

## HOUSING

## SUGGESTED REDUCTION OF INTEREST RATES

**Mr. Léonel Beaudoin (Richmond):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a question to the Minister of State for Urban Affairs.

Because of the marked slow-down in recent months of single-unit dwelling construction in Canada as a result of the prohibitively high rate of interest on the balance of the cost of those dwellings, which means that the average wage earner finds it difficult to buy a home, can the minister tell the house whether the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation he heads intends to alleviate somewhat the high rate of interest with a view to making it easier for prospective or new homeowners to buy those houses?

**Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of State for Urban Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, I feel that we have just completed a record year in the field of housing. I therefore find it difficult to reconcile the assertions of the hon. member with that outstanding performance.

On the other hand, I am quite willing to recognize with him that it is in the interest of small wage earners to be able to buy a home at the lowest possible rate of interest. That is why the government has brought forward the program known as AHOP, the Assisted Home Ownership Program, the purpose of which is precisely to lower the actual cost of interest to 8 per cent.

**Mr. Beaudoin:** A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker.

Could the minister tell the House whether this lower interest rate will apply to single family dwellings in particular or to housing in general?

**Mr. Ouellet:** Mr. Speaker, I have just said to the hon. member that this is a government program. I will gladly provide him with documents on this subject. I think that he should have a better knowledge of this program which is already under way and has contributed to the construction of some 38,000 units in 1976 in Canada.

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[English]

## UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

## EFFECT OF REDUCTION IN WORK PERIOD NECESSARY TO QUALIFY FOR BENEFITS

**Mr. John Rodriguez (Nickel Belt):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Manpower and Immigration. In view of the fact that a committee of this caucus at its recent visit to Newfoundland found out from the Manpower office and the Unemployment Insurance Commission in St. John's that fully 48 per cent of all those receiving unemployment insurance benefits in Newfoundland have between 8 and 19 weeks attachments to the work force, and in view of the fact that many of these people will be eliminated from unemployment insurance programs by the changes in Bill C-27 which raise

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the length of work necessary for eligibility from 12 weeks to 18 weeks, will the minister now reconsider these changes in the UIC program which will not only work unspeakable hardship on the lives of many unemployed workers but which will play havoc with the economy of the Atlantic provinces and other such areas in the country?

**Hon. Jack Cullen (Minister of Manpower and Immigration):** No, Mr. Speaker, we are taking that particular bill in conjunction with the direct job creation program. Heavy emphasis on funding will take place in areas of high unemployment. We are satisfied also that the suggestion of the hon. member that all these people will automatically be unemployed is rather simplistic. These people do need help, but I do not think that continuing payments under the UIC program is really the appropriate method. We are also talking about the developmental use of UIC funds for training, and I think that is making better use of the money than just a straight payment out of the insurance fund.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I am concerned that we are getting into debate on a measure which will be before the House shortly. However, I will allow one supplementary question.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** In view of the fact that such programs as the one which the minister just mentioned depend on the rate of unemployment calculated by Statistics Canada in conjunction with UIC and Manpower figures, and in view of the fact that it is admitted that in reality unemployment is much higher than shown in the official rate and so indeed the amounts of money for those programs are badly underestimated, is the minister prepared to at least review the method by which the rate of unemployment is calculated so that the funds going for these retraining programs would really reflect the actual unemployment in the Atlantic region?

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. It seems to me that this question is a repetition of the same question put by the leader of the hon. member's party at the beginning of the question period.

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## THE MINISTRY

## INQUIRY AS TO RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBER FOR ST. BONIFACE

**Mr. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon-Biggart):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask a question of the Prime Minister. In view of the fact that the hon. member for St. Boniface has now been whipped down to the end of the row, and in view of the fact that he has a lot of time now, can the Prime Minister say whether he has been given any further responsibilities in the cabinet so that we may direct some questions to him?

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!