

Time Allocation

could have made the bill applicable to 1980 only, if it really wanted to encourage proper parliamentary review as ministers always claim is their intention. It could then have been referred to a standing committee of the House where expert witnesses could have been called and alternatives could have been considered.

What is the use of talking about it? The bill was politically motivated. It is not by any stretch of the imagination a housing initiative. The government knew this all along. Its actions in the past few weeks have confirmed this.

I repeat, this is not a housing bill. Yesterday this was confirmed once more after the many times it has been confirmed in recent months in debate in this House and in the press. Yesterday we received the November economic research committee newsletter, from no less an authority than the Housing and Urban Development Association of Canada. It notes that from its estimate in February of 215,000 housing starts in 1979 it has revised its forecast downward to 195,000. It is forecasting a further drop to 175,000 in 1980.

This authority on mortgage and property tax credit states in its November newsletter, and I quote:

The impact of the mortgage interest tax credit introduced by the federal government is deemed to be marginal during 1980.

If it is to be marginal, what is the haste?

Since the tax credit is small during the first year of the program and since it will not have an impact on home buyers until after they complete their tax forms in April, it will have a minimal effect on stimulating housing. The increase in mortgage interest rates for home purchasers has largely negated the benefit of the tax credit during this first year as well.

Another option open to the government, if it wishes to promote passage of this bill, is to consider a sunset amendment to permit a review of the bill in 1980. We will propose such an amendment when the bill is sent to the Committee of the Whole. The hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) suggested such an amendment under Standing Order 43, last Tuesday, November 27. I did not see any hurry on the part of the government to concur. Our party will vote against this closure motion and we will vote against the bill on third reading.

Hon. J. Robert Howie (Minister of State, Transport): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to add my voice to those members supporting the passage of Bill C-20 to amend the Income Tax Act to provide a tax credit for mortgage interest and property tax paid by home owners. I am very pleased also to support the use of time allocation, speedy passage of this bill.

This legislation is the most important tax reform measure to be proposed in this House in the last 16 years. This change is vital to those citizens desiring to own a home and in assisting these citizens in achieving that goal, and is equally vital to home owners who find the cost of living has become a more difficult problem in balancing the family budget. Why this positive reform is being opposed is beyond me.

The members of the opposition regard this reform measure as one very distasteful to them. In the first opposition attack on the bill, one hon. member described this measure as a

[Mr. Berger.]

scheme that will have a very limited impact, a discriminatory tax measure that is based on bad economics. Since the assault was launched, it has been carried on daily. "Inefficient", "inequitable", "expensive", "arrogant" and "blackmail", are some of the epithets that have been used.

These are the descriptive words opposition members apply. The longer the opposition participates in the debate, the greater their display of distaste for the bill, the more intemperate their assault, and the less valid their arguments.

In the time my constituents have had to consider the merits of this bill to provide major tax relief to home owners, I have not had one citizen of York-Sunbury suggest that this mandate of the Clark government ought not be enacted into the law of the land.

The only reasons I can honestly think of for the strong opposition to this tax relief for the people of Canada are three in number, namely, the reform never occurred to the former government, although the Liberal administration had 16 years in which the bolt of lightning could have struck; second, the opposition did not know the principles involved have long been accepted in tax law by our neighbours to the south; third, perhaps the chief reason for the opposition is the fact that this administration supports and proposes this long needed reform.

This bill is before this House because it is right for the people, home owners and would-be home owners alike; it is right for the people of New Brunswick, and it is right for the people of Canada. This legislation represents a new benchmark in income tax reform for Canada. I have no wealthy friends and I know of no wealthy people who have large mortgages and pay high interest rates.

This bill benefits the lower and middle income group, the breadwinners of Canada, the people who pay the taxes and make Canada the great nation that it is. They deserve a tax break, and this bill gives it to them.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Eymard Corbin (Madawaska-Victoria): Mr. Speaker, this is indeed a sad day for Parliament and democracy when we are faced with the irresponsible and ill-advised actions of this government. They want to rule Parliament by force, they resort to every possible and conceivable trick to prevent the people's elected representatives from expressing their views and, those of their constituents and putting forward sensible alternatives to this government's proposals. It is apparent, Mr. Speaker, that with this motion the government House leader, the President of the Privy Council and minister of National Revenue (Mr. Baker) is trying to save face, no more and no less.

How can they explain otherwise that the person under those hats, even before Parliament had an opportunity to discuss a measure, probably ordered the Minister of Supply and Services (Mr. La Salle)—because he is responsible I suppose for government printing services—to print the income tax forms for the current year, even before Parliament had an opportunity to deal with this financial legislation?