

*Supply*

I come from a riding where there are many social housing developments and I can tell the hon. member that families living in co-op units do not have to spend as much on housing; consequently, they can invest more on food and health care, and are therefore more likely to exert less pressure on those social programs which she seems to be so concerned about.

[English]

**Mrs. Brown (Calgary Southeast):** Mr. Speaker, if I may be so bold I just have to say that you do have an interesting way with your hands. You kept gesturing making me think I was running over my time or that I had to wrap up my comments. You might want to put your hands in your pockets, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. member for his question. He has to know how difficult this question is for me to address because it is based very much on emotion. I would be the last person to look at something from an accountant's perspective. When it comes to compassion requiring difficult decision making, that is difficult because this matter is very much couched in difficulty.

I am sorry I did not make the relationship of social reform, social programs and expenditure more clear to the member. I am committed to an economic agenda. As members of the House of Commons during this particular Parliament it is extremely important that we get our spending under control. There will be a very inefficient and ineffective system for care for everyone if we do not get our financial house in order.

While I was campaigning I did meet people who had lost their homes or who were going to be losing their homes because of the very sad condition of our economy. That is the perspective I brought to this debate and which I presented to the member.

**Mr. Dan McTeague (Ontario):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to commend my hon. colleague on her insight in terms of not only this debate but some of the comments she has made on a wider economic plane as it relates to housing.

I have worked in the housing industry. I take exception to one of the questions concerning the need for federal government funding in the area of social housing as a means of stimulating jobs. I can assure the hon. member that in the private sector we often found ourselves with private money competing with public money. The result was not only waste and duplication, but at the end of the day there was lack of housing.

I have a very simple question for the hon. member. Would she consider looking at housing as a means for the private sector, with all that is attached to it, to make a more affordable and accessible product in this country through financial institutions? That seems to be the real reason many developers and builders are not able to bring on a good product at an affordable

price for the economy and for people to get access to quality housing.

**Mrs. Brown (Calgary Southeast):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. Within the context of my presentation I did quote the 1992 Auditor General's report.

• (1640)

That is exactly the point I was trying to make. We seek other ways to get things done in this particular area by approaching problems using private sector funding.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona):** Mr. Speaker, I want to make one brief comment.

The hon. member raised a good point when she talked about the changes made to the way the estimates were dealt with in 1969. It seems to me it is at that point that Parliament and the House of Commons began to lose control if not necessarily over spending, it lost its ability to affect spending, to have a committee actually have an effect on estimates. Therefore we got into the situation in which estimates are deemed to be passed by a certain period of time whether a committee has looked at them or not.

When I first came here there was at least an effort to question the minister and to spend some time on that. However even that atrophied after a while because members came to notice that it did not really matter what they said and these things got to be passed anyway. The minister simply took up the necessary time. When it was over it was over and the estimates were passed. The point is well taken. No amount of parliamentary reform in the last little while has been able to overcome that dilemma.

Just for the record much parliamentary reform happened here in the 1980s by unanimous consent or with the agreement of all parties, although not the reforms in April 1991. However, those particular reforms in 1969 were not the result of all-party agreement; they were brought in by the use of closure at that time by the then Liberal government.

**Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to refer to the motion the Bloc posed to us:

That this House condemn the government's inability to re-establish and increase budgets for social housing construction programs.

As I looked at this issue I looked at social housing construction in an overall sense in an attempt to put it in the frame of reference of Canada's needs.

I found that this whole program is under the auspices of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and that CMHC has a social housing stock of 650,000 units in our country. There are four separate programs: the native housing program; the seniors housing program; the next step housing program for women who are victims of violence; and the housing program for low income