

Housing

As a member of the DREE committee, I have worked to try to attract industries to rural areas and then help them to succeed. To our sorrow, a good many industries have gone into these remote areas but, to put it mildly, they are having pretty tough sledding.

I have listened to speeches made on both sides of the House. Some members on this side took exception to certain statements by the minister and members opposite. Members on that side have taken great exception to the fact that we have even raised our voice in one word of criticism about the wonderful Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. I am aware that the department has accomplished certain things. It certainly should have.

I had the privilege of attending the housing committee meeting last night and early this morning. I was able to get some figures from the minister. A great deal was said about the AHOP program. So far, a total of 39,000 homes has been built under the program. That is all well and good for those who have their homes, but it is a far cry for those who feel they should qualify under that program.

The minister also gave figures with regard to defaults as far as AHOP is concerned. He stated the figure is about 2.2 per cent. That seems within reason.

Something I am interested in seeing enlarged is the RRAP program. I questioned the minister about this program because many people do not qualify for regular housing under CMHC, AHOP and so on. They do not have the income required to be able to qualify. Therefore the RRAP program is their only hope for better housing. This is one case where the government should go the third or fourth mile, or even further.

These programs are of particular interest to areas outside the cities. I admit there is bad housing in some cities, but there is much more need for this plan in the rural areas. I plead with the minister and his department to channel more money there and to do away with a lot of the red tape.

I have received telephone inquiries from my constituents who were turned down under the RRAP program. I admit you have to be in a position to repay the amount that is borrowed. I am also aware grants are available under that plan. Earlier this week I was told of persons who had made application under the RRAP program. I mentioned this to the minister. I want to put this on record because he and his deputy minister, Mr. Teron, stated it was not correct.

Certain people applied for loans under RRAP. They had certain ideas about what they intended to spend. For example, they may have intended to spend \$5,000 to upgrade the worst features of their homes or to make other renovations. When the inspector visited their homes, these people were told there were other things that had to be done and it was an all or nothing deal. I feel that is wrong. I intend to get back to that branch office in North Bay, in the area of the Postmaster General (Mr. Blais), to get a ruling and to tell them that I have heard differently from the powers that be. The RRAP program is doing a job in the rural areas in this country.

[Mr. Darling.]

There is a requirement for homes that can be put up in a hurry on land that does not cost a great deal. I listened earlier to current lot prices. I do not dispute those figures. Lots costing \$20,000, \$25,000 or \$30,000 are absolutely prohibitive.

The Canadian Mobile Home Association has been making presentations to the government to try to get some assistance. I brought this to the attention of the minister in committee this morning. He gave me the impression that something would be done. A great many people could purchase a mobile home which could be set up in a mobile home park without having to pay a very high land cost. There could be a rental for the land which would be within their means.

You can go from one extreme to the other. Mobile homes are suitable for the young and the old. For many retired senior citizens, their homes are now too big. They would find a mobile home much more economical. In addition, their homes could be put on the market and available to those with growing families. This is one phase of housing which would suit lower income people.

The hon. member for Selkirk (Mr. Whiteway) referred to the prophetic statement made a year or so ago in Calgary by Mr. Teron. He stated that only a very small percentage of people can look forward to owning a home. That is a tragedy in a country like Canada. This is a reasonably well housed country. Most of us are very lucky to have good homes. However, that is small consolation to a great many people still looking for adequate housing.

Something else has been very much to the fore this week. I refer to the government's insulation program. I am delighted to learn that the two provinces which had not joined the insulation program have finally been brought into the fold by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Gillespie), who recanted and allowed them in without any strings attached. In other words, he did not use the rubber hose on them that he used on the other six provinces. I commend the government on having removed that obstacle.

I hope the government has learned its lesson. When the matter of provincial jurisdiction is again involved, I hope the government will not try to use strong tactics to get its way. The key word with the provinces is co-operation, and consultation instead of arbitrary decision.

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The federal government certainly has a role to play in the area of housing. To a very large extent the federal government determines the environment, or the conditions of the housing market, because the housing market is so dependent on the current economic situation. It is the federal government which has a major part in creating the economic conditions—perhaps in the present circumstances I should say in the destruction of the economic conditions prerequisite to a healthy housing market.

The government has abused its role. Instead of creating an environment of co-operation between the federal department and the provinces, it has played blackmail games. Surely the government must be aware, as everyone else in Canada is, that