CMHC Act

of Habitat Canada continue to change and improve the cities, towns and villages where Canadians live.

In preparation for making this address today I looked up the history of the word "habitat". In the English language it is as old as the language itself. It comes from the Greek word "habère", meaning to hold; to occupy or possess; to have. Even a small child, when developing and learning, has the word "habitat" in his vocabulary—"That is my habitat, the place where I live". That is common to our language. In the same way, its roots are equally deep in the other official language, the French language.

One of the most serious difficulties in our society today as a government and as members of parliament is to make people understand what is available to help them. I suggest that this is a phrase that says, in both official languages without need for translation and in words long based in both languages, Habitat Canada; just what it means. There is some precedent for simplifying the names of federal institutions. TCA was changed to Air Canada, and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to Radio Canada. That has surely been helpful to Canadians to know and to identify these institutions of the federal government. I will not continue, Madam Speaker, because I hope for sympathetic support for this bill. There is some indication from the government to that effect. I hope my friends on the other side of the House will agree that this is a simple move to help Canadians understand better what is being done for them in the field of housing.

Mr. Bill Clarke (Vancouver Quadra): Madam Speaker, I was interested to hear the fatherly presentation of my hon. friend opposite where he stressed the role he sees for yet another government organization. By now we should be used to such time-fillers as the bill of the hon. member for York West (Mr. Fleming). After all, he is a member of the government which in the last session had us debating a bill about what kind of football Canadians should be allowed to watch, at a time when Canadians were so frightened by the effect of inflation on their savings that they were going on a huge spending spree, fueling the fires of inflation even more. In that same week, the government-owned CBC was broadcasting American football games in Toronto. This government again illustrates that it is insensitive to the wants of Canadians. If Canadians did not want to watch World Football League football it would fade away without any help from the government and Canadians would have had one more element of their freedom left intact.

The changing of this corporation's name to Habitat Canada will cost the Canadian taxpayer a great deal of money but will not make it one bit easier to obtain a mortgage. But then the government, after interfering in the bargaining process, held off recalling parliament to stop the grain handlers' strike in Vancouver for six weeks, completely ignoring the cost entailed in keeping ships in port. It also ignored Canada's failure to meet overseas grain commitments and the wishes of producers and consumers who are now dangerously short of grain.

● (1710)

But let us look at this bill. The hon. member for York West says that it will provide a shorter name and one that is the same in both official languages. The corporation has

[Mr. Fleming.]

been known as CMHC—you will notice that there are just four letters—for decades. It will take another decade for people to learn that good old Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation is the same as Habitat Canada. And for many Canadians the word "habitat" will recall mixed feelings and memories of the housing white elephant built for Expo 67 in Montreal. The hon. member says that it would be the same in both official languages. That may be true, but it would not mean the same thing in both languages. Or would it?

Harrap's French and English dictionary is supplied to members of this House. If we look at the French word "abita" we find that it means "habitat" in English. The Concise Oxford Dictionary, which is also supplied to members, defines "habitat" as the natural home of plants or animals, or as a habitation. It goes on to say that habitation means a place of abode or branch of the Primrose League. The same book says that the Primrose League is a Conservative association formed in memory of Benjamin Disraeli, the Earl of Beaconsfield. Perhaps "Habitat Canada" would be interpreted as the Canadian old Conservatives, a sort of Conservative Senate. Who knows what it would mean!

We have seen much evidence of this government's gimmickry in changing names. For instance, to name a few, we have Sports Canada, Recreation Canada, Taxation Canada, Agriculture Canada and Information Canada, affectionately known as InfoCan. None of these agencies works any better under its new name. In fact, some do not work as well. The Post Office, for example, is known as Postes Canada, but that is backwards for Canada Post, which used to be known as Royal Mail.

These problems, of course, are not related to the two languages. For instance, in the English language version there is a program known as PEP, the Program to Enhance Productivity. That does not apply to the people in the House or to agriculturalists; that is an industrial program. The aims of the program are: to encourage industrial growth and production by supporting studies to determine the feasibility of projects designed to enhance substantially the productivity or efficiency of companies. Well, so much for PEP! And if that description does not boggle the mind, let me refer you to GOMI, which is short for the Grains and Oil Seeds Marketing Incentives Program. And the list seems endless.

Some huge group evidently sits around all day dreaming up these names. I am sure we can all feel sorry for the fellow who dreamed up the slogan Air Canada. Sorry? Yes, because the name was grabbed up by the airline when he had intended it for the CBC. The poor old CBC had to settle for Radio Canada, which is not too bad except when the announcer says, "This is Radio Canada," you can see him on television and the television network uses the same name. One name which did not cost millions to change over was COJO. The only problem is that it only translates into the French words "Le comité d'organisation des jeux olympiques." In English that would be the Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games, or OCOG. But I suppose that's no worse than PEP or GOMI.

Maybe we should look more deeply into the reasons for this proposed, costly changeover. Maybe it is a plot to expand operations and for the government to get meaning-