

National Housing Act

industries will help to restore confidence in the economy and make certain that productivity in the country generally improves as we pull out of the present situation.

The new housing program forms an important part of the government's attack on inflation. Canadians will have more housing available of good quality, at a price they can afford. This action will do much to answer critics' statements that the wage and price controls will bring about a decrease in economic growth. On the contrary, we can expect to see inflation brought under control and, at the same time, productivity stimulated by a healthy housing market and construction activity.

By this program the federal government is committed to encouraging the production of one million new housing units during the next four years. Certainly this figure will be and has been attacked by skeptics as an impossible goal but, as the parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier)) pointed out yesterday in the House, we are already assured of achieving our target of 210,000 housing starts in 1975. This program is what the Canadian people need and what they have been asking for. Housing has been mentioned as a problem in every election held recently, both federal and provincial. The minister is to be praised for providing this program to Canadians and deserves the full support of this House in seeing it becomes implemented immediately.

Mr. Bill Clarke (Vancouver Quadra): Madam Speaker, three years ago I was elected to this chamber, and the passage of each year has been marked by the various housing programs the government has brought forward. It seems that every year a new housing program is brought forward, which will do great things.

Mr. Orlikow: It is done several times a year.

Mr. Clarke (Vancouver Quadra): It's done several times a year, as my hon. friend to my left says.

This evening I want to refer to some remarks the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands (Miss MacDonal) made one month ago, when replying to the statement of the Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Danson). She expressed the views of this party when she said that we welcome any government initiative to stimulate the residential construction industry, particularly in view of the fact that moves taken by the government in the past 18 months have largely been responsible for the depression experienced by this very important sector of the economy.

She then went on to say that she found several basic shortcomings in the minister's program. She said that, first, the measures will not stimulate the provision of the amount of mortgage funding required even to supply the new housing mentioned by the minister. Second, there was nothing in the statement to deal with the major problem presented by high interest rates. I will deal with this later. Finally, she said the program failed to deal with the necessity for continuity in housing policy. She suggested that there is scarcely any reference made to co-operation with the provinces, and she ended saying there was nothing original about the proposed measures. I agree with my colleague from Kingston and the Islands.

The housing shortage largely is a matter of geography. I tell the House that in many places in Canada there is no

[Mr. Maine.]

shortage of housing. The opposite is true. For example, in Squamish, British Columbia, not far from Vancouver, there is a surfeit of housing, all kinds of housing, single family, rental housing—you name it. The reason is that tenants are mobile and can move. If a tenant's job ends, he can simply move. But you cannot pick up housing and move it. Housing is put in place for a long time and serves over the long haul. It stays where it is built—unless you happen to meet a house on a trailer coming down the highway the other way.

There is surplus housing in places other than Squamish. Recently, in the Public Accounts Committee, in these very parliament buildings, we examined the question of housing in Gimli, Manitoba. There is a surplus of housing in the town, and the Department of National Defence was paying for this surplus housing. The people in Gimli, Manitoba, who faced a housing shortage on the private market, tried to talk the government into sharing the expense for housing. The housing was being wasted, and the government was paying for empty housing. But would the government say, yes, we will let the people of Gimli, Manitoba, share the cost, rent this housing and thereby ease the burden on the taxpayers of Canada?

An hon. Member: No way!

Mr. Clarke (Vancouver Quadra): No way, Madam Speaker. Those housing units stayed empty for I do not know how many years, to the cost of the taxpayers of this country.

We often hear talk of the housing shortage, and of the government's countless plans to combat it. Anyone who considers the housing situation must realize that there is no housing shortage; there is a money shortage. That is what is wrong. If you have money, you can find housing—you can buy or rent any sort of house pretty nearly anywhere you want. If you have no money, or not enough, then you are out in the cold. I will be showing as these remarks drag on—

• (2040)

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Drag on?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Clarke (Vancouver Quadra): My friends concede that my remarks will not drag. I hope to be able to demonstrate that the government has been the cause of the shortage of money and the high cost of housing in this country. I have to go back. It is nearly three years ago that I first spoke of housing in this House.

Mr. Broadbent: And nothing has changed.

Mr. Clarke (Vancouver Quadra): That is right. At that time I made a statement which caused a lot of mirth on the government side. I advocated that if the government got out of the housing business, the housing industry would provide the housing required by Canadians. They laughed. It is now three years later. How many plans have they put forward? As my friends to my left say, nothing has changed.

I wish to read a sentence or two from what I said on March 22, 1973, in this very chamber. I quote:

I am going to argue that federal housing policies, current or proposed, do more harm than good, and that the best thing the federal govern-