

premiers will be engaged in provincial political matters. According to the minister's statement it would be impossible to hold such a conference if there were a provincial election in progress.

Mr. Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Keays: Certainly.

Mr. Nicholson: Would the hon. member agree that six provincial elections within four months is a rather unusually high batting average for such a short period?

Mr. Keays: Yes, it is unusual to have so many provincial elections. It is also unusual to have so many problems in the field of housing. I believe it would have been usual had we asked some of the ministers of the provincial governments to contribute in some measure toward a solution of this problem. The minister is responsible for housing and is certainly aware of the increased demand for shelter that was forecast to occur between 1966 and 1970. Yet the minister contented himself with holding symposia in various cities across this land. He forgot to delve further into the real problem of housing which is one of finance.

I ask the minister, what consideration have we given to the construction industry in so far as it affects housing and commercial building in this country? The construction industry is the third largest contributor to our gross national product. Is it more economical to curtail housing drastically? Is it more economical to discourage the building of homes or to make homes unobtainable to prospective home owners? Is it more economical to have corporate investment postponed, with the result that 100,000 people will be unemployed?

If the situation is allowed to continue, during the coming winter months at least 100,000 people will be unemployed. There will be unemployed people who are specialists in the housing industry, and this industry requires many specialties. These people will not be able to sit around until we develop a new housing policy or commence new projects. They will endeavour to find employment elsewhere. The net result will be that when we begin to tackle the housing problem seriously the specialists will have gone. In this event there will be another increase in the cost of construction.

What are we to do about the commercial buildings that have been planned in all our

cities and towns? Are we to force people to postpone these projects for another two or three years, thus putting more people on the list of unemployed and affecting the service industries to such an extent that many thousands more will be sent home and asked to draw unemployment insurance? I believe this is one consideration that must be dealt with by the government. Housing is not only a problem; it is a crisis. This we all admit. It is also a financial problem. This we admit. But let us find a solution to the problem, because if we do not we will create a much more difficult financial situation by allowing the construction industry to be reduced by 20 per cent, 30 per cent or 40 per cent. Mr. Speaker, may I call it six o'clock?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, it being six o'clock, pursuant to provisional standing orders 6 (1) and 15 (4) I do now leave the chair.

At six o'clock the house took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The house resumed at 8 p.m.

Mr. Keays: Mr. Speaker, at six o'clock I was trying to impress upon the government the necessity for co-operation between the different departments of government. I was speaking about the responsibility of the government to ensure that the construction industry in Canada would not suffer from the increased lending rate in connection with housing and also about the importance of assuring the construction industry that we will not use it as an economic tap to be turned on or off.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I hate to interrupt the hon. member but I should bring to the attention of hon. members that many conversations are going on in the chamber. This makes it difficult for us to follow the hon. member's speech.

Mr. Keays: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope I have been able to draw the attention of the government to the fact that, although everyone in the house recognizes that we have a crisis in the housing industry we also recognize that there is a shortage of mortgage funds. However, I believe it is not the role of the members of this house to say that we have these problems, so therefore we must accept them and live with them. We have a duty to perform toward those who need housing, such as the young families across this