

Urban Affairs

● (2050)

Here we have extremely wealthy people building monumental mansions worth over \$100,000. They do not pay interest. The same people who are drawing such wages at Massey-Ferguson are charging high prices for their farm implements. The farmers of western Canada know this only too well. People working in the prairies, the north, northern Ontario, New Brunswick and the forests, fields and lakes produce the wealth of this nation, yet we as parliamentarians expect them to live in substandard housing. The wealth of this nation is created in the hinterlands and backwoods, not in the cities. I think a lot more money has to be pumped back into the hinterland.

An hon. Member: Who is responsible?

Mr. Nesdoly: It is the responsibility of governments of the last 100 years who have used the hinterland as a source of capital to build magnificent mansions and factories in the cities. I am not against the cities, but let's return some of the money from whence it came.

My home town of Shelbrook had a land assembly project about ten years ago. It was a federal-provincial-municipal deal. It was a good project. There are still lots 64 feet by 120 feet available for \$2,350. People would not buy them because they are on the edge of town. Instead, they bought lots in town. The lots in town are now about the same price as these, so I am sure they will be sold. People can pay \$1,315 down and the rest over a period of 15 years.

The land assembly projects in some of our small towns and villages are excellent if they have a degree of flexibility. One problem has been lack of flexibility. When I was on town council we asked Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation authorities whether we could buy unused lots scattered throughout the town. We were told we could not do that, we had to buy lots that were all in one place. If we could have done what we asked, those lots would have been built up.

Officials who have lived in Saskatoon, Regina, Ottawa, Montreal or another city all their lives do not appreciate the lifestyle of rural and small town people. I plead with the government to put some flexibility into its programs. I say, listen to the advice of the local councils because these are usually pretty shrewd people. Land is not much of a problem in Saskatchewan because we have some very farsighted city councils in the province. Five or six years ago a royal commission held up Saskatoon as a model. Why? Because 20 or 30 years ago the city of Saskatoon bought thousands of acres of land around the city. It was kept out of the hands of speculators. It is still possible to get a reasonably priced lot in the city of Saskatoon. However, where the land was allowed to fall into the hands of speculators, land prices soared out of sight.

The town of Meadow Lake had a housing problem. The worst off were the low income people: there was a shortage of houses for them. New legislation was passed and new regulations were put out by the government. People looked forward to the neighbourhood improvement program and the assisted home ownership program. On paper, these programs look fine. Unfortunately, they received more publicity than they deserved. There is a problem in rendering the services which were advertised. It is neces-

[Mr. Nesdoly.]

sary to wait a long time for them. This is because the people who provide the services live far from the community that requires them. It seems to be difficult to get our bureaucracy moving. This town needs a land assembly project but the program is slow in moving. There is a Saskatchewan Housing Authority which is very active. I have written to them. They advised me that the federal government is slow in releasing funds. The housing authority wants money for land assembly. Why are the funds not being released to the small towns and villages? If this is going on in Saskatchewan, I imagine it is going on throughout the country.

I have been told by town councillors that CMHC has too many regulations. They claim that all too often CMHC finds regulations to hide behind. Perhaps the thinking of small town people about CMHC is best summarized by the words of an editor of a small town newspaper. I quote from the July 25, 1973, edition of the Meadow Lake *Progress*:

Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation policies are misunderstood by most citizens of this country. Many people believe the purpose of CMHC is to help people obtain homes who couldn't otherwise own a place of their own.

Actually, nothing could be further from the truth.

CMHC policies are set to allow large lending institutions to loan money at a high rate of interest with absolutely no risk to the lender. There is no protection for the buyer built into their policies.

I understand there is some protection built into the new act and I hope it will be used.

At one time only those who could not obtain mortgage money through regular channels could qualify for a CMHC loan. Now CMHC does not loan money to home owners but only guarantees the repayment of loans which the lenders make.

If you wish to purchase a home and can't pay cash, you apply to the local bank. The bank accepts an application which asks that all assets be listed, and also for references. This application is then processed by the bank and CMHC. If approval is given you are then entitled to borrow from the bank at between 9 and 10 per cent interest.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but his time has expired.

Mr. S. Victor Railton (Welland): Mr. Speaker, many of the comments from the other side of the House have been very reactionary. The party is known as "progressive," but I cannot see where it has shown that today. They feel that what was good enough in the past is still good enough. They have a laissez-faire attitude. They are not at all interested in innovation or trial runs. I certainly support the government's proposed fund for innovation in housing. The opposition surely should be aware of what it is trying to do. On one hand we have the problem of land and housing supply, with maintenance of urban communities and the quality of urban life; on the other hand we have the energy crisis and our continuing ecological problems. It is really almost an ecological conundrum.

I am convinced that all levels of government are prepared to work together. This has become the fashion. It is long overdue. I think we could suggest there is now a community of interest developing among and between governments as well as the private sector. We heard suggestions at the federal-provincial energy conference for a national power grid and a national industrial policy. Both have ramifications far beyond their immediate goals.