

Housing

ted to all parts of this country. It is important that Canadians know and understand where their tax dollars are being spent, by whom and in what manner. As far as I am concerned, it is fundamental in this area of federal-provincial relations.

As I said before, I do not think we should be called members of parliament. We should be called trustees. We are elected, we collect taxes, spend the money and go back to the people at election time to give an account of the trusteeship. It is very easy for other levels of government to say they do not want to be bothered with the taxing job but just with spending the funds. I realize there are areas of co-operation, but it is not as simple as the problems of getting together and saying, "You do the taxing and we will do the spending". The parliamentary system as we know it would fail. As the hon. member for Bellechasse said, it is important that these programs be clearly articulated so that not only members of parliament know about them but that constituents also know. I commend the hon. member for Bellechasse for his concern. I am going to go into this rather thoroughly to make sure the information program is enhanced and that the corporation is enthusiastic about it as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Is the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) rising for the purpose of asking a question?

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): I should like to ask one short question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: This can only be done with unanimous consent because the time of the minister has expired. Is there consent to allow a question by the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the minister could tell us whether the meeting between himself and the provincial housing ministers which was not held on May 21 has been rescheduled? If not, is it his intention that it will be held before the budget?

Mr. Danson: Mr. Speaker, I hope so, but I do not decide this unilaterally; I discuss it with my colleagues. I shall be seeing most of the housing ministers separately. I want to speak to them personally within a period of a few hours to determine this. They might find, because of our meetings in the next few weeks, that we can resolve our problems. The provincial ministers now understand, as I am beginning to understand, that it is almost better to sit down one by one and deal with each province, than have all the other ministers sitting around the table listening to problems that are different from their own.

Mr. James Gillies (Don Valley): Mr. Speaker, one of the agonizing chores of a member of the opposition is to watch the government mismanage the country. One that is equally agonizing and almost worse is to listen to the type of explanation we have had from the minister about what is happening to housing in this country. Does the minister not know that there is a real housing crisis in this country? He has the gall to stand here this afternoon, when the vacancy rate in Toronto is less than 1 per cent for apart-

[Mr. Danson.]

ments, and housing starts in the country for the first three months of the year are the lowest since 1946, and make the speech he made this afternoon. How can he do that? He made a catalogue of those programs, and still we have the most disgraceful housing problem that we have ever seen in this country.

I do not get upset easily, but I am truly upset this afternoon. It is as if the minister did not know what is happening in housing. We are in a terrible mess with economic problems, as everybody knows, but does the minister not also know that housing starts are down by 100,000 from what we thought they would be? Does he not know that people are leaving Toronto because rents are increasing so rapidly? Does he not know what is happening to people in the country because no housing is being built for them? The minister has the nerve to stand up this afternoon and recite this catalogue of programs when nothing is happening. Let us be empirical about it. He can talk about these programs as long as he wants, but nothing is happening. Housing starts are down.

Mr. Danson: Ten million dollars a year!

Mr. Gillies: Mr. Speaker, I find that answer so distressing and so incredible. Does the minister not know what is happening to housing starts in this country? What is the good of talking about \$10 million a year, or this or that or the other program? The programs are not working. Look at the evidence. The Houses are not there. Housing starts are not in evidence.

• (1450)

The hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) said he hopes the minister goes to Europe. I understand the minister hopes to go fishing. I wish he would stay here and help us get some houses built in this country. We have a more serious problem in housing than we have had at any time since the early days of the Second World War. Yet here we are, postponing meetings, fooling around and wondering when the budget is going to come down, talking about AHOP, and this and that and the other program, when the entire premise on which the housing policy is based is wrong. That Canada, with all its land resources and all its building material resources, should face a situation in which the number of housing starts in the first three months of 1975 was smaller than at any time since 1946, is incomprehensible. There is something desperately wrong, and that is why the minister's approach, of giving a catalogue of programs, is totally unacceptable.

Clearly, the premise on which we are basing our housing policy is totally wrong. Housing in this country has traditionally been used by the government as an anti-cyclical instrument. When the business cycle declines, we build houses. Interest rates fall, demand goes up, and starts increase. When the business cycle is on the upswing, interest rates rise, demand falls and we do not build houses. However, now the traditional pattern of the business cycle is not present. Because of poor economic policies we are now in a situation in which there is increasing inflation and rising unemployment at the same time. We can no longer see the same pattern that was evident between 1945 and 1970. Inflation should be lessening