

Mortgage Tax Credit

While we are talking about those who deserve, I have heard the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Crombie), again a gentleman whom I admire and respect, make some statements in this House about the problems of the real core, the inner city people. I agree with the concern, but are they helped by this program? Are they going to get any assistance under this program? I suggest not, when 60 per cent or 70 per cent are renters who will receive, again under that Christmas tree, simply a piece of black coal. They are not going to receive any benefits under this program. So, let us cut through the illusion and delusion and the unreality of the Minister of Finance.

● (2130)

Let us cut the bombast and get down to real facts. If the government were trying to design a program that is measured against housing needs and against where the real pressures of increased costs are being felt, and if it were trying to develop a program that would respond to the present demands and imperatives of the 15 per cent mortgage rates, then this program has nothing to offer. It is bad economic management. The same amount of money could be used to get a better bang for the buck. The money could be reallocated to other priorities, and directed to where the real problems are. There is nothing that will give incentive to a first time home owner, a person renegotiating a mortgage, a renter, or an apartment owner.

We cannot take the Minister of Finance seriously, even if he tried to be serious, which he does not do very often. When we look at the facts on the matter, it has nothing to say.

Other than the problems associated with the fact that this program has nothing to do with helping housing, we should also look at whether or not it is a good economic package. I do not think there was any statement heard more often during the past election campaign from Tory members opposite than, "we are the efficient managers; we will really put the economic house in order; just watch us get there because we are really going to clean things up".

To show how responsible this Minister of Finance is, he is prepared to bring in a program which commits the Canadian taxpayer to a locked-in expenditure of \$2.5 billion in four years, and \$575 million this year, without even knowing where the money will come from. That is Tory economic policy. How can the minister expect members of this House to pass this legislation when he has not given us the foggiest notion, even Newfoundland the foggiest notion, of where the money is coming from? Is it coming from family allowances? Will he eliminate the index on pensions, or is he simply going to add that money to the deficit? Is this going to be the additional Tory deficit that he is talking about? It is an act of sheer irresponsibility to bring in a fiscal measure and not give any indication or present anything in what he has said tonight on how he intends to pay for the measure.

The minister would like the members here to treat him seriously. He would like proper consideration of this bill. But the minister is not prepared to provide even the most common

[Mr. Axworthy.]

of courtesies to the Canadian taxpayer and say, "If you are going to get this benefit, this will be taxed in return". That is not an act of a minister of finance; that is the act of a member who is trying to play black magic and who is using smoke and mirrors, not economic tools. He has no responsibility in those circumstances.

What the Tories are really trying to do is blackmail this House. We have the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Baker), the Minister of Finance, and all their assistants getting up and saying, "That nasty opposition is going to obstruct this bill. We want it passed by Christmas." The government is not bringing its budget in until December 11. Why is the minister not prepared to tell us now how he will pay for this program? When will he start fessing up with the other side of the equation, that if you are going to spend the money you must show where it is coming from?

We cannot accept that kind of pig in a poke proposition. It is simply not good economics, and any member of this House who wants to have any credibility when he returns home at Christmas will not want to vote for this spending program of \$600 million without even knowing where it is coming from. I am amazed that the Minister of Finance would try to pull this stunt off in this House tonight. We have been waiting to hear where the money is coming from.

Perhaps equally serious is the fact that when this minister talks about his economic management he is committing the cardinal sin of a minister of finance, which is to bring in a structural measure that will be permanent to deal with a cyclical problem. Why is this measure being introduced—to stimulate the economy? What will the economy be four years from now? The Minister of Finance does not know because even his crystal ball will not predict that. In fact some of the economists who have looked at this measure have said that we may be in a period of fairly heavy growth in four years and why would we be spending \$2.5 billion—it is probably closer to \$3 billion—at a time when the economy may be overheated?

The Minister of Finance is committing the major cardinal sin of committing money down the road when he does not know what the conditions will be. He does not even have a road map of where we are going. He is flying blind. He is doing his wrong-way Crosbie act. The minister is going in the opposite direction to where he has to go. We could accept it if he brought forward measures and said, "we have some housing problems in this country, inflation is going up and there is additional pressure, and I would like to bring in some measures this year to see what we can do about them. And if the problem is not solved, then we will take a look at it next year and the year after". But to make a commitment for four years down the road, God forbid!

When the Minister of Finance challenges us for an election, I think it would be in the best interest of the Canadian people to have a change of government so that at least there would be a government which is not committing that kind of hara-kiri with this country. That is what the minister is engaged in; he is foreclosing with hara-kiri.