

National Housing Act

The people who will benefit from the new non-profit housing program are low-income people, women on their own, raising families on their own, old and disabled people. That is in fact our first priority. They are the people we want to help and they are the people to whom we want to give more adequate and more decent housing facilities in Canada.

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, most Canadians are well housed. Whatever yardsticks one may use, they are among the best housed people in the world. In fact, housing production in Canada in recent years has been the highest in our history. During the last four years housing starts in Canada reached an average of nearly 250,000 units. Hon. members who want to compare our accomplishments with a specific standard only have to look at the United States. The Progressive Conservative party tried to take a formula in use in the United States, use it as a political football and come up with some kind of magic formula to meet housing needs in Canada.

Obviously when one compares our accomplishments with that specific norm which exists in the United States, we find that between 1967 and 1977, for example, we built in Canada an average of 10 new housing units per 1,000 people, while for the same period in the United States the proportion was only 6.8 units for the same number of people. Mr. Speaker, not only did our rate of production exceed that of the United States, but it had greater stability and less pronounced year to year variations.

● (1750)

[English]

I would like to look at the proposal which was put forward recently by the Conservative party. It has tried to copy a policy which has existed in the United States for years.

Mrs. Pigott: Successfully.

Mr. Ouellet: Not successfully, but with great difficulty. This policy is being copied by the Conservative party in the hope that it will be more successful in Canada than in the United States. People in Canada realize that the Liberal party has been helping to produce better housing and a greater number of homes and that the terrible scheme which the Conservative party proposes will be regressive.

We are getting short of time, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to discuss further this matter when the debate continues, unless the Conservative party again tries to prevent the House from proceeding in the normal way with its business. There is no doubt that the House leader for the Conservative party will try other tricks to block the normal activities of the House to prevent it from proceeding normally. We cannot have confidence in him. He is obviously trying to prevent the government from proceeding in an effective manner.

Mr. Crombie: How about the bill?

[Mr. Ouellet.]

Mr. Ouellet: Before we adjourn at six o'clock, I would like to say that if one looks at the performance of this government in housing—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) is shouting at the Chair from his seat. If he would like to address himself to the Chair, he should seek the floor.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I am very much concerned that the government, which has delayed the bringing of this bill forward for one year, is now using its debating time for personal attacks on members of the opposition. I am not the least bit concerned about the personal attacks from the minister, because I consider the source from which they come. I am anxious, however, to get on with the legislation.

Mr. Ouellet: If the House leader for the Conservative party is so anxious to have this bill pass, I hope that he will agree to a specific timetable to pass it before the end of the week or early next week; in other words, that the bill will be dealt with in all its stages and approved. I am sure that he knows that this bill is important to a large number of municipalities across the country. The hon. member also knows that in order to have an appropriate program for the rehabilitation of housing, this bill should be approved. If the opposition House leader is speaking honestly, he should be prepared to tell us now that he is ready to agree to having this bill approved in all its stages within one or two days.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I apologize to the House for the minister, who is so beside himself with synthetic rage that he had difficulty doing his bargaining on the floor of the House.

Mr. Pinard: He has the right to speak in English.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): When I became the House leader of this party—

Mr. Pinard: What is wrong, just because he speaks slowly in English?

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton):—I indicated that we did not feel it was our duty as the opposition inordinately to hold up legislation which was important. I will undertake to the House that that will be the attitude of this party as long as it is in opposition, which I hope will not be too long.

I want to give the minister that reassurance. I would also like to say in the course of this debate that I am always concerned when the atmosphere of the House of Commons breaks down into unreasoning partisanship. I hope that the minister will get on with the legislation which he has brought forward. The hon. member for Ottawa-Carleton (Mrs. Pigott) is ready to follow him and to put forward a proposition. In fact, she has been waiting two months for the minister to bring in this legislation.