Housing

fears that rent controls would be lifted. They wanted a policy on interest rates that would not be tied to that of the United States. They wanted lower rates, made in Canada. They wanted the government to set up new co-operative housing projects. The Ligue des propriétaires de Montréal told us that Quebec was different from other provinces because 62 per cent of the population lived in rental accommodation. In Montreal, most landlords have low-rise buildings, and they are paralysed by the changes in the tax system.

[*English*]

We have travelled across the country listening to people. In Montreal I heard people mention their fear that rent contrls will be removed. There are a great number of renters in the province of Quebec. It is a rather unusual situation when one compares it with other parts of the country. The people there demanded a "made-in-Canada" interest policy.

If the minister really wanted to do something about housing, and we all know what it is, what he should do is to lower interest rates, and that would really move the market.

● (1740)

I want now to say something about co-operative housing, Mr. Speaker, because it seems to me we could make some progress there, as we have done until recently. I spoke personally with Shirley Schmidt, the director of Columbia Housing, a co-operative housing group in my riding. They have been holding orientation meetings for people interested in joining a co-op as one way of getting affordable accommodation. They have had four of these meetings since January in a hall which holds about 250 people. On February 22, last night, they had another meeting which was attended by 350 people. They could not squeeze them into the hall. I am told that there is no chance that any of these people will get into a co-op before at least 1984 or 1985, if they get in at all. The only way we can change this is for Columbia to be given funds to build to their potential. I am told they could build a minimum of 600 units in order to do what needs to be done. If they had 900 units, they could fill them all.

In Vancouver, Columbia Housing alone has 174 units, one of which is in my riding, and they have had to put on hold 252 units which could go into construction in May. They have had to put them on hold. Mrs. Schmidt was almost crying when she told me that. This is in the province of British Columbia, with its huge forest industry and one third of its work force out of work. We have the trees, the labour, the people and the demand. We know how to do it.

Mr. Cosgrove: And no provincial plan for housing.

Mr. Waddell: What are you waiting for, Mr. Minister? Oh, you will say it is the provinces.

Mr. Cosgrove: Three thousand units in the plan in front of you.

Mr. Waddell: The minister says it is the provinces. There is a potential for 150 units in Richmond, a suburb of Vancouver right next to my riding, but Columbia has never been able to get any funding for Richmond. We also found that the B.C. government is withdrawing from the assisted rental program, which will affect senior citizens. We have found that there are 420 co-op units on hold in the lower mainland of British Columbia. This represents 534,822 man hours of work, or 14,263 person weeks. I thought I would put something in, Mr. Speaker, that the bureaucrats in Ottawa could understand. That is 274 person-years of work, as they say in Ottawa.

What it really means, Mr. Speaker, is that it gives 274 people a year of work, or twice that number six months of work. The total value would be $21 million. There would be four million board feet of lumber used. There are 74 co-op units in Fort St. John, and more needed, for which there is no funding. We had a call from Prince Rupert where they want units but none have been allocated. The demand is there but there is no funding. We would support a bill tomorrow, or even tonight. We will stay all night if the minister wants to bring in a bill to supply funding for those units. No debate, we will support it.

I talked to Glen Hadrill of the Co-operative Housing Foundation and he tells me that across Canada there is a producible demand for 10,000 co-op units. The real demand is far above that. Last year 5,400 units were allocated across Canada. This year it has been reduced to 5,000 units. Mr. Hadrill said that in British Columbia there is a producible demand for 2,000 units. Last year 1,025 units were allocated to British Columbia. It has been reduced this year to 898 units.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have quoted people from my riding. I will not prolong this because the facts are there. I have tried to set out some of the things that could be done. The hon. member for Vancouver East (Mrs. Mitchell) spoke on the details of this bill and suggested that we should be expanding CMHC, not contracting it. This insurance plan does not really do ordinary people much good, it simply helps the lenders. We heard from the Conservative Party that the answer is mortgage interest deductibility. That is just a subsidy to the rich, Mr. Speaker. You get it, go out and double your mortgage and reinvest the money. It will bankrupt the treasury and it will not help the low and middle-income people. It will help the bankers, but they are not the people who need the help. The people who need the help are the ordinary Canadians whom I have quoted extensively today. I have suggested some concrete solutions. I have given the minister some information about co-ops and how he could advance that aspect of the industry, and I have set out the general situation in Vancouver.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the difference between us on this side of the House and the minister over there is that we believe housing is a social right and we are not going to bring in crumbs for people. We would bring in a bill which would put the housing industry back to work and which would, in fact, build affordable housing for those people, ordinary Canadians, whom I have quoted in the House today.

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon West): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity of participating in this debate. I listened with close attention to the last speaker, speaking as he