

Oral Questions

meant the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker).

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, I say a very simple thank you. I am glad the hon. member did not refer to me as a saint, because I doubt whether there would have been that degree of applause that there was. This is deeply appreciated by me. I recall that Sir John A. Macdonald on one occasion, when his birthday was mentioned in the House, and it was his birthday, said that because of his interest in Canada as a whole, Saint Jean Baptiste Day was his day. It is the same with me.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order in connection with the business of the House and I do so, if I may say this by way of explanation to Your Honour and the House, to press home the gravity of the questions that were raised in the House by my colleagues and myself today and yesterday. This matter can be resolved very quickly if the government would agree, as it has failed to do in the past two years, to refer to the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications the annual report of CN. The government has not done this. We have not had in this House in the past two years, an opportunity to examine the management and officials of CN. Consequently, we are not in a position to get the kinds of answers we would normally be able to get if those people were before the standing committee.

To underline the gravity of this matter, may I cite briefly Term 32 of the terms of union between Newfoundland and Canada. It reads:

Canada will maintain in accordance with traffic offering a freight and passenger steamship service between North Sydney and Port aux Basques—

We consider this to be a matter of the most urgent gravity. If the government would agree immediately to refer the current report of CN to the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications, and I might say that report was tabled in the House last March, the members on this side of the House could get on with their constitutional responsibilities and examine CN in committee.

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. I think the hon. gentleman read the report. There is no relationship at all between it and the constitutional responsibilities of the government. This responsibility, if it exists, is that of the government and not that of CN.

Mr. Speaker: Orders of the day.

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

RESIDENTIAL MORTGAGE FINANCING BILL

ESTABLISHMENT OF CORPORATION, RECOGNITION OF SPECIALIZED MORTGAGE INVESTMENT COMPANIES UNDER LOAN COMPANIES ACT AND TAX TREATMENT

The House resumed, from Tuesday, September 18, consideration of the motion of Mr. Basford that Bill C-135, to provide additional financial mechanisms and institutions for the residential mortgage market in Canada, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs.

Mr. Cyril Symes (Sault Ste. Marie): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to say a few words on Bill C-135 respecting residential mortgage financing. The NDP opposes this bill because it perpetuates the basic view, espoused by the Liberal party and the Conservative party, that the private financial market place can best meet the housing needs of Canadians. I reject that assumption for the following reasons. First, one has only to look at the present housing situation in Canada and the crisis which it is in to realize that this assumption is false. Second, on looking at the provisions of Bill C-135, I conclude that it will perpetuate rather than solve the problems to do with mortgage financing in this country.

Let us first look at the housing situation today in Canada. I refer to the Dennis report of 1972, which was an exhaustive study of housing in this country. That report concluded that there were 750,000 housing units in Canada which were not safe, decent or sanitary. In other words, there are about 3 million Canadians living in substandard housing. In addition, there were at least a half million units that were in need of substantial repairs, which meant that another 1 million Canadian were living in substandard housing. About 20 per cent of Canada's population is inadequately housed. That is our present situation because Liberal and Conservative governments have relied primarily on the private mortgage and lending institutions to meet housing needs in Canada.

My second reason for rejecting this bill is this: On examining the present situation in Canada, one can see that the majority of Canadians who want to buy a home cannot afford one. The cost of the house itself is too high, as is the cost of financing that purchase. In Canada the cost of housing has risen by 90 per cent in the past decade. In my constituency, Sault Ste. Marie, it is now predicted that the cost of the average house will rise by between \$2,000 and \$3,000 in the next two years. The President of the Toronto Real Estate Board has predicted that the average price of a house in Toronto will increase by around \$10,000 in the same period. The difference between the two areas is attributable mainly to differences in land cost.

One has only to look at Central Mortgage and Housing figures for Canada to note that the cost of serviced land has risen some 19.2 per cent in the last 2¼ years and 36 per cent since 1967. Clearly, land costs in 1971 represented almost 40 per cent of the cost of all houses in Toronto and about 17 per cent of the cost of all houses in Sault Ste.