

Housing Task Force Report

Mr. Gilbert: It took an outrageous amount of money, time and effort to inform the Canadian public of something that they already knew, namely that we have a housing crisis in Canada and, second, that the federal government should accept a leadership role in solving this crisis. The Prime Minister scored a big zero at the Commonwealth Conference—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Gilbert:—and the Minister of Transport (Mr. Hellyer) scored a double zero in this report, with his recommendations.

● (2:30 p.m.)

The solutions to the crisis offered by the government are pitiful and pathetic. They expand the old fallacies of the past which produced the housing crisis. As to the urgent problem of public housing and urban renewal, they have replaced them by a research department. No concern has been shown for persons whose incomes range between \$4,000 and \$7,500, who are obliged to pay high prices for homes, and face high interest rates. Little thought has been given to people in this situation, and there has been no consideration of a subsidy on the interest rates charged to them.

No real housing target has been set—for example, a target figure of 250,000 homes, to make up for the shortage brought about by poor building performance in past years. There is to be no increase in construction sufficient to bring down the price of homes. Certainly no consideration has been given to providing a proper "mix" of the types of homes needed.

One feels the government is condoning present exorbitant interest rates and taking no action, either with respect to the financial institutions or with respect to their own policy, which would have the effect of bringing down these excessive rates. It strikes me as strange that we in Canada can build a sufficient number of cars, television sets and radios to meet the needs of our population, while we cannot build sufficient homes to give people the basic social right of decent housing. This report, in our humble submission, constitutes a shameful approach to the housing crisis in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roland Godin (Portneuf): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to express my views on this reform project of the National Housing Act. I had my first look at the report this morning and I want to thank those who made it available to me.

At last, we are dealing with a rather important program. Construction has fallen, which has resulted in a housing crisis, and the people are very much concerned. On the other hand, from a moral point of view, I am convinced that the Commission will really have reached its goal, because I feel that royal commissions are probably the most efficient way to lull the people today.

During the last few years, everything has been done to bleed the Canadian people white through higher income tax deducted at the source, higher industrial income taxes, higher excise taxes, higher sales taxes, both from the wholesaler and the retailer. It will be recalled also that to ram down our throats the famous 11 per cent tax on building materials, the whole thing had to be done in three successive stages.

The high cost of money has been added to all those taxes which contributed to increasing the cost of living. What else could we expect since, on March 21, 1967, the Canadian parliament passed Bill No. C-222, that, in addition to removing the 6 per cent ceiling on bank loans, enabled them to make ten-year loans at any rate they saw fit.

Mr. Speaker, I do not understand why the Progressive Conservative party is complaining about that increase in interest rates since I noted—and I have here a photograph in support of my statement—that on the day Bill No. C-222 was passed 70 Conservative M.P.'s were absent. They preferred to stay away since banks contribute to the elections funds of the two old political parties.

In any event, in view of the high rate of interest, the high cost of capital, and the increase in all kinds of taxes, our economy has reached its saturation point, so that everything is now at a standstill.

Agriculture, trade, commerce and construction are in a slump and the present government, with its well-organized program, keeps pulling in the same direction. I am not mistaken, Mr. Speaker, since the government still has its thinkers and advisers, and the goal will ultimately be reached, I imagine.

Strangely enough, though, all the problems created by the government become practically insoluble. Then the government hires a group of understanding commissioners who tackle those problems and travel across the country to study them.

Mr. Speaker, without any reflection on your integrity, since you were chosen as an independent member, let me rate among the