

National Housing Act

● (1720)

In fairness to the Minister, the Government was giving an undue amount of political credits. It was taking all the credits for this housing program and yet the Government did not see fit, at least in my province, and a similar situation exists in other provinces, to get these programs delivered. As I said at the outset, I applaud the Government for taking the necessary initiatives to deliver these programs directly, but that does not get the Government off the hook. This Bill does not attack the root cause of the problem. The housing market is tied to the cyclical nature of the general economy. Unless the Minister has the courage to correct that, we will have continuing serious problems in this area.

Mr. McKenzie: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Hon. Member for Prince George-Peace River (Mr. Oberle). I am sure he will recall during the last election campaign the Liberal ads which appeared over national television during prime time, night after night. We saw the Minister of Transport (Mr. Axworthy) speak repeatedly on interest rates and what a horrible thing it was that interest rates were rising. Night after night over national television on behalf of the Liberal Party, with its usual pack of lies, he stated the Liberals would reduce interest rates.

That was over four years ago. Does the Hon. Member for Prince George-Peace River think that the Liberal Government should bring forward its policy and program on how it is going to reduce interest rates as the Liberals said they would over national television night after night during the 1980 election campaign? Does the Hon. Member not think that four to four-and-a-half years is just a little bit too long for the Liberals to take to bring in this policy of reducing interest rates? Does the Hon. Member think the Liberals should explain why they allowed the interest rates to go to 21 per cent? Interest rates are now on the rise and the Liberals still have not brought forward this policy of reducing interest rates.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McKenzie: The Liberals are going to mislead the Canadian people again going into the next election.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Guilbault): The Chair has a problem of whether some questions are allowable. Questions should relate to the remarks made by the previous speaker. The Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Assiniboine (Mr. McKenzie) is referring to something that happened four years ago. The Chair recognizes that the subject of interest rates is in the Bill. The Chair will allow the Hon. Member to reply. This is a border case, which seems to have little to do with what we are discussing.

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Speaker, what my friend, the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Assiniboine (Mr. McKenzie) has said is indicative of the kind of reluctance I would have in giving the Liberals our program in great detail, because they would not know how to handle it. The Liberals let interest rates run away, even though they promised clearly that interest rates

had to go down. I can recall the present President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Gray) getting up every day during question period saying that interest rates must go down. He was almost falling into the aisle while saying it.

Mr. McKenzie: He said he would resign.

Mr. Oberle: Interest rates went up. As my hon. friend indicated, the President said of the Treasury Board he would resign if interest rates did not go down. He is still here, Mr. Speaker, and he has not come up with any innovative ideas. The same is true with gasoline taxes. The Liberals said the price of gasoline would go up 18 cents if the bad Conservatives stayed in power. Look at what has happened, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Guilbault): The question period has now come to an end. For debate, the Hon. Member for Timiskaming (Mr. MacDougall).

Mr. John A. MacDougall (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in the debate, but very concerned in another way. Four years have gone by since this Government has been in power. Now we are in a situation where the Liberals are producing amendments not only to the Interest Act through Bill C-36, but also introducing amendments to the National Housing Act through Bill C-37.

This afternoon during question period we heard that we have to work together, meaning federal, provincial, and municipal governments, but when we look at Bill C-37, what do we see? We do not see federal and provincial governments working together. What we see is the federal Government going on its own. It is a sad state of affairs when we as a federal Government cannot work together with our counterparts in the provinces.

Housing to me and to the Members on this side of the House is very important. Everyone in this country should be able to have affordable housing. Everyone has a right to have a home. Let me speak about rural and native housing. There are a number of reserves in my riding of Timiskaming. Let me introduce to you, Sir, one part of my riding, the Moosonee-Moose Factory area. That area is made up of a native reserve and is in the northern part of James Bay. I went to that part of my riding last week. A housing survey was taking place. It was shocking, to say the least. In 1984 we still have people living in tents. I know that is hard to believe, but it is true. That same survey showed in addition to those living in tents two, three, and four families were living under one roof. In two or three rooms were 12, 14 and 16 individuals. I was told that in winter months, people were sleeping in the attic because that was the only warm area. Today, four years after this Government took over, we are only now debating this question. I hate to say this, but is it because there is a chance we will have an election this year and is it just an election issue? I hope not.

This year in the riding of Timiskaming we are allotted 30 homes under the Native and Rural Housing Program. That will not come close to what is required. In one area of my riding, the Moosonee-Moose Factory area, those 30 homes could be used exclusively. There are other parts to my riding,