

tion and decisions. Thus divested, they do not even command attention and still less, Mr. Speaker, gain the confidence of the Canadian people.

Therefore it is against this background associated with the deplorable attitude of the government which saddens most of us, that we are going to consider its housing record.

The number of housing units for rent in Montreal for example, and elsewhere in Canada, based on—

[English]

**Mr. Basford:** Mr. Speaker, on a question of privilege—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger):** Order. I think the minister is rising on a question of privilege.

**Mr. Basford:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I listened with great interest to the hon. member speaking for the Conservative Party, but I hope by his remarks he was not suggesting I was streaking in the House of Commons.

[Translation]

**Mr. Wagner:** Not at all, Mr. Speaker, it is mere fancy! But if it can comfort the minister, I would tell him that the way he showed who he really is is nothing compared to the moral strip off of the New Democratic members who supported the idea, but who decided this evening to vote against it.

Mr. Speaker, I was just saying that the number of units for rent was decreasing in Montreal and in other parts of the country. Today, the government, via the minister, takes its stand on statistics given by the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation and dares state, as we all heard, that 1973 has proven to be the best year Canada has ever known in the field of housing construction.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Wagner:** You just heard the frantic and assiduous applause of the hon. members for Laval (Mr. Roy) and for Lévis (Mr. Guay). I hope they will also receive the end of my speech with loud applause.

The minister should consider the revealing figures I am quoting. The number of units for rent in Greater Montreal decreased from 3 per cent in December 1972 to 2 per cent in December 1973. In Quebec City, in 1973, the number of available housing units has gone down from 5.5 per cent to 3.1 per cent. In other parts of the country, the situation is much more precarious and has reached such a point that you can definitely say there is a housing crisis in Canada.

I would say to the seemingly powerless Minister of State for Urban Affairs, who loves covering up problems with reports, studies and statistics, that a study released by the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation shows that the number of available housing units, namely 2.1 per cent, is the lowest percentage in six years. I hear the hon. member for Laval (Mr. Roy) applauding. This is a total failure and the lowest percentage in six years of administration by the self-styled just government, a past slogan gone with the wind.

The Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation which published today the highlights of its annual report is quite careful not to dwell on the rather somber outlook for the

### Urban Affairs

next few months. It seems that the current interest rate and a shortage of building materials will lead to a decrease in residential construction in 1974. Those are premonitory signs of a serious housing crisis in Canada.

If the minister so-called responsible for housing does not believe in the relative decrease in available housing units, his colleague the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand), who also admits he is powerless, recognizes this phenomenon. But, mind you, it is only to claim that the quality of those same houses has improved.

And yet, as early as 1967, the Economic Council of Canada thought that one million Canadians were living in quite inadequate housing conditions. Incidentally, since a Minister of State does not have the powers of a Minister of Transport, who admitted to be powerless, I would say to the Minister of State for Urban Affairs that insufficient consideration is given to some "lemon projects". Let him meet the owners of the "Prairies de Montréal" project. He will see how the standards of the Central Housing and Mortgage Corporation have been disregarded and maybe how the inspectors did not care about them.

The average citizen is not adequately protected in the area of construction. The government agencies only pass the buck to each other; the Central Housing and Mortgage Corporation claims it is only a loan agency, the Minister of State for Urban Affairs has not enough powers, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Gray) dares not or is unable to intervene.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, not only is the number of available housing units decreasing and does their quality of construction sometimes leave much to be desired, but, month after month, the government remains powerless before the increase in the cost of living in general and in the housing sector in particular.

Does the minister, who is not an agent, realize that the year 1973, as all Canadians and not only Quebecers well know, is truly remarkable in the home building sector because of the fact that housing costs have gone up by an average of more than 20 per cent?

The minister and the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation say that 1973 is a record year for building. It is certainly a record year for the builders, especially because of their profits, but, along with all the people of Canada, I say that 1973 in the building sector was a record year for cost increases.

One can no longer rely only on government studies, all the more as their findings are not always made public. I am thinking of the famous Dennis report. *Le Devoir* referred to one of those studies on February 15 in the following terms, and I quote:

More and more, the single family home is only available to a small part of the population, namely those who can spend \$300 a month on housing.

● (1710)

This is one point on which the New Democratic Party socialists should agree. This is a prohibitive price if one considers, for instance, that in April 1973, the average weekly income of a Quebecer was \$149.94. And the upward trends are still very much with us.