Canadians cherish the hope that they will some day own their own home. Because of the economic conditions which have existed over the past few years, many have come to the conclusion that they will never be able to own their own home, so they want to get security through the next best way, that of renting a home.

● (1530)

On the other hand, there are people who do not want the responsibility of owning a home, paying the taxes, cutting the grass and shovelling the snow. That is their privilege. A former colleague in the Alberta Cabinet said that he got to the point where he just did not want to be bothered with owning a home. He would much rather have someone else cutting the grass and shovelling the snow. He was quite happy, during the last part of his life, to live in rented accommodation. There is a place for both ownership and rentals.

I want to focus my remarks today on the various means by which the Government should make available the opportunity for Canadians to either own or rent homes with some security. I will do so from a broad point of view.

First, I would like to deal with one or two points raised by the Hon. Minister about the Mortgage Rate Protection Plan. When I read this Bill last night and heard the Minister speak this morning, I questioned why the Government is getting involved in this program. It is an insurance scheme. Did the Government contact the insurance industry in Canada to determine if it was prepared to develop an insurance policy that would provide some protection? If not, I suggest the Government has missed one of its responsibilities. We have a very viable insurance industry in this country which I believe would be quite capable of devising a plan that would give protection from interest rates if it thought there would be enough money for it to operate successfully.

Although the regulations have not yet been published, it appears that the premiums for this plan are very high. They may or may not be reasonable in contrast to the estimated cost or potential cost of the program. However, the fact that it may cost $1,050 as a maximum premium on a $70,000 mortgage will in itself prevent many people from buying this protection since they will have used all of their money to buy the home. Second, I do not see any indication in the Bill about whether this premium has a duration of six months, as many insurance policies are now, or for a year or, as the Minister stated this morning, if the coverage would be for ten years, at five years with a five-year renewal.

If this premium is to be semi-annual, I do not foresee anyone except the very rich buying this particular policy. A few more may be able to afford it if it is an annual premium, but certainly we should be trying to help those who are least able to help themselves. I question whether those families can afford $1,050 to buy the protection.

Let us use the example of hail insurance on a crop. A farmer depends on that crop for his income after a year of work. There are some farmers who have other income and do not insure the crop because they can absorb a loss for one or even two years. They will take a chance by not insuring against hail or frost in a particular year and consequently save that premium, which is a substantial amount of money, if there is no hail or frost. Others cannot afford to buy the insurance because their cash flow is almost nothing and they are therefore forced to take a chance. It will be the same situation with regard to this insurance scheme.

Those who are hardest hit with rate increases on their mortgages will be the ones who are unable to take the protection. That is one of my objections to this Bill.

I would also like to see the regulations since this is only the bones of the Bill. I want to see what the figure will be once all of the regulations are contained in the Bill. It will make a difference as to whether these regulations are sensible and designed to help the poor and middle class or will simply be a gesture that will not help people who really need it.

I want to see the rest of this proposal before it decide to support it or whether my constituents, whom I have the honour to represent, will be able to afford it or if it will help those who need it. With respect to the Mortgage Rate Protection Plan, the Minister said that this is protection against "unaffordable losses", in his words. Of course, the Bill does not protect against unaffordable losses when the interest rises because there is no protection whatsoever when it goes beyond ten points. Therefore, it is not really protecting against the unaffordable losses, only against some losses.

I would like to spend a few minutes speaking about the next item which is a very important part of the Bill. That is the section on the Rural and Native Housing program. It is called the RNHP. Certainly this program was designed to help those who need it the most. Apparently, it has not been working very well because a number of provinces withdrew from it and the Province of Quebec did not participate at all; that province could not see any advantage to the program. Prince Edward Island went into the program, but withdrew in 1979 because it did not find that the program worked satisfactorily. New Brunswick withdrew in 1983 and British Columbia withdrew in 1984. The Minister did not give us any reasons why these provinces withdrew, and I have not checked but we must assume that the provinces did not believe it was working to the advantage of their people. I think we generally agree that provincial governments should be working for the benefit of their people. Apparently, these three provinces did not like the plan and consequently withdrew. The Minister said that 21,000 people received help, but did not specify over what period. However, 21,000 is a reasonable number of people to have received help under this program.

I believe there is a need for this type of legislation. For example, there is a single parent in my riding who has three children. She is doing her best to raise her family properly. She asked me if there was a program that could help her because her house needs shingling and new doors. The winters are rather cold in Alberta. The temperatures sometimes go down to 40 and 50 degrees below zero with a wind chill of 70 below when the wind is blowing. That may not last for many days, but that temperature on one day could freeze someone if