

Urban Affairs

The Montreal section of the urban renewal and housing association is anticipating for 1974 an increase of about 25 per cent over 1973. How can we explain such increases since, according to official statistics, building materials and labour have increased by only 10 per cent in 1973? And then some people will laugh at our policy to abolish the 11 per cent tax on building materials, and especially to freeze prices, profits and other incomes, in particular in the food and housing areas.

When anyone in my party speaks about a freeze, while it is common knowledge, it is not only of a wage freeze but a freeze on all Canadian factors of the cost of living, therefore a freeze on prices, profits and other incomes as well. To pretend the opposite, as the hon. member for Scarborough West (Mr. Harney) did recently, to pretend that the Progressive Conservative party merely demands a wage freeze that would affect the small earners, to pretend that is to show the worst kind of dishonesty.

Mr. Speaker, Canadians must consider the following facts: a very low vacancy rate in housing, staggering rent, increases the prohibitive purchasing cost of single family houses, the smallness and the poor quality of the new dwellings and the government, particularly the hon. Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Basford) are the firsts to speak highly of the housing achievements in 1973. Mr. Speaker, it is sheer thoughtlessness and they obviously are irresponsible.

My colleagues and particularly the dynamic hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams) discussed the partial solutions proposed by our party as regards housing, which makes it unnecessary for me to do so. In this program the minister responsible would be really responsible for something and everything would be centered on the protection of the consumer and the expectations of the average family. This program demonstrates that the Progressive Conservative party is ready to accept the challenge and already presents a serious alternative to the present government as our party is ready to govern this country.

In view of the increasing price of building materials I shall merely remind you of the proposal I already made in this house to the effect that the government should set, in the case of certain materials, for instance asbestos, a price for domestic consumption and another higher price for exports. That is one way, among many others, of lowering the cost of housing, specially in Quebec.

In another vein, I must once again warn the present government, with regard to its laborious formulation of a housing policy, against its visceral tendency to take advantage of a crisis, or if need be to create one, and gradually take over jurisdictions that normally belong to the provinces.

A series of articles recently published in the daily *La Presse* proves, once again, how the present Liberal government, under the pretext of co-ordination, has reached the point where it wants to control all initiatives in the field of urban matters. As for me, I fear that the field in which the overly centralizing ambitions of the Liberal government will soon cause the provinces, of which Quebec in particular, to object, and rightly so, is precisely that of urban affairs.

[Mr. Wagner.]

Quebec should pull itself together before it is too late, assured as it can be that we are listening attentively.

Mr. Speaker, everything about the Ministry of Urban Affairs, its record, its objectives, its programs and even its orientation, as we very well find out today, is so confused and inadequate that we can no longer have confidence in the government. How could we in the circumstances—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Order. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but his allotted time has expired.

[English]

Mr. Basford: Mr. Speaker, even though I was not given the same courtesy I would be happy to extend the time of the hon. member so that he may complete his speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Does the House give unanimous consent to allow the hon. member more time?

[Translation]

Mr. Guay (Lévis): I agree, Mr. Speaker, but providing we shall hear not only criticisms, but really constructive proposals.

Mr. Wagner: Mr. Speaker, I thank the ministers and members of this House for their generosity. To comply with the request from the hon. member for Lévis (Mr. Guay), I will be pleased to send him the working document containing our new dynamic and imaginative policy, which will be that of the next government very soon.

Mr. Speaker, I was saying a while ago that it was impossible, considering the present circumstances, to miss this opportunity of discussing the idea of a \$100 million fund to promote, rather vaguely, from 1976 to 1981, initiatives that would bring about solutions to urban problems, initiatives in fact that would be the basis of our participation in the United Nations Conference and Exposition on Human Settlements scheduled for Vancouver in 1976.

We must reject that \$100 million demonstration program because it is becoming a very costly diversionary tactic which cannot possibly assist in solving the existing housing crisis which I mentioned a while ago.

This government, having lost all sense of priorities, postpones its own commitments about which we have read in the Speech from the Throne at the beginning of this session.

● (1720)

Some of these agreements are somewhat outdated, like the relocation of railway lines and terminals within cities, suggestions which we had heard a great deal about before 1972, especially in Quebec City. There were other suggestions, of more recent vintage, concerning consumer protection on the real estate market, and finally this supercolour vision of housing in the year 2000. During the last election campaign, Mr. Speaker, they lured us with bright and awe-inspiring projects of national parks for year 2000, and in case nobody remembers them, I am sure the hon. Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mr. Chrétien) could refresh our memory with advantage.