

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, you will recall that I made some remarks about the task force on housing and raised the hackles of some government members when I suggested that the report was a colossal fraud on the Canadian public and an outrageous expenditure of time, effort and money to underline for Canadians something they already knew, namely, that we have a housing crisis in Canada and that the federal government should take the role of leadership in attempting to solve it. The disappointing feature of the report of the task force on housing and urban development is that it constituted a position of "stand-patism" by the government. It retained old methods of financing and fixing interest rates and continued to ignore the groups that need help the most, namely, our senior citizens and those in the lower income brackets.

The recommendations in the report to the effect that public housing would be held up in order to conduct research into economic, social and psychological issues and that no further projects would be undertaken until the study was completed and, further, that urban renewal would be stopped until housing starts increased, came as shocking news not only to the members of this party but to all interested and concerned groups across the country. When we heard the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson), in reply to the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield), say that he would study, and that was all, the recommendation regarding abatement of the sales tax, it reinforced our thinking that little or nothing would be done in this session to solve the housing crisis.

When one reads the report of the task force on housing and its declaration of principle that every Canadian should be entitled to clean, warm shelter as basic human right, certainly one is touched. When one reads the statement of the Canadian Welfare Council declaring that all Canadians have the right to be adequately housed whether or not they can afford it, again this principle is underlined. We in the New Democratic party state that housing is a basic necessity of life similar to education and medical services, and that all Canadians are entitled to decent housing, whether they can afford it or not. It would appear that most Canadians are in agreement with these general basic rights, and this brings up the question: Why the shortage of housing today?

I am going to enumerate very shortly five reasons which I put before hon. members for

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their consideration. First of all, the housing shortage, I submit, is due to the failure of the government to accept the leadership role in housing. In the past the government has played the role of the friendly banker only and has sheltered under the umbrella of the constitutional defence in order to take little or no action in this important field.

Second, the government has failed to assess our national housing needs and to ensure adequate financing. It appears quite obvious that the minister was far more successful in twisting the arms of the military in regard to integration than he has been in twisting the arms of the financial community in regard to adequate housing.

The third reason is the failure of the government and its policies to control interest rates. Yesterday I heard the Leader of the Opposition urge the government not to lift the ceiling on interest rates, which does appear to be the attitude and aim of the government, and I am wondering just how high interest rates can go. At the present time the government rate is 9 $\frac{3}{8}$  per cent and conventional rates range between 9 $\frac{1}{2}$  and 10 per cent.

My fourth reason is the failure of the initiatives, incentives and policies of the government in regard to public housing, urban renewal, senior citizens housing, co-op housing, and special housing projects for our Eskimos and Indians. The failure of the government to enunciate its policies in this connection was underlined at the federal-provincial conference last year, and in the meantime the government has taken little or no further action.

My fifth reason is the failure of the government to develop a social conscience toward the need for adequate housing. The government's selfish and limited view that housing should be regarded only as an economic regulator or as a private profit-making industry has caused some stress and shortage in the housing field. These, Mr. Speaker, are the five main reasons for the failure of the housing policies of the government in Canada today.

• (4:00 p.m.)

The report makes many recommendations, most of which will have to be implemented by municipal and provincial governments. However, some of them could form the basis of a federal housing policy, and the government ought to act on those immediately.