

that contains something more than generalities and red herrings. After all it was three months from election day to the opening of parliament. Surely the geniuses in the government's white towers could figure out, in that time, that all the promises of the last six or seven years were left unsolved. In fact, most of them had not even been dealt with seriously. I cannot believe it took three months to prepare a speech that skirted around all the current issues and problems.

I heard from a reliable source that the Speech from the Throne had been farmed out and written by some brain truster in Toronto who did not even know what was going on in Ottawa, or anywhere else in Canada for that matter.

Last year the Prime Minister appointed Mrs. Beryl Plumptre to head the Food Prices Review Board. I suppose he thought the higher prices for food would go away and stop bothering him. All of us now know that Mrs. Plumptre has bombed out. She solved her own personal problem because she gets \$40,000 plus per year in salary. It suits her all right to be used to pass the buck for food price inflation from the government to the Review Board. Just the other day the government announced that her job has been made secure for another year. I suppose that is the sum and substance of the government's fight against inflation in food prices for some time to come.

That is not good enough, Mr. Speaker. The people of Canada, the people of my constituency, will not be satisfied with this kind of nonsense in place of decisive action. I personally do not think that giving Mrs. Plumptre exposure on national television week after week is going to solve any problems, bring down the price of food, or even stabilize the price of food. I want to see some positive steps taken by the government. We have enough publicity seekers around already, people who go on national television one day telling us that the worst is yet to come, and the next day come back and tell us there is not much of a problem after all.

I was disturbed a few days ago when the new Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Danson) made a public statement that there was no crisis in housing in Canada today, and that Canadians should consider themselves fortunate to be living in a country without a housing problem. Of course there is a housing crisis in Canada today, Mr. Speaker. Tens of thousands of people in Canada cannot afford decent housing, whether they are looking for rental housing or housing for purchase.

Rental housing has gone beyond the means of thousands of Canadian families, and every day that passes means that countless more thousands are being priced out of this market. Purchase housing has long been beyond the reach of the average working family unless two or more people in the family are bringing in good salaries. The costs of materials and construction are continuing to rise at an alarming rate, and when the present interest rates are added to these costs it is easy to realize why the average Canadian family simply cannot afford living accommodation that they have a right to expect.

This fact is easy to realize, Mr. Speaker, but as far as I am personally concerned, it is impossible to accept. I do not accept a situation in a country like ours where builders and money lenders are empowered to determine who can and who cannot live in a decent home. We are now in a

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situation in Canada where the builders and landlords dictate housing costs and they also determine rent levels, here in Ottawa and elsewhere. There are landlords who not only set exorbitant rents for their accommodation without any limits or restrictions being placed on their actions, but who also decide whether they will allow children in their apartments. In other words they can say to a prospective tenant, "If you plan to raise a family, go somewhere else".

● (2120)

A few days ago the hon. member for Moncton (Mr. Jones) pointed out that present CMHC policies seem to be directed toward urban construction and other matters related to improving the housing situation in the cities. My own riding happens to be rural in character and so I have a personal interest in this matter. This situation was further aggravated on October 1 of this year, just a week or so ago, when CMHC restricted its home ownership plan to new housing. This means that families who have a chance to buy older homes in areas such as my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka have been cut out of the Assisted Home Ownership Plan. This is discrimination in more ways than one.

In the first place buying a new home is almost always more costly than the purchase of an existing one, especially where families plan to acquire an older home and fix it up to suit their own needs and tastes. The Minister of Urban Affairs may not have a housing problem of his own, but I can assure him that thousands of Canadians are not as fortunate as he is in that respect.

I would just like to make one more comment about the change in CMHC policy with regard to the Assisted Home Ownership Plan. In the last few days I have heard of cases where people have been hit by this change and, in my view, it shows how cold and unfeeling this government is when it comes to dealing with individuals.

We have a situation in which the government has wasted hundreds of millions of dollars on many programs, one being bilingualism. Incidentally, the money applied to CMHC programs is not being pumped down the drain in the way so much other money is that is supplied for other programs. This money is being paid back to the treasury, with interest. Tonight the Minister of State for Urban Affairs is appearing before a committee. I had hoped to attend, but was unable to do so because I was selected to speak in the House.

At this point I wish to mention one or two proposals which were advanced by my party in the last election campaign, and which the government adopted.

An hon. Member: They were Conservative proposals.

Mr. Darling: Nevertheless, they were good ideas. We are pleased to note that wives of old age pensioners will be eligible to collect pensions at age 60. When I listened to the Prime Minister I thought this plan would be implemented in October. I thought that was fine. But when I read his speech, I noted that the date of implementation was to be October 1, 1975. That gave me an awful shock. That situation is disgraceful. The plan could have been implemented within two months of parliament being convened. Inflation is with us now and wives of pensioners certainly need that money.