

Housing

concerned about two things. First, he has been concerned that hon. members of this House have been criticizing his housing policy. Second, he has been reacting rather vigorously to the statistics hon. members have been using in terms of housing starts, or the lack thereof. He feels those figures are not accurate.

As we consider the housing initiative before us, we should look very briefly at the economic situation facing Canadians. This provision flows from the budget. In tonight's *Ottawa Citizen*, a paper which has generally been supportive of the government opposite, there is an editorial entitled "Spectre of Depression". This editorial appears on a day when the dollar has again broken the 82 cent barrier. In fact, it dropped approximately .44 of one cent today to 81.68 cents. That drop in the value of the dollar will have an affect on inflation and the ability of Canadians to have suitable or adequate housing. Indeed, it puts that prospect into even further doubt.

What I find interesting about this editorial is that it is in this newspaper which, along with many others over the years, has criticized Members of Parliament who have said that when we have new programs we should know what the expenditures are and what the affects of those expenditures will be in the years to come. The reason editorialists feel that a spectre of depression is upon Canadians is the fact of the national debt, which now has risen to \$122 billion. There is a sudden realization that roughly 25 cents of every tax dollar collected will be used not to pay the debt but to service that debt. It is easy to say, as the government opposite has done, that we can have all types of programs, which are good in themselves, but eventually they have to be paid for.

● (2120)

That is the situation we face today and I raise it because housing is one of the great necessities of Canadians. It is tragic that, because of various other programs that do not have the same merit as housing, the minister responsible is stuck with a bill that does not do enough. He does not have the wherewithal to put in place housing programs that will meet the needs of Canadians.

I received a message from a constituent today enclosing a newspaper article entitled "Trudeau, you are killing us". The article is a dissertation on the problems that average Canadians, especially small business people, are having because of the economy. The person who sent the clipping concludes the covering letter with the comment that he hopes the opposition can do something before we have a revolution.

Those are rather dramatic words for a Canadian to use, Mr. Speaker, but the government has mismanaged the economy so badly that people do not have confidence that any program will come close to meeting their needs, or that there is the capacity in our economy, under this economic leadership, which would lead them to invest in housing.

What initiatives does the government offer in the field of housing, Mr. Speaker? Bill C-89 is one; another is the CHIP program, and there are the insulation programs.

Just today in Manitoba one of the radio hotline programs dealt with UFFI. The reporter working on the story, along with other investigative reporters, has discovered that the government intends to remove asbestos from all defence buildings in Shilo. It has asked for tenders, but when questioned about the approximate amount of those tenders, officials refused to give the information. When the reporters inquired why the asbestos was being removed they were told it has to be removed because it is hazardous. They were then asked why the asbestos was being removed when the government was not looking after the needs of those Canadians who have UFFI in their housing. I might add that UFFI was approved by the government through the CHIP subsidies. Apparently there is not the same desire to see that matter cleared up as there is regarding the defence installation at Shilo. When questioned further about this the answer was that the reason it was being done in Shilo and not in private homes is that the buildings in Shilo are government buildings. That is not a good enough reason, Mr. Speaker.

The minister has been very sensitive in the last few days, but I must tell him that the initiatives the government has put forward for housing do not meet the needs of Canadians and, indeed, some of the programs have been disastrous. Some people who thought they were making improvements to their homes have found those improvements to be inadequate and expensive.

In research for my comments tonight, I went back to a speech made by the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy) when he was opposition housing critic in October, 1979. At that time he spoke of mortgage deductibility and told the minister of the day, "When you are in trouble there is an out." Apparently the out is to blame the previous government. Has anyone ever heard more blame levelled at a government that was in office for less than a year by a government that had been in office for much too long? It was a very interesting speech, Mr. Speaker. He asked, for example, how a government could bring forward a program that would not benefit at least 40 per cent of the people. By extrapolation, does he then concede that the program would have benefited 60 per cent of the people? How many Canadians will benefit from the program the minister in charge of housing today has put before us? I suggest there will be pitifully few, Mr. Speaker.

We have heard what the NDP has to say about housing. Yesterday one member said that housing is a basic right, and that his party regards it as a basic right. What is the basic property that most Canadians buy, Mr. Speaker? It is housing. Yet the party that says housing is a basic right voted against property rights in the special joint committee on the Constitution, and did so in the House at every opportunity. What were they doing then? How can they, on the one hand, say housing is a basic right, and then, on the other hand, vote against property rights? For the vast majority of Canadians the only property they ever hope to own is housing. Yet the NDP says it is a basic right, that they are interested in the right but that they are not interested in property—