

*National Housing Act***PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS**

[English]

**NATIONAL HOUSING ACT****MEASURE TO ENABLE HOUSING REHABILITATION FOR PERSONS OF LOW OR MODERATE INCOME**

**Mr. Walter C. Carter (St. John's West)** moved that Bill C-227, to amend the National Housing Act, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I think the hon. member knows that the Chair has expressed some reservations about this bill inasmuch as it seeks to remove from the statute a specific subparagraph and substitute for it another involving the expenditure of funds which come under the statute. Accordingly, there is some question whether the bill infringes upon the financial initiative of the Crown. If hon. members want to contribute to that point of order, the Chair will listen to their representations and reserve final decision about the orderliness of the bill. We could then allow debate to continue for the normal time and perhaps make a decision some time later.

**Mr. Pierre De Bané (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State for Urban Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, I submit that the bill standing in the name of the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Carter) is highly irregular because it seeks to repeal subparagraph (ii) of section 34.1(1)(a) of the National Housing Act and substitute another paragraph the effect of which, if passed, would extend to the entire country the benefits of the program involved. The bill, if passed, would entail the expenditure of more than \$1 billion. I submit that there are dozens of rulings of various Speakers of the House which say that only a minister of the Crown may propose a bill which involves the spending of public money. Citation 249 of Beauchesne's Fourth Edition reads in part:

[Translation]

And I quote:

249. (1) "No cases can be found of any private member in the Canadian Commons receiving the authority of the Crown, through a minister, to propose a motion involving the expenditure of public money.

[English]

It is obvious, *prima facie*, that the bill does not conform to the fundamental rule which says that only ministers can introduce bills involving the expenditure of public funds. The object of the bill, as it is said, is to—

● (1700)

[Translation]

—to repeal the limitation therein and to apply it to the whole country. Considering that thousands of units must be renovated, we can easily infer that public expenditure will be greatly increased. That is why I ask the Chair to declare this bill out of order and inadmissible.

[English]

**Mr. McKinley:** With regard to the matter Your Honour has raised, I think your assessment is what would be desirable. The idea incorporated in the bill is what the

[Mr. Speaker.]

hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Carter) is desiring to put before the House. I suggest we have this debate for an hour and it could then be ruled in order or out of order, whichever Your Honour sees fit. Your Honour's initial suggestion that the decision be made after a one-hour debate on the subject is preferable at this time.

**Mr. Speaker:** If there is no other hon. member who wishes to make a contribution to the point of order, perhaps it could best be expressed that it appears on the face of it that there are certain difficulties such as those described by the hon. member for Matane (Mr. De Bané). However, if the Chair were to reserve its decision perhaps the debate would bring forth, from members on all sides, explanations of the operation of the bill which might in fact persuade the Chair otherwise. The preliminary indications are that there would be great difficulty from the technical point of view because of the arguments made by the hon. member for Matane. Perhaps the best course to follow is for the Chair to reserve judgment, allow the debate to take place and see if there is anything during the course of the debate to persuade the Chair that the bill is in order.

**Mr. Carter:** Madam Speaker, I apologize if my motion is in doubt. However, I am not too familiar with parliamentary procedure. I am more concerned about the thousands of people suffering the effects of poor housing, people with no assistance to improve their housing. I am more concerned about that than the niceties of whether technically the bill, in the opinion of some hon. members, is not in order.

The intent of the bill is to extend the benefits of the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program to families living in other than Neighbourhood Improvement Program areas or areas covered under the rural and native peoples housing policy as announced by the minister in March, 1974. The objective of the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program is to improve the housing conditions of low and moderate income people by assisting in the repair of their existing dwellings.

As Your Honour is aware, families with low incomes residing in designated NIP areas may borrow from the government under the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program up to \$5,000, half of which is forgiven. This money is available to restore their homes, bringing them up to an acceptable standard having regard for their health, comfort and safety. The program could be of considerable benefit to our people except for the fact that its application is limited to families residing in NIP areas or those covered under the rural and native peoples housing policy.

If we accept the principle that all Canadians are entitled to decent housing—and surely this House must adhere to that principle—then the government's policy with respect to funds available for house repair and rehabilitation under the RRAP program discriminates against an estimated one million Canadians who, through no fault of their own, are forced to live in and raise their families in homes and under conditions that are totally unacceptable and far below the nationally accepted average. I make that charge on the basis of problems that exist in my city of St.