

those who will try to justify the actions of the government or clear it of this responsibility. I feel that by and large, the government is responsible to a substantial extent, especially regarding this catastrophic situation which is making thousands of Canadians suffer, and I find it most regrettable that the government did not act much sooner to accept its share of the responsibility. Of course, the minister responsible has mentioned the government's generosity in relation to the provisions of this bill under which home owners may receive payments of up to \$5,000. Our estimates have proved this amount to be entirely inadequate. I realize that the government must limit its spending, but how can you, as it were, negotiate the problems confronting these people and the suffering the situation is causing all these home owners? I feel that all governments have a social responsibility, and in this case there is also a moral one, and I believe that the government would receive the approval and support of opposition members if it were truly willing to respond with a decent minimum, in direct proportion to the problems facing these people.

The financial assistance provided in the bill is grossly inadequate. Realizing this, the government points out that other government levels could do their share. However, we firmly believe that the federal government has a major responsibility to correct a serious mistake. Of course, I am not accusing the minister of having voluntarily misled the public; that is not the point. The federal government subsidized this product and it must therefore take its responsibilities. Since this is a social problem, I feel the government should be much more generous and humane toward these victims.

We are also aware that people are now trying as best they can to rid their homes of this product. Many questions remain concerning the retroactivity of this legislation. Will those who have had this product removed benefit from the funds allocated under this legislation? We shall have the opportunity to put these questions to the minister in committee and we hope that the program will be retroactive and that the criteria or requirements set in the legislation will not disqualify some of the victims of this product. We also know that since the subsidy available will not be enough for people to remove the product completely, the conditions prescribed will only guarantee that the product already installed will be sealed in. Obviously, it will remain between the walls and experts might prevent it from being as hazardous as it is now. Other experts readily admit that this is certainly not a solution. The answer seems to be to get rid of the product, which entails costs three or four times higher than the maximum amount of the subsidy. It is therefore obvious that the bill cannot correct what is a major problem for thousands of Canadians, and I do not think that any member of this House can be satisfied with a bill which is so completely inadequate.

The government is now devising all kinds of programs to create employment. I would have hoped that the subsidy

Urea Formaldehyde Insulation Act

provided under this legislation would be higher since it will necessarily create employment as the work must be done by specialists, by people who are able to correct the problem. This is what the government should do instead of announcing programs which are too often nothing more than disguised welfare. When the bill is in committee, many members will undoubtedly attempt to suggest solutions, and in any case, they will ask the minister for additional funds. Let me simply remind the members of this House of all the statements we have been reading and hearing for at least a year. The minister may have tried to tell us that we are delaying passage of this bill by our interventions in the House, but I do not think that we can be accused of having wasted the time of the House as some members have said recently, and while we are well aware of the urgent need to refer the bill to committee and to consider it clause by clause, we are also aware of our duty to convince the minister of the need for additional funds.

I submit it is not asking too much, Mr. Speaker, that government members show more compassion and generosity toward those 300,000 people, those 100,000 families who will be unable to meet their obligations and cannot afford to stay much longer in those homes. We know this legislation will pass within the next few weeks but they will be unable to make the changes needed, which means that come winter, most of them will have to relocate. And what does the government do? All it can hand out is a mere pittance if you compare that with the needs and misery resulting from that legislation. This is not good enough. It does not resolve the problem it merely mottballs it, and there is no evidence that the effects of that harmful material will not still be felt despite that minimum correction within the coming months. Evidently those people have to get rid of the stuff, and the problem is compounded two, three times over because they cannot sell those homes and they probably cannot get loans either to partly correct the problem. We know full well that the institutions or individuals that are aware of the dangers of that material will not participate financially in any partial repair. Therefore, it is clear that those home owners will have to arrange for a thorough clean-up job. It is also clear that the grant is altogether inadequate.

I can well imagine the minister is referring to the generosity, to the substantial effort made by the government, but we must remind him that this effort is inadequate, that the grant solves the problem only in part. But how is it possible to negotiate or perhaps be satisfied with partial corrections of the ills of the individuals who have to live in those homes? It is out of the question, Mr. Speaker, and I feel we have a duty to make these representations to the minister, and we will have an opportunity for further discussions in committee. I have the clear impression and I hope that the minister himself will have amendments to make in committee, in order to decently address the plight of those people faced with that plague or hazardous product.