

The Address—Mr. Danson

Hon. members are very well aware of the wide range of social housing programs now available under the National Housing Act. I have already referred to AHOP, which can be of special benefit to young families. Another important approach is through what has become known as the third force in housing, housing provided not by the government, not by the conventional housing industry but by local people helping themselves. Very often this housing is created for the elderly or for the physically or mentally handicapped. We give these public-spirited sponsors 100 per cent financing at favourable rates, a 10 per cent capital write-down and substantial grants to help plan projects and get them started. With this kind of help, of course, we expect these groups to create housing that will rent at a price somewhat below market rates and reflect interest subsidies and grants which are provided with public funds. We are now looking at other ways of helping these third force groups, particularly ways in which land could be made available to them at a lower cost, especially near the central cores of our major cities.

I am pushing ahead energetically with the program of rural and native peoples' housing which my predecessor announced in the last parliament and under which we are committed to create or rehabilitate, with the fullest possible co-operation of the local people, a total of 50,000 homes over the next five years. This program requires the agreement and participation of provincial governments, and I am pleased to say these negotiations are proceeding and agreements should be reached with most provinces before the end of the year.

For many people, of course, the only solution to their problems is public housing provided at rents geared to their income. I am sure this kind of solution will continue to be needed for many years to come. However, we are continuing to seek new ways of applying this program, particularly arrangements which will avoid creating so-called ghettos and which will integrate public housing clients into the community without incurring any social stigma, and also enriching the lives of those people and their children.

● (1600)

All these programs offer the people of Canada not only help with their housing problems, but the widest possible range of options to select the kind of housing they will occupy and the way they will occupy it as owners, tenants or members of co-operative organizations. I do not agree that everyone is entitled, as a matter of right, to be provided with a house of his own by the government. I do believe, however, in equality of opportunity and that all Canadians should have equal access to the same options for solving their problems.

I believe that people, like governments, in selecting their options in these times should exercise restraint. I think there is adequate evidence that some of our present difficulties are created by a minority of people who have heated up the housing market by repeatedly trading up to larger and more expensive houses which bear no relation to their essential needs and sometimes not even a relationship to their cost.

I wish to conclude, Mr. Speaker, by reiterating the view of this government, that even though housing is a critical

[Mr. Danson.]

element in the economy of the country, it is not simply a commodity to be bought and sold according to the winds prevailing in the marketplace. Because it is an essential factor in the fundamental physical and social well-being of people, housing must be the subject of deliberate, consistent, long-term policy. This is why I reject any suggestion that housing funds are turned off and on to manipulate the economy.

Our financial commitments have not fluctuated; they have been consistently increased. Certainly, we must always be aware of the demands which housing makes on capital markets, its effect as a stimulator of employment and as a catalyst in the sale of a wide range of capital goods. These considerations, however, must be carefully weighed-off against a preminent concern for people's immediate and urgent need to be decently housed, a need which cannot be deferred or delayed to accommodate economic or fiscal mechanisms.

Though I am a new minister, Mr. Speaker, I have the great advantage of being a member of a well-established firm. I mean, of course, the present government. It is a firm which, with respect to housing as in all other matters of public concern, enjoys the well-founded confidence of the people of Canada. Many Canadians are concerned just now about their current housing problems, but they have resisted and will continue to resist the efforts of those people who would magnify these difficulties into a national crisis. The people of Canada have confidence, Mr. Speaker, in a government which during its term of office has seen the creation of new homes for 5½ million people, far exceeding the population growth and the rate of new family formations.

The people of Canada have confidence in the government which accepted the challenge of the Economic Council to build a million homes in five years and exceeded that target by a healthy margin. The people of Canada believe that our present housing problems can be solved, and they believe they will be solved by the government which during its six years of office built three times as many low-income homes as were built in the previous 22 years.

The people of Canada expect solutions from the government which introduced assisted home ownership, neighborhood improvement, residential rehabilitation, rural and native housing, the widest range of far reaching social housing programs ever introduced in Canada and, I suggest, in most countries of the world. The people of Canada know that our housing difficulties will not be overcome overnight by some simple device pulled out of somebody's hat. It will require a sustained attack on many fronts, not by a single minister but by the whole federal team working with other governments, the financial community and with industry and people at the neighborhood level.

That is what the people of Canada expect of this government, and that is what they will get. They have every reason to face the months ahead with confidence and good hope.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I want to say a few words about United Aircraft of Canada Limited. The tragic unfolding of the