

Income Tax

Mr. Stevens: Madam Chairman, of course I am not familiar with the wealthy friends of whom my hon. friend speaks, but if he feels his wealthy friends in the city parking operation are doing something in respect of which the law should be changed, I suggest that by all means he should make that recommendation to the Minister of Finance. While the minister is attempting to stop that, I would urge him not to do something at the same time which would kill the building of homes in this country.

The hon. member may represent a downtown Toronto riding and not know this fact, but I would suggest to him that home prices in this country are out of the reach of the average would-be homeowner, and this is partly due to the inept actions of this federal government. It is mostly because of its actions, or the lack of them, that we have this problem in the country. I simply suggest that if the minister takes a careful look at the suggestion proposed he will find it is going to complicate home building in this country rather than relieve it.

An hon. Member: Let's hear from the Minister of State for Urban Affairs.

Mr. Stevens: I would certainly yield the floor to the Minister of State for Urban Affairs, because I am curious to know whether he has been tainted by the same ridiculous attitude concerning home building that is generally reflected by clause 7 of this bill.

● (2150)

Mr. Benjamin: I am also anxious to hear from the Minister of Finance. The hon. member for York-Simcoe made reference to the individual homeowner and the damage that this clause will do to him. I should like to ask the minister to elaborate in greater detail for my edification, as well as that of the hon. member for York-Simcoe, on the clause as it relates to the individual homeowner who has owned the lot for X number of years before building his home. Will this clause hurt him or not?

Mr. Gilbert: Before the minister answers the question may I point out that the Minister of State for Urban Affairs, who has a very intimate knowledge of this subject, is here. Perhaps he could explain to us the impact of this clause and what happened prior to introducing it. How much tax does Cadillac and some of the companies in Toronto pay as a result of taking advantage of the clause?

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): Madam Chairman, the answer to the hon. member's question is that the homeowner who has his own lot cannot write it off because he is not in business, so there are no penalties on the homeowner at all. The hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre can draw his own conclusion as to what the hon. member for York-Simcoe was trying to say.

Mr. Malone: Madam Chairman, I had not intended to speak on this clause this evening, but after listening to some of the comments, I have come to the conclusion that this is certainly an issue that concerns me. As I listen to the debate going back and forth, the gist of what I am getting is that land will be more available and somewhat cheaper for prospective home owners. Certainly it appears

on the surface to be a very positive move and we must give it some support.

However, there is one comment that I would like to make to which I hope the minister will pay particular attention. I think that if this clause will make land more available, the factor that I will bring forward will have to be considered. I understand this relates to agricultural land.

There is an assumption in Canada that we have lots of good soil in our country. The fact of the matter is that the cultural way in which Canada has developed has put our citizens where the best soil is to be found. One can ask how it is that some of the larger cities in the prairies, such as Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Regina, Lethbridge, Red Deer and Edmonton, are all built right in the middle of old geological lake beds. Everyone of those cities is built right on silted out soil; almost all of them are on soil internationally rated at from one to seven, right in the middle of class one and two soils.

We assume in this country that Canada has all kinds of food producing resources. But the fact of the matter is that if Canada's population continues to increase at the projected rate—and I am now quoting a soil scientist—this country will have great difficulty in feeding itself by the year 2000. In the United States they lose more agricultural land, almost 100,000 acres of soil a year that is good agricultural land. If we take a look at the Niagara Peninsula, the Okanagan Valley, and the shore lines along the various coasts, while I appreciate the fact that an attempt is made to try to make land available, the very fact that this provision is being put forth by the minister will create a tremendous negative factor in our society.

If I can get the minister's attention I should like to ask him whether or not any consideration has been given in the cabinet to protection of land, so that we do not continually use for housing and development the small amount of agricultural soil that is left.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): There is a good deal of concern in the cabinet about the gradual erosion for urban purposes of our agricultural land, relating primarily to zoning laws and usage of land laws within provincial jurisdiction. The Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of State for Urban Affairs and others have been in touch with their provincial counterparts to see what can be done on a national basis to preserve agricultural land. This is primarily a provincial responsibility. Through our demographic and urbanization policies we will do whatever we can to supplement wise provincial use of land.

Mr. Malone: Madam Chairman, I appreciate the main part of the minister's response when he said that, generally speaking, soil and other resources are under provincial jurisdiction. But I would like to put this question to the minister: If that is a provincial resource, then what is happening with the projected airport at Pickering? More important, with the decision that has already been made, obviously within federal jurisdiction, what is being done about the airport in Edmonton?

When they decided to build a satellite airport there, they chose three sites. When it was narrowed down to two, one of those sites was on 45 per cent class seven soil and on 50 per cent class six soil. One of those is considered non-