

Housing

does for the New Democratic Party on almost every issue which comes before the House in debate. I did so because I remember that he was sitting in his place—

Mr. Waddell: I would do it again.

Mr. Hnatyshyn:—during the time we were in government, at which time he showed his true colours. He speaks now of what the NDP would do to assist the home owner. Well, he had the opportunity to support some very progressive legislation presented by our government which directed itself very much toward helping home owners in Canada, but when the time came, he carried on the great tradition of supporting the Liberals in everything they do on major issues.

So I find it rather interesting to have him now stand up and rail away at the minister responsible for housing, saying that he is in opposition to the policies being brought forward. The fact is the member has demonstrated, as has his party, that they support this government. At all important times the NDP can be counted on to say: "Ready, aye ready. Whatever the Liberals say, we are prepared to follow along." I tell you, Mr. Speaker, that made me wonder about the credibility which can be attached to the speech we heard in the last 40 minutes.

However, Mr. Speaker, I was more interested in listening to a couple of my colleagues who have spoken in this debate, the hon. member for Cumberland-Colchester (Mr. Coates) and the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton). Those members have been here since 1957, the days of the Right Hon. John Diefenbaker's election as Prime Minister. I say this because I want to give some historical perspective to the commitments of the parties in the House with respect to the right to own and live in single homes in Canada. I was very much taken by the wisdom shown by those two members, and I think it is important for us to listen to people who have been here for some time, because experience is a very important commodity in politics, as in everything else. I recall that at that particular time the Conservative government brought forward a new emphasis to home construction. At that time they resurrected what was a dormant national housing act which had been given very little support by the Liberal government which preceded Mr. Diefenbaker's government. I recall the enormous activity and the commitment given by the government as a whole with respect to home construction which took place during the late 1950s and the early 1960s. I am very proud to be associated with this party which has had the tradition of encouraging and taking positive initiatives on behalf of the home owners of Canada, those who want to become home owners, and those who want adequate and reasonable accommodation in our country. I agree with the hon. member who spoke previously to the extent that I believe the right of home ownership should be a part of the objectives of any political party worth its salt in this country.

• (1750)

When we were in government, we made a number of proposals which, I suggest to Your Honour, were very much in the tradition of the policies brought forward by Mr. Diefenbaker. They involved a recognition of the growing burden placed on home owners of this country by virtue of a situation where

inflation had risen to unacceptable levels, and where the expenses involved in home ownership were indeed cumbersome for the average citizen, the average couple, the unmarried couple, and the lower and middle-income earners of our country. I look back on that particular initiative which we took, and I commend the kind of thrust we took as a government to the minister responsible for housing.

I am glad to say and happy to report that the minister is in the House now and is sitting through this debate, which I appreciate. As I direct my remarks today to the effectiveness of the current government policies, I want the minister to know that I appreciate the fact that he has tried to bring forward the proper emphasis and the proper policies with respect to housing in this country, but that he has been fought on every level by his own party, and more particularly, by the government of which he is a member and by his colleagues in the government.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hnatyshyn: What I have to say to the minister today is said more out of a sense of sadness than out of any personal vindictiveness toward the minister, who is trying to do his job.

We look at the situation today. What is happening economically? It is reflected in what has happened to our dollar today. We find today that the dollar has fallen below 82 cents. It is on a downward trajectory. It is a reflection of our present economic circumstances. I feel very uncomfortable, as do most Canadians, with respect to our economic prospects. I look at some of the additional costs which are now being placed on the home owner. In the province from which I come, Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Power Corporation rates have been going up to unprecedented levels. I am in receipt of letters from my constituents, from elderly senior women living alone in my riding and from young couples, people who have a hard time making ends meet. They have told me that their heating bills are now putting additional pressure on them with respect to carrying on private ownership. For example, in the province of Saskatchewan, power and heating costs will be increased by 18 per cent this month. When we look at what has happened as a result of the amount of interest which is being paid by the home owner, we can imagine the additional encumbrance resulting from payments of high fuel bills in a winter which has been one of the traditional Saskatchewan winters, as I recall them some years ago, a very cold winter. It has meant an enormous increase in the heating bill to the average citizen in my province. Interest rates are at unprecedented levels. Inflation is reaching record proportions with respect to the costs of home maintenance.

That is the general situation in which we find ourselves today. That is the atmosphere in which we must address this particular piece of legislation. I say to the minister that over the course of the last few months I followed the pre-budget pronouncements of the minister with some interest. Many people were wondering, as it is obvious Members of Parliament and members of the Press Gallery were also wondering, exactly what we might expect from this government in terms