

National Housing Act

tive markets as the mechanism for providing for the well being of Canadians. That institute has as one of its first projects a study of rent controls. Their observation is that in the first year of rent controls in British Columbia in 1974 rents in Vancouver inflated at a rate of 75 per cent faster than rents in Toronto. They go on to say that statistics for the previous ten years indicated that until that time the two cities had experienced similar rates of rent inflation.

On the basis of statistics for the first five months of 1975 rents in Vancouver were 11 per cent above the 1974 level, but in Toronto where there are no controls they were only 7 per cent above the 1974 level. It is interesting to observe that in British Columbia the 10.6 per cent or 8 per cent control maximum is now considered to be the main reason why a landlord cannot adjust these rents according to the market. His costs increase because of the controls so he is virtually forced to increase his rents to the limit every time he is allowed to do so, which is once a year. The Fraser Institute observed that rent controls act as a disincentive in respect of the availability of housing units, and that only new construction and redistribution of existing housing could solve the shortage.

I think I am running short of time, Mr. Speaker. I hope that by my remarks I have illustrated some of the basic problems the government faces in trying to overcome the problems, and that the ideas that are being put forth are nothing more than stop-gap measures. We on this side of the House will support this bill because we believe the poor homeowners need every break which we think they might get. We think the government should give the power to the local levels of government so that they could free the people of Canada from the structures of the federal government's interference in the housing market. We have heard the statement that the state should keep out of the bedrooms of the nation. I should like to extend that by saying that the state should keep out of the living rooms of the nation.

Mr. Jack Marshall (Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, I wish to commend the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra (Mr. Clarke) for his contribution. I find myself in a dilemma. I do not feel I can criticize the bill very much because it indeed is an attempt to stimulate housing starts in Canada. Another dilemma I find myself in is that the Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Danson) is to visit my district on Monday next and I hope he will be making some profound announcements about an increase in the amount of funds allocated to the province of Newfoundland, because indeed the housing crisis there is probably as bad or worse than it is in any other section of Canada.

I must say the government has indicated in respect of Bill C-73 that some new efforts are being made to stimulate housing stocks in Canada. While we all agree that in most cases the bill is directed toward this end, there are still some major shortcomings which affect a great majority of our population. The people I am talking about are the many millions of our citizens who are on low and fixed incomes.

In addition to attempting to provide themselves with decent accommodation they are experiencing difficulty even in keeping themselves fed. True, it is obvious that

[Mr. Clarke (Vancouver Quadra).]

some effort is being directed toward relieving the public housing stocks, but I do not think there is enough awareness of the emergency that exists in respect of providing shelter and accommodation to the poor and needy.

The latest poverty line figures I have been able to find show that a single Canadian must have \$210 per month in order to exist. In this regard I point out two examples to show the discrepancy which exists when we expect all Canadians to be able to provide themselves with shelter or accommodation. For example, the War Veterans Allowance recipient at the single basic rate receives only \$207.12 per month. On a means test basis he can have that amount supplemented to bring it to \$247.12 which is only \$30 above the poverty line figure. I should like to ask the minister or the parliamentary secretary how this citizen after he pays his utility costs, when the price of electricity and heating fuel is increasing beyond control, can afford even to think about accommodation or how much interest he has to pay when he cannot even look after his basic needs.

What about the senior citizen living alone who must exist on the princely sum of \$219.96 per month, which is just \$10 above the poverty line figure? I mention these cases because I am bitterly disappointed there is no mention of the expansion of what I feel is a most important program. I know the people from CMHC in the gallery and others on the other side will know what I am talking about.

I am talking about the residential rehabilitation program. I have said dozens of times, and repeat in this House that this is a program which could relieve the pressures on our housing needs and at the same time allow these citizens to maintain their present homes, which many thousands own, but which they cannot maintain because they cannot afford to do so. This rehabilitation program, as everyone is aware, is designed to help individuals earning between \$6,000 and \$11,000 to repair housing structures and upgrade plumbing, electrical and heating systems, if such repairs can ensure a further useful life of the property for another 15 years.

I can only repeat that this is a most worthwhile program that can help hundreds of thousands of Canadians bring their homes up to a reasonable standard of appearance. More important, by the installation of proper heating and electrical systems to ensure safety there would be a reduction in the unfortunate loss of lives and property through faulty construction or faulty wiring, and so on.

● (2120)

The figures are there to prove the need for such a program because Statistics Canada shows that there are over one million homes heated by a stove or a space heater, homes which do not have proper heating systems. At the same time—I was not able to get the figures in this case—it is reasonable to conclude that a like number of homes are without proper wiring, electricity or insulation. Many of these homes are in the rural parts of Canada, many are old and deteriorating because a good proportion of the needy citizens live in their own homes, or homes that have been passed on to them.

I thought that in view of the many times that I have spoken on the subject I had convinced the minister that a concerted thrust should be made on a priority basis to