

significant part of the population. These students attend both university and community college. Their tuition fees are too high, and their living allowances are too low. Immigrants and new citizens are in large numbers, and they seek an open immigration policy which, as we all know, can only in the final analysis be based upon a strong and vibrant economy.

Women are also a very important group. They seek not so much to be treated as men but as full and equal persons. They seek equality in the work place, and adequate family services such as child care. Public servants and armed forces personnel who live in my riding seek not to be scapegoats or to be ignored. Native Indian people—and there are a number in my riding—need their basic needs, such as housing and jobs, to be met. Franco-Manitobans seek equality and cultural affirmation. Pensioners faced with ever-rising costs of living need adequate incomes.

Home owners are faced with the spectre of exorbitant mortgage rates, and every citizen of my riding is faced with the ever rising cost of living due to continuing oil price increases and interest rates and the general lack of sensitive management of the economy.

I would like to turn my attention now to the substance of the throne speech, which is the focus of my remarks tonight. I would like to begin by mentioning the reference to the handicapped, and the amendments to the Human Rights Act which are projected therein. I must say that I welcome this item, and I urge the government to act on it expeditiously.

During the campaign I attended an all-candidates meeting on a local radio program. One citizen telephoned in and asked all three candidates if we could give the assurance that this item would be in the throne speech. I was not able to give that assurance, but I said that I would raise it in this debate. I am glad to see that the matter is included in the throne speech. However, being a member of the NDP and being a member of the opposition, I note that I am free to prod the government to fulfil this hope which has been offered. I am free in a way which a backbencher on the Liberal side would not be free to prod the government and, considering the entitlement of Manitoba in this administration to only one cabinet minister, another Liberal member of Parliament from Manitoba probably would not be able to move these things along at all.

An hon. Member: Rather like a eunuch.

Mr. Keeper: Those are not my words.

I would like to say, as stated in the throne speech, that I am willing to represent my constituents to the government. I am also willing to represent the government to my constituents in the manner that that is merited, and I am sure I will be given every co-operation in that regard.

Another major matter in the throne speech is the whole question of our very high interest rates. The throne speech mentions protecting those most affected by such rates. It is clear now that the government does not intend to do anything about interest rates in general. Its floating bank rate policy reveals a deliberate high interest rate policy. As an alternative,

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the NDP offers a low interest rate policy. We have called for an immediate reduction in interest rates by at least two percentage points as a first step to meet this problem head on and directly.

High interest rates are not simply a problem in general. They also affect specific areas of the economy and specific needs of people. I am thinking of housing, and the throne speech mentions that the government will help people who are having the greatest difficulty with renegotiating their mortgages. It goes on to state "without a major subsidy program." That would suggest to me that the government really does not intend to do much and that its measures will be simply cosmetic.

● (2040)

By way of contrast, the NDP has a comprehensive and, I think, effective housing policy, and I would recommend five points in that policy to the government. I will list them. First of all, we recommend that the government restore CMHC, particularly as a direct lender providing mortgage assistance in the form of subsidies for families with incomes under \$30,000. Second, we recommend that we extend federal housing programs with special emphasis on non-profit and co-op housing. Third, we recommend that we promote public land assembly to keep costs down. Fourth, we recommend that the graduated payment mortgage, which perpetuates the problems inherent in the AHOP scheme, be dropped, and lastly we recommend that a federal-provincial conference to examine problems facing tenants as well as home owners be convened. The problems facing tenants have not received sufficient attention, with all the focus that has been put on home ownership problems.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Keeper: It would not be sufficient to have a good and sound housing policy only.

Before leaving the subject of housing I would like to say quite simply that without a sane energy policy there is no way people would be able to live in their homes and meet their other needs because of the rising cost of energy that will continue to make it very difficult for people to keep their homes and to meet their other needs.

In that regard I would like to say that the government must avoid any unjustifiable oil price increases. Judging from a reading of the press—in which I am sure we can place trust, at least I am willing to do so—we learn that the Liberals are beginning to back away from their commitment to lower oil prices. As well, specifically with housing itself, I read that the minister in charge of housing, the hon. member for York-Scarborough (Mr. Cosgrove), hopes that the interest rates have peaked. I should like to say that people want more than the minister's hopes; they want effective housing policies.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Keeper: The whole question of interest rates demonstrates the government's attitude toward management of the