

result of the poor quality of some homes. We need a national building code to provide for a high quality of workmanship and safety standards for all Canadian homes.

Much has been said about abolishing the 11 per cent sales tax on building materials. Many have said that eliminating the sales tax would lower the price of housing. Mr. Speaker, it would only lower the price if there were a guarantee by the government that any reduction in the 11 per cent sales tax would be reflected in a reduced purchase price. I am afraid that if we abolish the sales tax on building materials the builders across the country will pocket the reduction and not pass it on. Therefore, we must make doubly sure that any savings to be gained from abolishing the sales tax on building materials are incorporated in a lump sum which is put to the credit of the purchaser.

Mr. Alexander: The hon. member has no faith in builders or the private enterprise system.

Mr. Gilbert: The hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander) tells me I have no faith in builders. He suggests that I am afraid they will not pass on any savings occasioned by abolishing the sales tax and that I have no faith in the free enterprise system.

Mr. Alexander: That is right.

Mr. Gilbert: With the greatest respect, I reply to my hon. friend by asking him to examine the poor record of the private house builders in this country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gilbert: The next point I wish to make to the hon. member is that high interest rates press very heavily on people of low incomes and if CMHC had not participated in public housing programs and made housing loans available to meet the housing needs of Canadians, their needs would not have been met to the extent that they have been. Perhaps the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander) has faith in the private enterprise system, but when he looks at the record I am sure he must shake his head and say, "They have not done a good job over the years."

Mr. Alexander: Blame the federal government and its lack of leadership.

Mr. Gilbert: One of the main planks of the New Democratic Party has been the idea of a Crown corporation active in the housing field. We have heard many suggestions for making the Department of Public Works into a Crown corporation. A deputy minister of the Department of Public Works had great ideas for setting up a Crown corporation to build government buildings.

An hon. Member: That idea would never work.

Mr. Gilbert: Those who made such suggestions are now silent. One wonders why. The New Democratic Party would establish a Crown corporation to undertake building, and we would use all the ideas of the National Research Council to bring forward new techniques in

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house building. We have had some experience with the \$200 million innovative fund the minister has mentioned. The minister was proud to announce that he had found ways and means of providing housing for people in the low-income groups, particularly for those between the \$4,000 and \$7,000 per annum level. That was in 1970. He experimented, and was criticized on the grounds that under the innovative housing program many of the units were made smaller and the density was greater.

We hope those criticisms have not discouraged the minister and that we will not quit at an early stage. I think there ought to be innovative housing techniques. Surely the National Research Council should develop and implement them through a Crown corporation. I should also like the minister to introduce an innovative scheme to subsidize interest rates paid by low-income people across the country. He tried this idea by introducing his \$200 million innovative fund. Although the program enjoyed some small success, I think it would have enjoyed greater success had he implemented our suggestions and enforced them.

One cannot talk about urban life without mentioning the problem of pollution. A high quality of urban life requires minimum pollution standards across the country to make our air clean and the environment pure. I recall the present minister appearing before the committee that was considering his estimates and giving his ideas with regard to the E. B. Eddy Company. All he really said was that he would consult the company and hoped that a plan would be available in the future. If the minister adopts a similar attitude to the pollution problems of urban areas across the country we will be in serious danger. The minister is hobnobbing with industries across the country and is failing to take the initiative with regard to this serious problem. Pollution controls demand the enforcement of standards. We must have a minister who believes that ours should be a clean air society. I look forward to reminding the minister of his duty with regard to pollution.

One cannot talk about urban affairs without also mentioning transportation. When the government of Ontario cancelled construction of the Spadina expressway, I for one was very happy and proud.

Mr. Woolliams: Good for you.

Mr. Gilbert: If we are to curb pollution we must develop a transportation policy in this country which puts people first and not the motor vehicle. I therefore hope that when the minister attends the tri-level conferences with the provinces and municipalities he will indicate the importance of municipalities and provinces developing transportation policies which meet the needs of urban growth.

● (9:20 p.m.)

I wish to deal briefly with the point raised by the hon. member for Spadina (Mr. Ryan)—the question of Rochdale. I admire the patience and understanding of the minister with regard to this very tricky problem. I condemn the Toronto *Daily Star* for its purile editorial last Saturday with regard to Rochdale. If there was ever a