

Request for Housing Statement

has been made to the possibility of granting loans to workers earning from \$5,000 to \$10,000 per year at an interest rate of 5 or 6 per cent. I venture to think that the government will react to those recommendations. We could be told that we are only criticizing. I think that our suggestions are acceptable. I am convinced that such a policy would likely give new life to the building industry in Quebec as elsewhere in Canada.

Indeed, the construction industry employs close to 30 per cent of the Canadian labour force. Somebody could say that there is the risk of inflation. Everything that is said about inflation makes me laugh, because the government policy to eliminate it made it worse. Inflation has never been so bad. Yet, the budgets of various departments were cut while more unemployment was created to eradicate inflation. The policy of the government in that regard did not produce the expected results.

Housing is not any better for all this. If the suggestions to get construction going again were implemented, thousands of new jobs would be created and industries would be more prosperous.

As for the 500,000 unemployed who receive from \$53 to \$60 a week, they could find work. They would pay small taxes on certain building materials. However, the general 11 per cent tax on building materials would have to be repealed.

Not wanting to deny my colleagues the opportunity of speaking—they probably have much to say—I conclude my remarks by saying that, like an important segment of the population, I am quite disappointed with the housing policy of this government. Of course, I have had the pleasure of approving the policy of the government in other fields, and I even made it a point to do so. As to the failure of the policy concerning housing and assistance to low wage earners, I feel it is my duty—and I do not think I am wrong in saying so—to hold the government responsible for it.

They can say all they want about establishing a department of urban affairs, about dialogue or co-operation between municipal, provincial and federal governments, but as long as we fail to reduce substantially the interest rate and to bring in legislation to lower the price of building materials, it will be completely ridiculous to talk about boosting the construction industry and the minister's wishes today will remain pious ones.

I dare hope that these few comments will incite the government to be more serious, more courageous and more sincere as regards the great number of people who need suitable housing at reasonable prices. It is the only way to offer them decent homes. That is the only way to put the building industry back on its feet. To speak at greater length on that subject would probably be a waste of time. I hope that the government will avail itself of these suggestions and that I will not be regarded as confining himself to destructive criticisms. On the contrary, while trying to make suggestions I keep hoping that the government will stop turning a deaf ear to the possibility of housing low income people in proper homes at reasonable prices.

Mr. Speaker, I think this would be a good show of humanitarianism, because we would then recognize that a homeowner is a precious asset for society, since the one who owns a home is always more interested in society than the tenant. The owners are more fully aware of their responsibilities, because they wish to protect their property. I suggest that to be able to afford an adequate home is an honor and something to be proud of. It would be within everybody's reach if reasonable interest rates were available and if materials were moderately priced. I do not see any other solution. I am not well versed in economics, but I think I can say that the economists who have come up with housing proposals so far have been way off the mark.

[English]

Mr. Robert P. Kaplan (Don Valley): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to be able to participate in the debate this afternoon. I think you might be interested to know there is a long list of members on this side of the House who would like to participate in this debate on urban policy. We are grateful to the opposition for raising the problem so often. I have waited now for three allotted days—they are not very good days, Fridays and Mondays—to have the opportunity to make a few comments, and I am glad to finally have this opportunity now. However, I find that almost everything I would have liked to have said has been said very well by other members who have spoken.

• (3:50 p.m.)

I appreciate fully the position which the government has taken. I agree with their assessment and with the proposed target of 1,100,000 homes to be constructed over a five