

Mr. McILRAITH: I am not raising obstacles to it.

Mr. GRAYDON: You are.

Mr. McILRAITH: I am seeking to bring this debate back to the motion before the house, which is a simple motion for second reading of a bill dealing with the federal government's responsibility in connection with housing. It is an amending bill.

There was some discussion this afternoon of the confused and difficult question of subsidies for housing. No one has yet defined exactly what is meant by subsidies for housing. However I was interested in the debate, and particularly in the few remarks of the hon. member for Saskatoon City (Mr. Knight). He spoke about some housing provided in his native city, and gave some examples. I did not know he was going to deal with those particular projects, or I would have sought to have the figures here. I am sorry I have not those figures with me. I asked the hon. member for them, because of my keen interest in his argument. I think, however, it may at some time or another be desirable to subsidize in some way some types of housing; although I never have been quite sure of what is meant by "subsidize". I think what the hon. member had in mind was a direct grant toward capital construction; I believe that is a fair estimate of what he had in mind. He spoke about the project, but made no reference to the capital cost of it. I am speaking from memory and have not checked the figures, but my recollection is that the project of which the hon. member spoke consisted of a building which was provided by the dominion government to the province free of cost and that the dominion made a grant in addition toward the cost of converting the building into suitable living accommodation. If there were anything paid for the building I presume it would not be more than eight per cent of the cost.

While the hon. member was asking for a direct subsidy for housing, he made what I considered the most perfect argument I have ever heard against subsidies for housing. He made a better argument than one would expect from a person who was flatly opposed to subsidies in any and all forms in any and all circumstances.

I could not help noting the example he gave of the married couple who were living in the housing accommodation which he described in rather good terms. This was serviced housing accommodation, with light and heat provided at a rental of some \$30 a month. He mentioned that the couple had no children, that the husband was working and that the wife was able

[Mr. Graydon.]

to go out to assist the family finances by working. From the nature of her position she would receive a salary of about \$175 a month.

Mr. NICHOLSON: Not while living in the unit.

Mr. McILRAITH: That was the assistance she was able to give toward the family finances. In any event, the two were able to work and they had this accommodation, with heat and light provided, at \$30 a month.

Mr. NICHOLSON: It was some time ago that she lived in the accommodation, not now.

Mr. McILRAITH: In any event, she seems qualified to earn \$175 a month. Even though she were getting considerably less, the point is that people with an income like that were living in subsidized housing, the capital cost of which, along with a substantial part of the cost of conversion, had been paid by the dominion taxpayers, by taxpayers in income brackets down to a minimum exemption of \$750.

Mr. FLEMING: Why did you not raise the exemption?

Mr. McILRAITH: I am thinking of the effect upon the working men and women of this country who have to pay income tax to an extent to provide a project of that kind to give low-rental housing to persons with that income.

Mr. NICHOLSON: He was a student veteran.

Mr. McILRAITH: I qualified my remarks at first; but I have never in all my experience heard, even from the most ardent opponents of subsidies, any example of a more unfair use or abuse of subsidized housing. I simply point that out.

Mr. NICHOLSON: You just have not the facts.

Mr. McILRAITH: Since the second great war, taxpaying has been a hardship on a good many of our people; and to state a proposition in the bland way in which it was stated, that accommodation should be provided for people with that level of income and in those circumstances, is not the best argument that could be made for subsidies. There may be other arguments that could be made that might be good, but I just wanted to bring the house back to a sense of reality on this question of subsidized housing and to show just what it involves with all its ramifications. I want to thank the house for its courtesy and indulgence in allowing me a few minutes longer and I hope I have added something to the debate.