

Mortgage Tax Credit

The way in which this bill has been introduced in this House is another point. The government had the whole summer to set up a timetable for this particular measure, but somehow or other it could not come to grips with it and make a decision early enough. The government then made the decision without thinking of the consequences or a timetable.

The Prime Minister then gets up in the House and says that he would welcome all amendments and suggestions and that he wanted this bill to be a co-operative effort. We took him at his word and have prepared a whole series of amendments, many of which are very sound and which the Conservatives, particularly the small "c" Conservatives, would accept. A sunset clause would make this legislation a little easier to predict from year to year in terms of what it will cost.

We have now been told, "Sorry, boys, no time". In fact we learned today that closure will be introduced.

Mr. Crosbie: Time allocation.

Mr. de Jong: Pardon me, time allocation. But what is the difference? We still do not end up with any real opportunity to introduce amendments which would strengthen this bill and allow us in our roles as members of Parliament to contribute something to this particular proposal. I am sure that most members of this House and, indeed, most members of the government in their hearts would find our proposals very acceptable and eminently reasonable. But we are not being allowed that opportunity because the timetable was not thought out in the preparation of this particular bill. I am afraid that that is not only true for this bill but for many other measures which have come before this House.

The government does not seem to have a grip on the problems confronting this country. It flies off by the seat of its pants making one proposal one day and another proposal the next. It has no coherent idea of how it will get hold of the problems which it has been left by the previous government. There is no doubt that the Liberals left this House a whole host of problems and, indeed, Tory times are often bad times because they follow Liberal times. The former government is now sitting like a bunch of Cheshire cats in the trees smiling down at the new government. It handed the new government a real mess, but I am afraid that all it is doing is mixing it around and making it even worse. The government is following the bad examples and bad policies of the Liberal government to the insane end. This can be seen in their high interest rate policy, crazy money policies and give-away programs. The former government gave away half of the treasury to their friends in all sorts of little proposals such as the MURBs, give-aways to the oil companies and the tax measures which nobody had any control over and which resulted in the deficit in which we now find ourselves. I understand that the Minister of Finance intends to tell us how much these policies in the past have cost the Canadian people. Instead of stopping it with this bill, however, the government is merely continuing down the same path of financial responsibility.

The only reason the government has decided to go ahead with this proposal is that it has already had to change some of

[Mr. de Jong.]

its other political promises. It had to insist that it kept one promise, come hell or high water and whether or not it makes sense. That is why this proposal is before us today. I am sure that it contradicts the government's basic philosophy of trying to get some proper fiscal management into government. The only reason for this proposal is that it is political. The government had to show that it was able to stand tough on something, so now it is posturing.

I am sure that Canadians would be much happier if the government came across honestly and said to them, "We made a mistake on this; it does not make any sense to us now, so we are going to scrap the idea". I am sure that the government would receive some jeering and ribbing, but the Canadian people would at least give the government credit for having the guts to stand up and say, "Look, we were wrong; we are going to bring in something that is a little better".

Had the government spent this money on a housing program instead of the tax credit scheme, then the Canadian people would have understood and applauded. Instead, it is damned determined to go ahead.

An hon. Member: Talk to your constituents.

Mr. de Jong: The hon. member suggests that I should talk to my constituents. I talk to them every week because I faithfully go back and knock on doors. I have been knocking on doors in the new housing districts of my own riding and also the riding of Prince Albert. The one thing the people seem to talk about is the fear of losing their homes because of higher interest rates. When I ask them if the mortgage tax scheme will help, they say, "Of course it will not save me because the amount of money I will have to pay out in interest rates is much higher than I will ever get back from this particular program". When I asked them if the NDP proposal of reducing the interest rate to 8 per cent or 9 per cent makes any sense, they say, "Boy, I wish the government would at least adopt that type of program; then the money markets for housing would be stabilized".

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): How would you do it?

Mr. de Jong: The hon. gentleman asks how I would do it. The government is already doing it in various areas such as the Farm Credit Corporation guarantees on interest rates. Why does the government not do it for housing? Why does it not use the money which is being spent on this scheme to subsidize and stabilize the interest rates for housing so that when a person buys a house they will know how much they will pay for it next year and in the years to come? That makes sense because it means stabilizing our society and helping to stabilize the economy and the housing market. That is what the Canadian people are asking for. Instead, what we have in front of us today is a gimmick which the people of Canada do not understand, do not want and do not appreciate.

For these reasons, and if time and opportunity permit on Monday in the restricted time period, we will attempt to introduce some amendments. I hope that the government will consider our proposals, which we will make in good faith. I