

Private Members' Business

programs, people are discrediting the whole co-operative movement.

I would argue that social ownership is no longer the route to go. If a group of workers wants to take over a plant that is closing, they can get together and put together a business plan. They can approach a bank. The bank can lend them money. They can put a management team in place, and that is fine. The government should in no way be involved in giving them preferential treatment to distort the market in order to favour a select group of people.

I was invited two weeks ago today to address the Co-operative Council of Edmonton, Alberta. They have an annual meeting that is made up of 15 members, two of which are housing co-operatives. There are other members, which the hon. member listed. There are credit unions, farm co-operatives, workers co-operatives, consumer co-operatives and so on. Two hours before I was to address them, I received a phone call. I was told I could not address them because I had spoken out against housing co-operatives and they felt it was not appropriate.

In this case, a few members of housing co-operatives who are earning over \$50,000 a year were offended that I suggested that they should no longer take advantage of massive government subsidies. They were really offended and said: "No, we do not want you to speak here", even though they were only two out of 15. They were discrediting the whole co-operative movement by such a petty way of approaching what would have been a very rational and reasonable discussion.

I personally support housing co-operatives and other co-operatives. Housing co-operatives are a very good way of providing housing for low and moderate income Canadians, and the Government of Canada should continue to do that. But we should in no way subsidize high income Canadians, including two members of this Chamber, to be the recipient of massive housing co-operatives.

Social ownership has distorted what we want to achieve and we no longer should be involved in this manner. If we want to provide housing support, we should have housing support that is targeted at those in need. There are growing numbers of homeless people

and low and moderate income people who need affordable housing.

• (1530)

The co-operative movement should look seriously at what the hon. member is talking about, getting involved and becoming more active, but he should not be asking for government subsidies or loan guarantees or for taxpayers to support them in this manner. We support them in other manners through the unemployment insurance program and so on.

In closing, I would say that social ownership is not what we as Canadians want to achieve. We want the free enterprise system to continue. It has provided a lot of growth. Individual initiative has spurred growth and economic activity.

Mr. Dennis Mills (Broadview—Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to rise and speak on this issue. As the member for Essex—Windsor is probably well aware, there are many worker co-operatives in my riding of Broadview—Greenwood. Carrot Common is one of them, and there are many others. I salute the work of these co-operatives. As the member mentioned, there is opportunity for more growth in the co-operative movement where all Canadians can be affected in a positive way.

First, I want to say that I am concerned about a couple of the tendencies that seem to creep forward from time to time where they try to put on an air of exclusivity. In other words, there are times when, if I go into the store and I do not have my co-op card with me, I do not tend to get the graciousness that one would normally get when one goes to any other store in the riding. In the area of public relations, the whole co-op movement would be much better served if those people who know it well and who practise it would be a little more approachable in the service they provide.

The member is missing a tremendous opportunity in the neighbourhood of financial services. He mentioned in his speech that the co-op movement had millions and millions of members across Canada. It would seem to me, if these members could be marshalled and organized in one or two of our principal financial institutions, that they could then use a very special kind of leverage because they were part of a co-operative financial institution. This could have dramatic effect on interest