

Private Members' Business

Mr. Mike Scott (Skeena, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the motion before the House today speaks to the need for more aboriginal housing. It is a real problem. Anyone who has ventured on to an Indian reserve, travelled by one, or has had the occasion to come into contact with aboriginal people knows there is a real problem as far as aboriginal housing is concerned.

As Canadians I am sure all of us would like to see the situation improved. We are not callous and uncaring. We would like to see everybody in our society living in decent housing with the opportunity to maintain what we have come to accept as the Canadian lifestyle.

These are some of the facts surrounding current government spending on aboriginal affairs. The Government of Canada is currently spending some \$5.8 billion a year to try and deal with the problems we are talking about this afternoon. Out of that amount, some \$300 million is directed toward aboriginal housing. According to the latest reports some 3,500 new units are built and 4,500 units are renovated every year.

● (1815)

The Auditor General says that the spending on DIAND's budget is rising faster than the rate of inflation and the increase in aboriginal population combined. This tells me that the positive results of this funding are dismal to say the least. It is my contention that the results will always be a failure because there will never be enough money available in this budget to address the needs of these people.

In my view the only way these people are going to be able to exist in housing that is acceptable to them and engage in a lifestyle that is acceptable to them and to us as Canadians is for them to become economically independent and be in a position to provide their own housing on the same basis as the rest of us.

While I appreciate that the Indian people find that these existing programs provide some relief, they are surely no happier with the situation than we are, the non-aboriginal people and the taxpayers of Canada.

I ask the question: How can someone feel a sense of self-worth and self-respect when he or she has to go begging to the federal government for money to subsidize housing or a standard of living?

Reserves, in many cases, are located in areas where there is little if any economic opportunity. That is the reality of reserves in Canada today. The people who live on those reserves are relegated to a lifestyle which perpetually looks to the federal government to be subsidized. In many instances these reserves are located in remote areas that are very difficult to access and where there is really no economic activity taking place other than government funding. There is virtually no meaningful employment.

The aboriginal people who have fared the best are the ones who have made the difficult but courageous choice to venture off reserves and become part of the Canadian mainstream.

It is the view of our socialist friends, and we see the evidence of that in such motions as the one before the House today, that the government either has or should have the answers to all of our woes. "If we only had a better program. If we only delivered it more efficiently. If we only earmarked more tax dollars for the program we would achieve our objectives and everybody would be happy. We would achieve a state of nirvana".

After nearly three decades of massive government spending, massive redistribution of wealth from productive people in our society to the have nots, we find that not only has the government not achieved its goals but in every instance has exacerbated the very problem that its programs were designed to correct.

Mr. Milliken: That is complete rubbish.

Mr. Scott (Skeena): Those are the facts.

It is interesting to note that the Auditor General has in his latest report started to echo the sentiments of many brilliant economists, such as my colleague from Capilano—Howe Sound, who have been saying for years that government programs designated to fix problems such as unemployment and welfare by their very nature increase the demand.

I will quote the Auditor General. He says: "There are indications of possible negative effects associated with social programs". He goes on to say: "We note that most if not all social programs have the potential to produce such effects".

Many effects that have been associated with existing programs include rising social program use and high repeated use, suggest that social programs may be creating a long term dependence among some users. Disincentives to work when benefits from social programs are compared to earnings from jobs and interactions among social programs may result in the programs working at cross purposes.

It is therefore obvious that the solution to native housing, the real permanent solution, does not lie with more government spending or more programs, policies or initiatives from government, but rather must come from the aboriginal people themselves through participation in the economy like all other Canadians.

I might add that there are hundreds of thousands of non-aboriginal Canadians who live in poor and sometimes inadequate housing and who desire to move from their basement rental suites and their apartments and live in nicer housing. The reality for these people, a reality they accept, is that they will have to pursue their own dreams and aspirations using their own re-