

*National Housing Act*

government. It is a suspicion that I have held for some time.

I believe that in the long run the Department of Finance, the Department of Agriculture, and the department responsible for urban affairs are probably the most important departments with respect to the fundamental development of the economy of this country and meeting the basic needs of the citizens of this country.

We have in this day and age, a Department of Finance which is recognized as having its feet firmly in the ministerial hierarchy, and a Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) with his feet planted firmly in the administrative hierarchy of this country. Yet one of the most important departments in the Canadian ministry, the ministry respecting urban affairs, which deals with housing and transportation, land development and the relationship between the provinces, is nothing more than a conduit pipe between an independent commission or corporation like CMHC and this parliament. I think this minister deserves much more.

**Mr. Alexander:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton):** I think the people of Canada deserve much more, and I think the people of Canada would welcome something that we have advocated for a long time. They would welcome a real frontal attack on the problems facing urban Canada. The first step is not band-aid legislation. The first step is not even appointing a good minister. The first step is to create a full time ministry charged with the responsibility for all those agencies which deal with urban problems facing Canada.

I heard the hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Anderson) just a few moments ago say that the federal government has no responsibility for the high price of land. He said it was the lack of serviced lots, the high cost of lumber, the excesses of the provinces that were responsible for all of this. He said that the federal government had no responsibility at all, and I suggest to the hon. member that in saying that he insulted the new Minister of State for Urban Affairs. In fact the minister, by the programs he is trying to bring forward—and he is trying to bring them forward despite the difficulties he is having within the ranks of government—is saying to the people of Canada that the federal government does have a responsibility in all of those fields.

● (2130)

When the hon. member for Comox-Alberni cops out with respect to the economic situation and inflation in this country, as he did in his speech, by saying that the responsibility lay somewhere outside of Canada, in some area over which Canada had no control, then he is mocking the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner). The Minister of Finance has rejected an incomes policy, and a number of other time-honoured policies, and is going to certain elements in this country seeking some kind of consensus to control inflation. Why is that, Mr. Speaker? Because there is—there must be—an acceptance of responsibility by the government of the part it must play in fighting inflation which is the root cause of the difficulty facing Canadians today in terms of housing.

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

**Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton):** Whatever acceptance of responsibility there has been for this great problem, the methods proposed for fighting it thus far have not worked. That is why we have asked the Minister of Finance and other ministers of the government, including the leader of this government, what they intend to do about inflation. If it is consensus they want how are they going about it, who are they meeting, and what results are they obtaining? The value of this approach to fighting inflation is indicated by the lack of answers in this House to those very important questions.

The problem of providing housing for Canadians, housing in some variety, is wrapped up with the problem of inflation. In fact, Mr. Speaker, as a result of the failure of the government to act, the construction industry in this country is grinding to a halt and Canadians are suffering because of it. The will has gone out of the construction business, and it cannot meet this challenge which the minister would like to extend to it.

As long as this government acts that way, and as long as backbenchers say the blame lies somewhere else or the responsibility lies somewhere else, that will always be the case. This industry will suffer, and the crisis outlined in the editorial I quoted will be magnified. The children in those 1,700,000 households in this country which are headed by people between the ages of 25 and 34 are going to be denied what is a basic right in Canada, in my respectful submission, and that is the right to adequate housing and a variety of housing.

I say to the minister that what his policy has done, added to the other policies of the government, is to embark this country on a course in respect of housing which is changing the face of the nation. This government has said to Canadians that they can no longer hope to have a single family home. That is out of reach of all but a very small percentage of the population. Even if they use the \$500 federal grant program it is unrealistic, and a home is still out of the reach of a growing number of Canadians. That is the matter we have to face in this parliament, Mr. Speaker, and that is the problem that is going to be with us for a number of years.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) was going to wrestle inflation to the ground, and the Minister of Finance is going to ratchet inflation to the ground, as he puts it. The record speaks for itself from the time the wrestling match began and ended and in the ratcheting that has now begun. The policies for dealing with inflation which affect the whole of the housing industry, as they affect everything else, are such that Canadians are faced with social change in this and other fields.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands has said this party will support the bill because it is a step up. The minister has not said what the government will do, although the hon. member for Comox-Alberni said they were optimistic that it would do something. The people of Canada have been living on hopes for housing for the last ten years. Those hopes have not been fulfilled, and the hon. member for Comox-Alberni knows it.

**An hon. Member:** What are your alternatives?

**Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton):** I will come to my alternatives. How far will it go? What income range will be