

discretion to authorities set up under the legislation and for us, in housing that means CMHC. The rate at which the housing problems of Canadians is ameliorated depends, of course, upon the actual commitments of the government in its budgetary appropriations as handled by CMHC.

The present legislation is not a significant innovation. I say this because most of the provisions of this bill, as the minister well knows, have already been implemented in some form, appropriately authorized or not, by CMHC. For instance, Canadian Housing Statistics contains references to the assisted home ownership program that has been in operation for three years now. We are told by our colleagues in British Columbia that a rehabilitation project similar to the one proposed in the present bill is in operation in the minister's own riding, although the NHA as it now stands contains no provisions for this kind of a project. It would be interesting to know under what authority this project was started.

Likewise, much that is proposed under the neighbourhood improvement program can now be done under the present urban renewal legislation, although we can understand the government's decision to discourage the continued use of a section so rightly identified with the destruction of many neighbourhoods in many of our large cities. This having been said, provision for these and other programs in the present bill are welcome, if only because adoption of the bill will make their availability more widely known and therefore more widely utilized by Canadians from coast to coast.

The bill in its present state, however, will not receive the unqualified support of the NDP. We have some questions which we want the minister and his officials to answer. We would like to know more precisely, for example, what is contained in some of the anticipated regulations. We would like to see amendments to the CMHC budget introduced in the House soon after the present bill is passed because, as the minister and as everyone who is seriously concerned with housing knows, it is the allocation of funds which will be so crucial in terms of implementing a number of the laudable objectives described in the different clauses of the bill.

A question related to that is that if we do not get adequate money we will simply be raising the expectations of countless Canadians across the land who will read in the bill some good provisions and expect that everything will be implemented within a reasonable period of time. If the government does not show a real desire to overcome the deplorable housing situation by providing money, then this bill will be appropriately seen as a piece of sham legislation.

Another question that concerns us is whether we are going to continue financing projects by large developers whose quality standards in terms of work in recent years has proven to be quite inadequate. I could document a number of cases but I will not take the time of the House to do it now. These were documented at length in the reports by Charney and Dennis.

Another question is whether the government will switch its emphasis, as we would prefer, to non-profit associations and co-operative societies. They have a potential for real social benefit over the long term in Canada, provid-

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ing not only adequate accommodation but, from our point of view, good social relations for people. The minister indicated tonight—and I know this from conversations with co-operative societies which have met with him—that he is fully sympathetic to the development of co-operatives. I for one welcome that and hope that the budgetary arrangements which the minister makes within his department reflect the concern which he has expressed.

The other matter which concerns us, and it is a matter of apprehension that is perhaps more real to me than the others I have mentioned, apart from funding, is that some of the programs that the minister has announced recently are intended not simply as alternative choices to public housing but perhaps reveal an intention of the government to replace public housing. We feel that that would be a tragic mistake. We think that the AHOP which was announced last year and is now before us in the bill, and the added measures that the minister announced a few days ago which provide diversification in terms of types of low income housing, are fine.

We think that these are steps, with some qualifications which were noted at the time, which will provide a greater range of choice to people in the low income group in Canada. But we think it would be a disastrous mistake if these programs were to replace public housing. Every authority I know of in the field of low income housing would agree that improvements are needed and that there must be some alternative choices. But they all say that we must maintain a basic commitment to public housing for low income Canadians.

What is needed is not the removal of public housing but additional choices. What is needed is an absolute expansion in the amount of money that is allocated to low income housing. So if we bring in AHOP and the kind of program which the minister announced the other day, they should represent, in terms of his own budgetary proposals, a cause to increase the amount of money for low income housing and not represent, I hope, a decision to take some money out of public housing and put it into these other schemes.

There are a number of improvements that we would like to suggest to the bill, but I see it is almost ten o'clock, Mr. Speaker. May I call it ten o'clock?

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. MacLean: Mr. Speaker, the acting government House leader may want to put on the record what is proposed for the House tomorrow so, that all members will be made aware of it.

Mr. Basford: I was not aware that I was the acting House leader, but I will take the job unto myself. I believe we are continuing with the housing bill, if that is agreeable to my colleague, the Secretary of State.

Mr. Faulkner: Mr. Speaker, I can announce that we will continue with the item that is now before the House.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Was there not some understanding that we might proceed with the