

Adjournment Debate

in answering me said that the issue is under study, but that "this point should remain included". I took it for granted that he was talking about the question of basements and house siding in the federal rehabilitation program.

Through correspondence with the minister and his predecessor I had suggested that a ten-year program of rehabilitation of miners' homes be carried out in the whole of the mining areas of Cape Breton which are now occupied by pensioned senior citizens, widows and others on low income. I pointed out that a great deal of this housing, formerly built by the private companies who controlled the coal fields in Cape Breton, was 70 or 80 years old. The miners in the past and the present occupants have done their best to keep these homes as neat and tidy as possible inside, but because of the age of these homes the sills, poor roofs and lack of foundations are beginning to take a toll.

With the introduction of the residential rehabilitation assistance program a few years ago some desperately needed help was given. The trouble is that the national legislation provided that the municipalities in urban areas had to set up neighbourhood improvement projects before RRAP money would be expended by the federal government. I suggest that in the case of mining towns such as those in Cape Breton this was putting the cart before the horse, that really what was needed was a more substantial ongoing housing repair program to be followed later on by neighbourhood improvements such as recreational fields and other amenities. In most of the mining areas sewer and water were already normal services for years.

● (2222)

Glance Bay is a town with a population of approximately 23,000 people. Last year it received RRAP funding of \$453,000. The number of applicants looking for housing repairs was 755 without any advertising of this program. It must be kept in mind that this is just in the NIP areas which were designated by the town council and co-ordinator. The number of applicants approved was 99. The average loan was \$4,564 with \$3,500 forgivable. The average income of successful applicants was \$4,000.

New Waterford is a town in my constituency of approximately 10,000 people. It received an allocation of \$437,000, again without advertising. There were 631 applicants. Of these applicants, 70 were approved. Their average income was \$5,320.

Aside from the criticism noted above, my major criticism of this program was that at this rate of repairing the homes we were going to run into a situation where many of them could never be rehabilitated because the structures would be so far gone with respect to deterioration. The result would be a clamour for more public housing. The government of Nova Scotia had already placed a moratorium on family public housing in the province.

I attempted to get the Cape Breton Development Corporation and the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation involved in setting up a special rehabilitation agency so as to get more homes in these areas repaired more quickly, efficient-

ly and effectively. I estimated that it would cost from approximately \$7,500 to \$8,000 to do the job on one side of the duplexes, which are the typical type of housing we are talking about. In his answer to me, the minister indicated that another federal government program called the emergency repair program might be more applicable to our part of the country. He noted that the federal government had just given a special grant of \$100,000 to the citizens service league of Glace Bay for emergency repairs. Also he indicated that more would follow.

I was happy about this, but I was not satisfied that the minister had grasped the difference between emergency repair programs, which had been used by the province of Nova Scotia within the last year, and full rehabilitation of these old homes, which would be a long term investment by governments to make these homes livable well into the future. I was attempting to press the point that we really needed a small or medium sized rehabilitation industry or agency to go beyond the work of the emergency repair programs, as well as to offset the slowness and other disadvantages in the NIP-RRAP programs as applied in present and former mining areas of Cape Breton.

Last week I was notified by CMHC to attend a meeting at the Holiday Inn in Sydney. It began at ten o'clock on February 21 and lasted until 5.30 p.m. It continued the next day from nine to twelve o'clock. The main speaker at that meeting was a Mrs. Pat Gish, the director of the Eastern Kentucky Housing Development Corporation of Kentucky, U.S.A. During that day and a half, delegates went into the mining areas and saw the situation at first hand for themselves. Present at the meeting were five representatives of CMHC, two representatives of the Nova Scotia Housing Commission, one representative of the Cape Breton Development Corporation, myself, and a few other invited people from the area who were working in the housing field.

The conclusion of the meeting was that there was a general need for a special rehabilitation industry or agency to do the required job. CMHC and the Cape Breton Development Corporation could well have a special role in setting up the agency so as to ensure the cash flow status of small contractors in the area. Also they could play a part in setting up additional administrative training programs, possibly in conjunction with Canada Manpower and industrial training programs. The objective was to set up a housing rehabilitation industry with a view to fixing up most of these homes in a substantial way over a 10 or 12 year period, thus providing a small but important industry in an area of high unemployment.

● (2227)

CMHC delegates said they would be meeting internally on the matter and would be getting together with Devco with a view to trying to bring this new agency into reality. The two representatives of the Nova Scotia Housing Commission said that the commission was prepared to do anything it could to help expedite the setting up of such a program. I expect that such a housing rehabilitation industry will become a reality in Cape Breton this year.