

to this day the government still does not appreciate the consequences which have flowed from its decision to ban urea formaldehyde foam insulation back in December, 1980, as evidenced by its failure to address the economic problems as well as the health problems facing those who have urea formaldehyde foam insulation in their homes.

The president of the Canadian Home Insulation Contractors' Association said on May 10: "The mass hysteria that has been created out there has created problems for everyone." I use that quotation advisedly because I suspect there is not a region of this country where a legitimate contractor involved in the home insulation business has not gone under as a consequence of this, because urea formaldehyde foam insulation was the prevalent material used by most legitimate insulators across the country—and I underline and emphasize the words "legitimate insulators"—who were doing an adequate job. They were using urea formaldehyde foam, and as a consequence of the government's decision they were forced out of business. Hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of Canadians lost their jobs as a consequence, so everyone has been affected. Everyone has been hurt.

I am not suggesting for one moment that the government was wrong in making the decision it made back in December of 1980. We will have to wait until the minister comes before us in committee where we will have an opportunity to question him in greater detail. What I am saying is that the government has to take full responsibility for its decision. It has to take full legal as well as full moral responsibility and, in so doing, it has to address the serious economic problems it has created for over 100,000 home owners in this country, a disproportionate number of them in the minister's own province of Quebec. That is my main concern.

I listened with interest to the minister, and if indeed the government was anxious to get this bill out, I just wonder why it waited so long to resume the debate at second reading. Perhaps the minister is trying to drag out second reading debate until we receive the final report of the three-man committee of inquiry which was established under the Hazardous Products Act. It is interesting that that committee has not issued its final report. The committee is still in the process of preparing its final report to the government. We have received a preliminary report. It is conceivable—indeed, it has been predicted—that that committee will criticize the government and say that the government was wrong to ban the use of urea formaldehyde foam insulation in the first place. Whether the committee will do that, of course, remains to be seen, but it seems to me to be passing strange that we as legislators would be asked to give second reading to a bill on which the jury has not come in. In effect, that is what this three-man investigating committee set up under the Hazardous Products Act is.

In any event, given the fact that the chairman of that committee is well known to the minister because he was the minister's campaign manager and there is a very close relationship there, I suspect that the report of the committee and the minister's program with respect to the bill will operate in tandem.

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Having said that, I think it is important for us to make the point that we are concerned about the effect of the government's ban on the investments of thousands of Canadians who are struggling with homes they cannot sell. They are stuck with homes on which they are even finding it difficult to get conventional mortgages. Given our responsibility to these people, it certainly is incumbent upon the government to give us an undertaking, before second reading, that it will at least tell us in the committee just exactly what the guidelines are. Is the minister prepared to give the House that undertaking? Is he prepared to tell the House, before third reading of this bill, that the House will know exactly what the regulations are with respect to the application of the financial assistance provisions of the bill? It is absolutely critical that we know that in order to determine that those who are to be assisted will be assisted as justly as possible and there will be no discrimination with respect to any consideration.

In addition, I believe the government also has a very serious obligation to tell the House exactly what it feels is its responsibility to those who do not have health problems as a consequence of urea formaldehyde foam insulation, and I am one of them. There is no problem in my home. I do not live there all year round. It is in my constituency, but I have no problem there. Indeed, the insulation has worked very well. It has served me very well, but if I were attempting to sell my home, I would have to state that it has urea formaldehyde foam insulation because that is now a regulation of most real estate companies in the country. Of course, the minute that goes down on the sales contract, I am out of luck. The property value is gone. I could not give my house away once people knew it had urea formaldehyde foam insulation in it. I think that is a problem.

My good friend, the hon. member for Gloucester (Mr. Breau), usually makes good contributions in the debates of this House. I suspect many of his constituents have urea formaldehyde foam insulation in their homes, and the majority of them, as the hon. member well knows, will not qualify for assistance under this bill. However, they will continue to have very serious problems, and I ask the hon. member to join with me in a bipartisan approach to this problem so that we can help all of our constituents.

• (1530)

Mrs. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, there are many four letter words in our language which are judged to be obscene. I think UFFI, the acronym for "urea formaldehyde foam insulation", has been added to the list of dirty words in the English language. As we know, urea formaldehyde foam insulation is a dirty, poisonous substance which has been used in some 100,000 homes by people who thought they were using a reliable, safe product recommended by the federal government and sponsored through the CHIP home insulation program.

As we also know, many members of families have suffered very serious health problems as a result of the use of the foam. Others who have not yet had health problems are afraid that,