

### Housing

It is not difficult for us to support the provisions to put Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation on a stronger and more businesslike basis, although I will say that we intend, when the bill gets before the committee, to examine the bill in greater detail and question the officials from CMHC on these particular provisions. However, we must take advantage of this opportunity to zero in on what the legislation proposes to do to bring some measure of relief to the housing crisis facing this country today.

● (1600)

The Minister of Public Works responsible for housing (Mr. Cosgrove) is a member who comes to the House with a measure of experience in one of the three levels of government. He was the mayor of his city for some time and was a member of the metropolitan Toronto council. During the short period that I have had the responsibility of being housing critic, I have come to know the minister. I may say that I have great respect for him because he is a decent and honest man. I believe that he has been given a bum rap in having to bring this bill forward. What we have in this legislation is the embodiment of the inadequate measures which are contained in the budget of the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) to deal with the drastic housing crisis which faces Canada today. This legislation is an attempt to deal with the expectations which have been generated in the minds of the Canadian people by the minister responsible for housing when he told them to wait for the budget—expectations which have gone unfulfilled.

It is interesting to note as we commence second reading of this bill today that it coincides with the release of the seasonally adjusted housing starts for January. These starts show a drop of 18 per cent from the previous month of December, down to 148,700 starts. This provides me the opportunity to comment on what the minister said a few minutes ago with respect to MURBs. The reason for the surge in housing starts during November and December was due to a last minute effort to cash in on the MURB program which was to be terminated by the Minister of Finance in his budget. I will have more to say about that in a few moments.

It also coincides with today's release of a letter which was the subject of question period today. It was a letter from ten Liberal Members of Parliament, including two cabinet ministers, which was released with a communiqué. I will read the communiqué:

**Mr. Roy:** En français.

**Mr. McGrath:** I will let the hon. member read it "en français". I look forward to hearing him participate in the debate and defending the views put forward by his ten hon. friends.

**Mr. Roy:** I put my name on the list.

**Miss MacDonald:** Good for you.

**Mr. McGrath:** The communiqué read as follows:

Following two meetings of their regional Caucus, the Members of Parliament for the Central-Eastern part of Montreal have released today a letter to the Prime Minister asking Mr. Trudeau to immediately initiate measures to fight unemployment.

The ten Members of Parliament have suggested two new programs to create jobs in certain specific sectors of the economy.

The first proposal calls for the stimulation of the housing construction industry because of its well known spinoff effects.

I will continue to quote:

The program would also help to make up for the deficit of some 50,000 housing units suffered by Canada in 1981.

Of course, that is a very conservative estimate.

As a second measure, the group suggests a program to help business hire more youths under age 25, as this group is the most severely affected by unemployment.

They then conclude by saying:

These MPs are also convinced that these measures must be adopted right now as they cannot wait for the results of a long-term economic policy which they otherwise consider sound and realistic.

That letter is signed by the hon. member for Saint-Léonard-Anjou who happens to be Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin), the hon. member for Hochelaga-Maisonneuve (Mr. Joyal) who is the Minister of State from Quebec, as well as the hon. member for Laurier (Mr. Berger), the hon. member for Montreal-Mercier (Mrs Hervieux-Payette), the hon. member for Rosemont (Mr. Lachance), the hon. member for Gamelin (Mr. Portelance), the hon. member for Saint-Jacques (Mr. Guilbault), the hon. member for Saint-Michel (Mrs. Killens), the hon. member for Montreal-Sainte-Marie (Mr. Malépart), and the hon. member for Bourassa (Mr. Rossi).

**Miss MacDonald:** They all did it after seeing the minister's bill.

**Mr. McGrath:** Interestingly enough, Mr. Speaker, they made their representations to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) after the bill had received first reading and before second reading debate on the bill in the House. It makes one wonder why it was necessary for a senior member of the cabinet and the most junior member of the cabinet, although he is very well respected, to communicate with the government in this way when they are members of that same government. I find that intriguing. I suspect there is more to it than meets the eye. Perhaps we are seeing the beginning of a little game to attempt to get the minister responsible for housing and the Minister of Finance off the hook. Perhaps we may see, even before this debate is finished, a magnanimous gesture on the part of the Minister of Finance and the minister responsible for housing to bring in further amendments which would go considerably beyond the measly provisions in the budget. Perhaps that is their objective.

Knowing the Minister of National Health and Welfare, a senior and experienced member of the House, and knowing the Minister of State, a very respected and competent member of the House, I suspect there is a great deal more to this than what is contained in the communiqué. It is interesting that the