

You, sir, who are now in the Chair and are also member for Beauharnois-Salaberry (Mr. Laniel), attended the seminar in Vancouver, in Harrison Hot Springs, where we laid the foundations of a housing policy, whereby we suggested through our leader, Mr. Trudeau, that the needs of Canadians had to be met, wherever they might live, whether in St. John's, Newfoundland, in Quebec City, in Toronto, in Vancouver or anywhere else in Manitoba. Canadians in ever-increasing numbers would be moving into urban centres, and the Canadian government had to help those people who would require not just housing, but quality housing. After that study and those findings, the Liberal government set up a Ministry of State for Urban Affairs in order specifically to work with the provinces, with various social bodies and with municipalities to develop not one but a number of programs, to establish a sampling of programs capable of catering to the needs of the Canadian people. What has happened since? As I said, in 1968 we built some 70,000 housing units. What has happened since 1968, sir?

I have here the 1978 annual report of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation which says that the annual average of new housing starts from 1969 to 1978 in Canada exceeded 235,000 units. In the last ten years, from 1969 to 1978, 235,000 housing units have been built compared with over 250,000 for 1978 alone. Before the Minister of Finance gets down to establish a new housing program, we should consider the situation. We should try to identify housing needs, study the quality of housing made available to Canadians and see if housing is plentiful enough.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is very important that we should study the question of quality of housing in Canada. I refer to a Gallup poll made in 1968 and in 1978 whose purpose was to get an indication of housing conditions offered to Canadians. The question was as follows: Are you satisfied, dissatisfied or indifferent about your dwelling? The survey was made throughout the country in October, 1978. According to that poll, more than 85 per cent of Canadians were satisfied with their accommodation. In the Atlantic area where the financial problems are the greatest, more than 79 per cent of the people said that they were satisfied with their housing.

In 1968, the degree of satisfaction was 60 per cent while in 1978, according to the Gallup poll, 85 per cent were satisfied with their accommodation. In 1968, 34 per cent were dissatisfied and in 1978, 13 per cent only were dissatisfied.

Mr. Speaker, I am really trying to see on what basis that legislation was introduced for consideration by the Minister of Finance as a priority that had to be passed before Christmas. I am trying to see what are the quantitative and qualitative needs of Canadians.

Mr. Chénier: Never.

Mr. Roy (Laval): This is the situation. I mentioned that the performance was not that bad. As for quality, I think that once

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again the Gallup poll reveals that it is very good. We are conscious of the fact that there is room for improvement. It is obvious that we must continue to have some. This is why the previous Liberal government had introduced a bill which was given three readings and was passed by the House of Commons on March 12 last. It was Bill C-29, an act to amend the National Housing Act and the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation Act, and it provided for an additional program to continue to improve housing conditions.

Mr. Chénier: Improper priority of the Progressive Conservatives!

Mr. Roy (Laval): Sometimes we make comparisons with the United States which already has a program such as the one being proposed by the Progressive Conservatives. In the U.S. there are 235,000 housing units a year. The number of housing starts in the past few years is as follows: in Canada, we built 11 units per 1,000 people whereas in the U.S., over the same period, there were only eight units per 1,000 people. In other words, under our housing policy we built more units per 1,000 people than in the United States, 11 units per 1,000 persons compared to eight units per 1,000 to be precise.

I am still trying, Mr. Speaker, to understand why the Progressive Conservatives are introducing such a piece of legislation. According to the statistics that I have before me and that I have just given, there does not appear to be any urgency or need for this measure, as they would want to make us believe. There is no urgency. That is why we tend to think that only to fulfil a haphazardly-made electoral promise the government is now ready, despite other priorities, to go ahead with a measure which, in my view, is discriminatory.

Mr. Speaker, I said that we are aware of the fact that we must continue to work towards improving housing conditions for Canadians, but for all strata of society; not just for the haves, but also for those who have family responsibilities, those who have reached an age where incomes decrease instead of rising, those whose needs and obligations remain the same, or for those who live in underdeveloped areas. It seems that this bill in no way reflects the needs of that sector of Canadian society, bearing in mind the statistics I gave at the start. It seems to me that the figures quoted by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Crosbie) are too negative and in no way prove that all levels of Canadian society benefit from this bill according to their needs. Instead, it reflects once again the initiative of a Progressive Conservative government that gives in to regional pressures from those who are better off. I would even say, Mr. Speaker, that I am convinced that, if in the riding of the Minister of Finance, as well as that of the minister responsible for housing, the Minister for Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. MacKay) people were asked to choose between the present housing policy and this one they are being asked to swallow whole, they would say they feel far better protected by the present policy.