

National Housing Act

I want to put something more interesting on the record so that the minister can be aware of the true facts. I do not know who is advising him. I know whoever it is may mean him well, but he should check other sources. I see the Secretary of State (Mr. Faulkner) pointing somewhere, but I am not referring to anyone in particular. I just said that the minister should check out his sources so that he can obtain the true picture. I recall the minister talking so eloquently about housing starts and saying that we will have more starts than we have had in the past. I would not say that the minister was deliberately misleading the people, but the minister was misleading because this article says:

New residential construction declined in November with housing starts in Canadian centres of 10,000 population and over showing a 36.5% drop to 11,489 units from 18,079 a year earlier.

Housing starts recorded in the latest month, with November 1973 figures in brackets: Ontario, 4,188 (7,727); Quebec 3,211 (4,892); Alberta, 1,314 (1,488); British Columbia, 935 (2,079); Saskatchewan, 511 (382); New Brunswick, 458 (408); Manitoba, 391 (572); Nova Scotia, 314 (323); Newfoundland, 153 (172); and Prince Edward Island, 14 (36).

There was a little break for the minister in Saskatchewan.

Where has the minister been when he tries to tell me that housing starts are at an all time high?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Alexander: He did not say that, but he led the Canadian people to believe that. Where has he been?

An hon. Member: He was in Hawaii.

Mr. Alexander: He should have stayed there. He may have learned something there in terms of housing. They do not have any sellers there, I understand, but that is another good thing.

Why do we not start pursuing some innovations around here? All people want is a house, and I have heard people talk about basic houses; in other words, give them the shell and allow them to have the opportunity to put the paint on, to build a garage, to add to it by themselves. This is of course calls for much consultation with the provinces and with the municipalities. Give them the basic needs. Has the minister thought about that?

Mr. Danson: The program is already in effect; shell housing.

Mr. Alexander: As far as I am concerned it is not in effect because my latest information reveals that cities are now looking at this matter with some interest. I hope that it is in effect, but if it is in effect I wish the minister would tell me where these particular housing innovations are.

An hon. Member: Come on Barney, tell us.

Mr. Alexander: I wish he would tell us when he next makes a statement. I am very concerned, and I want to let the minister know, that the climate is not conducive for housing starts.

I want to refer him to the Hamilton area. Of course I must involve Hamilton because obviously we have people there who have a need for homes. I want to read from page

[Mr. Alexander.]

29 of Statistics Canada's "Housing Starts and Completions", which shows how disastrous things are in this country in terms of the housing industry. For the year 1973, January to November, in the Greater Hamilton metropolitan area there were 8,253 starts. For 1974 to date there have been 4,913 starts. Where has the minister been, and what is he doing?

Under the heading "Under Construction", up to November of 1973 there were 8,237. That is in the greater Hamilton metropolitan area. When we get into the numbers under construction in 1974 we only have 5,824. What is the minister doing? Where is that freshness that the minister brought to the House of Commons in 1968? We are members of the same class, Madam Speaker, a fresh class with fresh ideas. We want to approach the problems of this nation with uniqueness, innovation and creativity. Has the minister lost all that since he has been elevated to such great heights? Surely not.

All of this has led the *Hamilton Spectator* to register its concern in lead editorial dated January 22 under the heading "Not Enough Houses". Of course the minister is not acquainted with that. This is what the *Hamilton Spectator* says:

Sharp increases in prices and in lending rates killed off the house-building boom of 1973. Demand for low and medium-priced housing rose but supply was limited as rising costs moved much of 1974's new house production into the high-price categories, beyond the reach of low and middle-income families.

And again I quote:

And a housing situation that forces families into overcrowded high rise towers, by leaving them no alternatives, that puts ownership of a private house beyond the average family's means cannot be accepted as socially responsible, not in a huge country lavishly endowed with the resources and the skills to produce housing on an epic scale.

I quote again:

Canada is approaching the point at which a forceful national effort is needed to produce new low and medium priced housing on a massive scale, an effort paralleling the wartime housing program of more than 30 years ago. The point may have been reached already.

Is the minister aware of that, Madam Speaker?

The CMHC 1974 statistics tell the story in the bluntest terms—we're producing less housing although we need more. The federal government seems blissfully indifferent. Its housing policies would benefit a country with no serious shortages, not a nation with a widening gap between supply and demand for one of humanity's first needs.

● (2020)

Where has the minister been, Madam Speaker? What is he doing?

Because of the absence of an anti-inflationary policy the people of Canada will suffer as far as housing is concerned. It has been their practice to treat one inflation-induced problem in isolation from the others, when what is needed is an over-all anti-inflation policy highlighted by federal guidelines and directives. Until such a policy is forthcoming the housing market will continue to suffer. There is no doubt about that.

I understand that in a speech today the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) has indicated that he has come to the conclusion that the call for higher wages and salaries is the cause of inflation. That is a flip flop. Now they are blaming labour. I remember the days when they used to blame high unemployment. They used to blame the senior