

Housing

is committed to giving those in this non-income group that priority.

As I indicated earlier, it is projected that by 1985 one half of the Indian population will be living in urban areas. What is the minister doing to assess the needs of native people migrating to urban areas?

I hope that the minister will comment upon some of these questions during his remarks. If he addresses himself to the questions I have posed, I think we will have a far better indication of his intentions in the area of native housing, and in addition it will remove some of the cloak of secrecy which is sometimes far too pervasive in this government. This would go a long way toward re-establishing some confidence on this side of the House and certainly among the native community.

If the minister is prepared to move in a bold and imaginative fashion, he has the opportunity of implementing a housing program which will stimulate the band economic sector and this will result in the emergence of more Indian-owned and operated services in construction, building material supplies, the manufacture of housing components, transportation of goods and other related service industries.

Two functions should be paramount in any program. The first and most important is to provide housing which is desperately needed; the second is to provide for economic development at the band level. Such an approach would offer hope for Indians to correct their critical housing needs as well as their employment needs.

I want to move on now, Mr. Speaker, to the second group to which I referred, the Inuit. As hon. members know, responsibility for Inuit housing, formerly carried out under the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, has been turned over to the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation. It is to be hoped that this will improve the situation. However, it is perhaps too early to pass judgment on their performance at this time. Nevertheless, it is important to stress the difficulty experienced by the Inuit, which I indicated earlier parallels to some extent the criticism of the other Canadian native peoples. The Inuit feel that the housing provided to them in the past suffered from certain defects.

● (1530)

For instance, the units provided were designed for markets in southern Canada and were not fit for the climatic conditions of a northern environment. The buildings had a life expectancy of five or six years. Their substandard construction rapidly deteriorated in the severe climate and they were not large enough to avoid overcrowding and condensation. Finally, in most instances the houses did not accommodate the culture and lifestyle of the Inuit.

The waste of money as a result of the inadequate housing, which has to be replaced after short periods of time, has ultimately caused financial constraints and shortages of housing in the particular Inuit communities. A point which should not be ignored is that the provision of houses of considerably higher standard than those provided to the Inuit very frequent-

ly and understandably caused resentment amongst the people themselves.

Against this background, is it any wonder that the Inuit feel that housing affecting their communities should be planned and organized by themselves? They have asked for adequate provision for research in order to determine the types of structures which would be best suited to their climatic conditions. They are interested in exploring the use of windmills and solar panels for the generation of light and heat, and they are disenchanted with the very high cost of transportation of building materials from the south and have suggested more use of local materials. In the areas of ownership and individual participation, the Inuit contend that families should have the option of ownership, regardless of income; the Inuit should be allowed the choice of appropriate house designs and should also be given the opportunity to have maximum involvement in the actual construction of houses. Those with the greatest needs, of course, should be served first.

Added to this should be an education program to help Inuit families adjust from their traditional mode of living to the form of life which now prevails in other northern communities. Part of the education program should help the people to organize housing associations in order to come to grips with the full range of housing concerns without relying on the government.

The Inuit have gone some distance in taking the initiative toward obtaining their own housing. The Inuit Tapirisat, whose headquarters are located in Ottawa—I am sure all hon. members are aware of this—instituted the Inuit non-profit housing corporation in 1975, and the Inuit people are looking to this organization to obtain their needed housing. In the summer of 1975 this corporation undertook a ten-house project involving the communities of Frobisher Bay, Rankin Inlet, Cambridge Bay and Inuvik. This was the first experience for the Inuit in providing houses from start to finish.

Apparently, despite the widely separated locations involved, the project turned out to be a resounding success and the experience gained confirmed the contention of the Inuit that they can build and design their own houses at a somewhat better standard than that provided by the federal government. What usually took the federal government two years, the corporation was able to accomplish in six months. Furthermore, the cost was initially estimated at \$44,000 per unit, and I understand that the actual cost is expected to be substantially less. Finally, this has permitted the Inuit Tapirisat to begin the process of developing its own housing policies with funds provided by the federal government for research purposes.

With their own policy the Inuit hope to avoid the repetition of mistakes which have prevailed in government policies over the last decade. By this initiative the Inuit maintain that they have come to the conclusion that their housing needs can no longer be left to the government and to bureaucrats from the south. Above all, they have indicated, like other native people, that they will continue to demand the right to establish policies and programs which affect their lives directly. Surely the failure of the government to provide sound policies for Inuit

[Mr. Holmes.]