

Adjournment Debate

Mr. George Baker (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Macdonald) and the Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Ouellet) I will attempt to answer the hon. gentleman.

The hon. member is correct in his assessment of some reduction in certain of the housing program allocations in CMHC's 1977 capital budget. It should be noted, however, that in the public housing area, where the amount of money allocated for 1977 shows the greatest reduction, the number of additional households assisted during 1977 will not be reduced but will be slightly increased. This is to be done through a couple of mechanisms that have been added to this program, and which do not entail capital costs. These mechanisms were devised because of the negative reaction given by the provinces to this type of housing assistance.

In the other programs specifically mentioned by the hon. member, the co-operative and non-profit housing programs, he should know that although the allocations have not been increased for 1977 there have been, however, substantial increases since the inception of these programs in 1973, and a number of low income Canadians have already been assisted under these arrangements. I would like to add that the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation 1977 budget, as designed by the Minister of State for Urban Affairs, reflects a re-ordering of priorities in the light of the large proportion of housing built in 1976, as mentioned by the Minister of Finance last week, a large portion of which was moderate or medium cost housing. It also takes into account the desire on the part of the government to limit the increase in government expenditures in 1977-78.

I would also like to point out that in trying to assist the very low income people the government has substantially increased the number of households to be assisted through the residential rehabilitation program. It is estimated that some 22,000 units are likely to be assisted in this manner during 1977. This represents a substantial increase over the 1976 figure. The program is aimed at helping people in the very low income groups. This program also has a substantial employment generation element which should be very well received in light of the present climate.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS—SOVIET ACTION AGAINST SYMPOSIUM OF
JEW IN MOSCOW—POSSIBILITY OF CANADIAN PROTEST

Mr. Dan McKenzie (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, on January 25, 1977, I asked two questions in the House concerning the Jewish symposium in the Soviet Union. My questions were, first, what steps has the Canadian government taken to indicate its dismay to the Soviet government of the stifling of the December symposium in Moscow, the symposium which was organized by Jews who wished to discuss the present state and possible future of Jewish culture in the U.S.S.R., and second, what effect this action will have on the intent and the meaning of the Helsinki accords?

[Mr. Gilbert.]

The minister answered in a letter to me which reads:

As discussed in our exchange of correspondence of November and December last concerning the emigration of Soviet Jews, the Canadian government's approach to the issue of human rights in the U.S.S.R. relies heavily on the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. I think those who are sincerely concerned about the implementation of the Helsinki Final Act and the promotion of human rights throughout the world will regret that action was taken to prevent what appeared to have been a serious effort to discuss a subject of concern to Jews in the Soviet Union.

The minister went on to say:

This is one of the subjects that will have to be looked at during the Belgrade meeting this summer that has been called to review progress in the implementation of the Final Act.

In a recent speech to the B'Nai Brith in Toronto on March 13, 1977, the minister stated:

The issue of human rights is commanding significantly greater attention on a global scale.

Then the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Jamieson), on March 16 in a speech to a seminar sponsored by the Canadian Council of Churches and the Canadian Council of Catholic Bishops, stated:

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is not a binding legal instrument, and other covenants and conventions which may have enforcement provisions are binding only upon their signatories.

These are conflicting statements. This disturbs me somewhat.

I would like to bring a number of individual atrocities to the minister's attention which I feel he should bring up at the Helsinki Final Act meetings that are going to be held this summer. One of the particular cases is an Ida Nudel, who is under 30 years of age and has been waiting six years to emigrate to Israel. She has been subjected to vicious harassment by the K.G.B. She cannot leave her home because K.G.B. agents follow her everywhere.

Another case is that of Dina Zlotver and her husband, Isaac. They are living in the city of Sverdlovsk. Both are elderly and both have cancer. They applied to emigrate to Israel but were turned down by the Russians. Their children were allowed to immigrate. This is inhumane. Also, Mr. Speaker Mr. Zlotver was a World War II hero. Why is he receiving such treatment?

● (2210)

Another case I would like the minister to raise with the Russians is Joseph Mendelovich. He is 29 years of age and is serving the seventh year of a 12 year strict regime sentence at Vladimir prison east of Moscow because he wanted to emigrate to Israel. He is in poor health and should be released and allowed to emigrate.

Why will the Russians not let Jews emigrate to Israel or elsewhere? These are issues the minister should raise with the Russians at the meetings that will be held this year in Europe.

On January 22 of this year the Russian government produced and displayed a film entitled "Traders of Souls", a government inspired film on anti-semitism. Why are the Russians going to such extremes and using such inhumane methods against the Jews in Russia?