

Supply

unilateral action taken by the Government, but they convey the new national consensus. Finally, the ceilings on fixed income for core needs allow the Government to make sure that its assistance will be beneficial in the first place to Canadians who are really needy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments. The debate resumes with the Hon. Member for Papineau (Mr. Ouellet).

Hon. André Ouellet (Papineau): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to speak this afternoon to the motion moved by my hon. friend from Hamilton East (Ms. Copps), which in fact condemns the Conservative Government for its poor housing policies.

The Minister responsible for housing in Canada (Mr. McKnight) tabled a Consultation Paper on Housing in January 1985, and in a speech he made today, before the Cooperative Housing Foundation here in Ottawa, he recalled the Government's three main objectives with respect to housing. This afternoon the Minister said: "I have identified a number of fundamental principles, as follows. First, programs must take into account the need for reducing the deficit. Second, assistance must be aimed at those who need it most. Third, outside the public sector, others must help solve these problems'."

● (1640)

I say that the Minister's three principles are absolutely out of place and irresponsible, because the truth of the matter is that the Minister, who is also the Minister of Labour, should be defending the rights of our workers, of people on low incomes and the neediest in this country. He should not let his department participate in the Conservative Government's brutal efforts to reduce the Canadian deficit. In fact, he should be demanding additional funding for his department, for the housing sector.

How can we take these objectives seriously, when the Minister who is supposed to be the Government's main spokesperson for housing and who should be the first person to demand additional funding for subsidized housing in Canada, how can we take him seriously when he tells us that his guiding principle is to reduce the Canadian deficit? It does not make sense. It does not make any sense, coming as it does from one of the few Conservative Ministers who should have a social conscience.

Second, he tells us that assistance must be directed towards those most in need. Of course! However I have here a newspaper clipping expounding the Minister's thoughts when he tabled his policy in Parliament: "The Minister indicated that the Government will offer a series of new social housing programs exclusively for needy households, meaning people who cannot find housing at reasonable prices on the private sector market. Statistics reveal that about one million Canadian households cannot find decent housing at reasonable prices."

The direct result of the new definition found by the Government will be the development of the ghettos mentioned by the previous speaker. The worst thing that was done to help social housing was to pile all the low-income families one on top of the other and force them to live together. Eventually, this brought about a whole series of unforeseen social problems.

These mistakes made in the fifties were corrected, first during the sixties, but mostly during the seventies. However, it seems that the Minister is trying to reinvent the wheel in 1986 by bringing back social assistance exclusively for the neediest, who will then be regrouped in ghettos of low-rental housing where health conditions are often deplorable.

I maintain that the previous Government had attempted to come up with a healthy mix of families with various levels of income. Co-operative housing in particular allowed people with somewhat higher incomes to form co-operative groups which would offer housing to low-income families, but also to middle and even higher income families.

In my opinion, this healthy mix is absolutely essential if we want to solve the problems of the neediest in our society and allow them to live decently without other people pointing them out as "the poor who live in subsidized housing".

Now, the policy of this Conservative Government, and its second goal which is to have help provided exclusively to those people most in need, will lead us back to the worst arrangements of the 50s, and I do not want us to relive the sad experiences with the Dozois Plan, for instance, in Montreal East in the early 50s. This is something that must be avoided at all costs in our future housing policies.

The last principle laid out by the Minister is that other people outside the federal Government must work at solving those problems. A tall order! This means that in fact, in this area, in the area of housing as in so many others, this Tory Government, obsessed by its desire to reduce the deficit, is passing the buck, especially to provincial and municipal Governments who will be expected to solve the housing problem in Canada. This in my view is an unfortunate abdication of his responsibilities by the Minister in charge of housing in Canada. I submit he is remiss, he fails to meet the expectations a great number of Canadians had in this Tory Government during the last elections. And again I say the Conservative Party has betrayed Canadian voters by not honouring their commitments because, in fact they promised they would increase housing funds. But the figures are quite clear, Mr. Speaker. I have here the English text of a document issued by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, from which I quote:

● (1650)

[English]

The Canadian Housing Statistics recently released by CMHC reveal the direction in which this government is going; funds authorized under the National Housing Act by the Liberals and by the Conservatives are as follows: