

Housing

a year and left businesses throughout the area bankrupt. The government says it is not responsible for any of the debts it helped in large measure to generate. That is an example of how woolly headed the Department of Indian Affairs is concerning its policies.

If half that amount of \$5 million had been put into the type of industry suggested by the hon. member for Northwest Territories and the hon. member for Prince George-Peace River to develop the adequate and appropriate type of logs for housing for native people, even if it were in the form of a subsidy, then the native housing program certainly would have moved much further ahead. When I stopped at the community of Iskut, south of South Dease Lake in British Columbia about 50 miles south of the Yukon border, an area which is subject to frigid temperatures—not so much snow, but very frigid temperatures—I was very pleased to notice the log houses there. However, I was very concerned when I was informed that they could no longer afford the log houses. Pulled up in the community there was a truck from Prince Rupert loaded with plywood two-by-three's. It is no longer two-by-four's but, rather, two-by-three's. This plywood was for the purpose of building private homes for the native people in those frigid temperatures.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): You must be kidding.

Mr. Brisco: No. Does this government really care? Will it get the message about the condition of housing and the situation that exists, when on one side of the road there are fine homes which are warm in the winter, cold in the summer and well insulated by virtue of their construction, and on the other side of the street there are plywood homes? We might ask what kind of social problems will be generated in this community, albeit a small community, because this government wanted to save dollars on the backs of the native people.

I am tired, as I am sure are all members, of hearing reference to the fact that the Minister of Transport flew at a cost of \$750,000—I think the Canadian people clearly have the message and that this need not be repeated any more—but that \$750,000 would have gone a long way to providing adequate housing for the native people.

As a member of the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development, I have been witness to the bitterness that has been created by the intervention and interference of CMHC in the affairs of the native people. We have special ARDA program under DREE. We have a particular ministry for the native people to cope with. We have National Health and Welfare, we have CMHC, and we have a few other scattered government programs which inject their oar into Indian affairs. Time and time again the native people have said they wish to deal with the federal government and with one ministry. But CMHC has injected its oar and has decided that the program it wishes to propose for native housing would require mortgaging the homes on land which is not theirs.

Do you think, Mr. Speaker, that the native people could accept or understand that? I ask you, Mr. Speaker to compare native housing today as we know it in urban centres to the

[Mr. Brisco.]

homes that belong to non-native people in the urban centres, and to give thought to the massive migration of people into the urban centres. I wonder if this government has any knowledge of those figures. I wonder if anyone in the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development can advise the people and members of this House how many native people have moved into urban centres, where they have come from and why, and what social problems have been involved in their moving from the reserves to the urban centres, and what social problems have been generated by their presence in the urban centres without adequate means of support and without adequate housing.

I ask what the government is doing to assess the needs in respect of native housing in urban areas. I ask this government to indicate what it is doing to assess the social needs of the native people in the urban centres. The Native and Urban Housing Association of Canada, in March, 1975, was promised an urban native housing policy. That was over 18 months ago; indeed it is two ministers ago. That association is still waiting for a response. Knowing this government, and knowing that nothing has been done, there is no question in my mind but that they are going to wait a damn sight longer for a response, and when they do get it it will not include a social program.

• (1700)

Since the rural and native housing program was announced in 1974, how many houses have been provided under it in the provinces and the territories? The minister's appearance in the House today was the first in his new capacity, and it was interesting to hear him say that his department will reach its commitment of 50,000 homes by 1978. Only 3,000 homes were built by the end of 1975, yet the minister promises 50,000 by the end of 1978, Mr. Speaker. Is this his solution to Canada's unemployment problem? No one on this side of the House believes him—and not only on that statement. It is now engraved on stone, however; the minister has said it.

We on this side will watch with interest his attempts to live up to that statement, and when he does not we will be waiting for his answers or, more particularly, his excuses. Time and time again delegations concerned about housing have appeared before the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development. This serious question occupies the bulk of the committee's time, but it is also concerned with problems of health.

This government, Mr. Speaker, has not only failed to address itself to the problems of native housing but has also failed to address itself to the problems of native health. This, of course, is part of the social problem and pressures, but the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) has failed to recognize it. In fact, he denied there was a problem with mercury pollution in northern communities. How many times were questions on mercury pollution asked in this House, and how many times did the minister deny there was a problem or indicate it was minimal?