

*Housing*

Hellyer) hit him a great deal harder than he appeared to suggest. I was very pleased to see him so animated. I listened to him with more attention, even though I did not agree with him to any greater extent.

The first point I want to make is that all of us in this house other than the Prime Minister, and I hope he is alone in his party in this respect, knew that there was a housing crisis; not because we created it but because every description of the housing situation in Canada today from the Economic Council of Canada to the task force report in January emphasized this housing crisis. The Prime Minister was the only person who did not know about it.

Because the Prime Minister did not know about this situation he did with statistics what is often done with them. However, he was no more revealing in his use of these statistics than some of the rest of us who do this kind of thing. During the course of his speech he emphasized quite rightly that 1966 and 1967 were years during which there was a real shortfall in housing. I do not have his text before me, but I am confident that is what he said. He then proceeded to compare the results of 1968 with those two years during which there had been a shortfall. That is the kind of statistical legerdemain I suppose all of us in politics practice, but it really does not enlighten or illuminate the situation.

The fact is that if there was an improvement in 1968 in housing starts, as there was, it was only because the performance in 1966 and 1967 was so dismal. If you start with a very low rate then, of course, your rate of increase is very high no matter what the performance. What is much more important and what I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, is indicative of the lack of concern of this government and of this Prime Minister is that his comparison of the number of housing starts had no conscience at all as to the kind of housing being started, about the price of homes being built, about rents being paid for apartments, about the cost of building houses or about the simple fact that a large proportion of those houses started in 1968 and 1969 were available to only 5 per cent of the population. That is sheer lack of social conscience, and I make no apology for putting it this way, on the part of the Prime Minister who rose in this chamber to say he was not aware of a housing crisis and then quoted figures which in no way touched upon the real problems and the real needs of 95 per cent of the Canadian people.

What are some of the facts about the situation, Mr. Speaker? If the Prime Minister were a little more humble and a little more concerned about the welfare of the people, he would have admitted these facts. He then might have argued that he was trying to do his best. To refuse to admit them is to me disgustingly shameful on the part of a leader of a country such as Canada.

The facts are that the Economic Council of Canada said we should have a minimum of 200,000 housing units; that in 1965, we had 165,000, 35,000 short; that in 1966 we had 134,000, 66,000 short; that in 1967 we had 164,000, another 36,000 short and that in 1968 we came near the 200,000 mark. Even in those four years from 1965, there was a shortfall of roughly 150,000 units. Those are the facts we have to face.

What are the other facts? As the hon. member for Témiscamingue (Mr. Caouette) pointed out, there are 500,000 substandard housing units in Canada. He pointed out that there are homes, and I do not like being maudlin about these things, in which children sleep in beds which are not fit for animals. They are being bitten by rats during the night. Stories of this kind of thing appear in newspapers all across the country. There are homes in this country which accommodate 8, 10, 15 people which are not fit for animals and should not accommodate, in any event, more than two people. There are homes in this country in large numbers—tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands—which do not have modern plumbing, which do not have electricity, and some of which do not have many of the other amenities of modern living.

There are 400,000 families in Canada today sharing accommodation, and in the cases where this happens the accommodation is not adequate for one family. There are 100,000 families across Canada on the waiting lists for public housing. In the metropolitan Toronto area alone, there is a waiting list of over 16,000. These are the facts. I repeat to the right hon. Prime Minister, he can make a defence if he likes, but he has no right to mislead himself and the Canadian people about the sorry state of the housing situation in Canada today.

What are some of the other relevant facts? It is a fact that the cost of housing in Canada since 1964 has increased annually at a rate of about 10 per cent. It is a fact that land prices have gone up from 200 per cent to 500 per cent in a short number of years. It is a fact that rents have skyrocketed and there is not a