

Adjournment Debate

continuation of Canadian shoppers going to the American side to pick up their groceries.

My reply to the hon. member must be given within the same framework as the letter that the hon. member received from the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Guay) this very day, as the letter in question appears to cover the points at issue more than adequately. Judging from the hon. member's questions in this House recently, I gather that his main concern is about the slowness involved in processing line-ups of people crossing the border at the Douglas Pacific Highway customs office.

Due to the 1975 labour dispute which shut down Vancouver area supermarkets, the office in question was inundated with people crossing the border to buy groceries. Groceries are dutiable, and at various rates. It therefore took more staff a much longer time to compute customs charges on grocery items. We had to have more staff working than we did prior to the strike, and therefore there was less staff available at the inspection booths at customs. Even though no additional full time staff hiring was possible, the department dealt admirably with the situation through an extended use of overtime.

Although lately there has been a decline from 9,000 to 6,000 in the number of entries by individuals through the customs office, this remains double the number of people crossing the border as compared to the pre-strike period. The department cannot speed up the traffic flow by relaxing its standards of customs examination. I am sure the hon. member would not want to see that done. Six hundred seizures and 2,800 forced payment entries over the last period are evidence of this. There can be no claim of inadequate staffing on the part of the department.

Pertaining to the hon. member's concern about the time businessmen must spend awaiting clearance at the Douglas Pacific Highway customs office, the process of clearing the businessmen in question at customs is necessarily thorough. Normal clearance time is 20 minutes. Although customs offices provide advice and help as time and circumstances permit, it is very difficult to see how this time could be shortened.

Once again the hon. member's concern about staffing at the customs office in question, though sincere, does not appear to be justified, given the facts of the situation, particularly as previously outlined to him by the minister.

CENTRAL MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION—
MANITOBA—QUESTIONNAIRE CONCERNING SALE OF SENIOR
CITIZENS' HOMES

Mr. Jake Epp (Provencher): Mr. Speaker, I hope the quality of the answer the hon. member for Surrey-White Rock (Mr. Friesen) just received is not any harbinger of the type of answer I am going to get because, if that is the case, frankly we are wasting our time.

The reason I am on my feet once again is that this government cannot be believed. It cannot be believed on the larger issues, as we have seen in this House, and even when we ask

[Mr. Harquail.]

simple, straightforward questions, its answers are not to be believed. I want to put evidence of that on the record today.

On August 27, 1977, I asked the Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Ouellet) a question regarding a CMHC questionnaire which had been circulated to senior citizens in Manitoba. I asked the minister at the time whether it was the intention of the government and whether it was CMHC policy to buy the homes of Manitoba senior citizens and then to place those people in public housing.

The minister replied saying that that was not the policy of the corporation but it was an investigation carried out by a few social workers in that province simply for study purposes.

Then I asked a supplementary question of the minister. I asked whether he would be able to put to rest the anxiety senior citizens had regarding this encroachment on the one source of dignity they had left, namely, their own places of residence. The minister replied in part as follows:

● (1822)

I do not see why the hon. member blames the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation for co-operating with people who want to find new solutions to offer more housing to senior citizens and at less cost.

The minister was trying to leave the impression that CMHC was co-operating with others and that this was not an in-house survey by them. But, Mr. Speaker, the envelope containing the questionnaire had a print-out from CMHC, it was addressographed by CMHC, and the return address was that of CMHC. The envelope in which the completed questionnaire was to be returned had the CMHC address of Suite 402—310 Broadway. I think Broadway is still in Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker.

Question No. 34 reads as follows:

There has been a lot of discussion about providing housing for people with mixed incomes. Would you want to live in housing in which people of all income ranges live?

Then there are questions along the lines of, "Are you willing to sell your house?" and "Can the government buy your house?" Mr. Speaker, surely in Canada senior citizens have the right to own their homes.

The government cannot be believed because of the following facts. Mrs. Yhetta M. Gold, executive director of the Age and Opportunity Centre, Inc. sent this material out under the auspices of CMHC. An article in the Winnipeg *Free Press* on October 28 comments:

All replies, she said, would be treated as confidential.

And further:

Mrs. Gold said she understood that the results of the survey were to be used as an "in-house document" (for the CMHC) to be used as "a tool for their corporation."

I hope today the parliamentary secretary will not get on his flat feet and be another tool of this corporation and the falsehoods that have been spoken.

Mr. Harquail: We are not deaf.

Mr. Epp: Yes you are, because we keep repeating the questions and you do not give answers.