

*Housing*

non-status Indians on the other to create a gigantic bureaucratic mess which clouds the underlying issue, that is to say, the need for more and better native housing.

The motion before the House today does not imply that housing is the only critical issues confronting native people. Indeed, their needs are written in the statistics of short life expectancy, increased infant mortality, unemployment, poverty with its ugly side-effects of hopelessness, alcoholism, suicide, high drop-out rates from school and a host of other handicaps. However, the main purpose of the debate today is to enable us to focus on the specific issue of native housing, one which has been ignored by the government despite overwhelming evidence of need and despite the obvious fact that adequate housing is an essential component of any over-all strategy to improve the standard of living of the native people, preserve the integrity of the family unit and rectify many of the ills to which I referred a few moments ago.

It is hardly possible for the debate today to be relevant in the absence of an awareness of the dimensions of the subject as they relate to the various segments of the native community. Moreover, it is necessary to understand the inadequacy of the government's approach to the native housing issue. Other members taking part in the discussion will, no doubt, deal with various matters of critical importance. In the time allotted to me I find it essential to enlarge on the two aspects I have just mentioned since these must be clearly understood if we are to insist, as we will, on a commitment from the government to rectify a native housing situation which is nothing short of a national disgrace.

The cause of this housing crisis is frequently overlooked by Canadians, yet it is pertinent to our discussions. Upon the gradual urbanization of Canada and in the face of the technological explosion experienced in the western world, many native people were left in limbo, in transition between their traditional hunting, fishing and trapping economies and the reality of the present-day economic system. Native people were unprepared for the changes which were taking place, and the paternalistic attitude of government contributed to their bewilderment.

Despite a history of poor native housing, one which has an even worse story to tell in recent years, native people have shown amazing restraint in their requests for justice. Status Indians began to complain about their government-constructed housing at the end of the Second World War. Provision of housing for the Inuit, the Metis and non-status Indians is of more recent origin. The Inuit, who have traditionally been self-sufficient when it comes to shelter, turned to what in southern Canada would be termed conventional housing only with the migration to the north of an increasingly large white population. The Metis and non-status Indians whose ancestry is either Indian or mixed blood through intermarriage with the early voyageurs, explorers and hunters, have been a relatively forgotten people; their aspiration to decent housing have really only received the attention of the government since the formation of the Native Council of Canada in 1971.

[Mr. Holmes.]

Before dealing with these specific groups, it is important to recognize that the basic criticism emanating from all three sectors of the native people is remarkably similar yet it has fallen on deaf ears. A common denominator of the complaints coming from the three groups is that the government's bureaucratic methods have failed to produce the type of dwelling which accommodates them in their culture or their environment. Perhaps of even greater significance is the well-founded complaint that native people have not been involved in planning and construction. The major criticism—and the reason for it is obvious to all who have visited native communities—is that the housing provided so far is far short of present and projected requirements.

Another pertinent point is that the government is unresponsive to the uniqueness of native peoples and ignores this uniqueness in its planning. Registered Indians have suffered when housing projects are promoted because of the narrow view taken by the Department of Justice with respect to the interpretation of the Indian Act. The Inuit, in calling for more involvement, insist that efforts should be directed toward environmental suitability, the development of solar heat for domestic purposes and cheaper forms of construction. The Metis and non-status Indian people have quickly learned from experience that the program originally designed for them must be recast so as to suit their specific needs.

What are the facts as they relate to each group? George Manuel, the past president of the National Indian Brotherhood, in his presentation to the Mackenzie Valley pipeline inquiry at Yellowknife on April 13 of this year outlined the tragic story. General housing and living conditions are far below accepted standards and are deteriorating. Over a period of 30 years the government's housing program has resulted in the construction of some 31,000 houses for Indians. Of this number, approximately 14,000 are, by any modest standard, habitable. Over 9,000 houses require major rehabilitation and more than 7,500 are beyond repair. The number of houses required by existing families who have no shelter whatsoever is 4,351. With the rising Indian population it is expected that by 1981 housing needs will be in the neighbourhood of 20,000 new houses and that a further 9,000 existing units will be in need of major reconstruction.

I know the government is inclined to use that figure of 9,000 homes requiring major reconstruction as evidence that Indian's lack interest in maintaining their homes. That is nonsense. The major reason these units need to be reconstructed is the kind of housing originally supplied. For instance, in 1968-69, 10 per cent of the homes supplied consisted of one room and were provided to an coverage of 5.5 people per household. While the average area of new Canadian homes is just over 1,000 square feet, 90 per cent of Indian houses contain less than half this area.

Seventy per cent of the Indian population have no water in their homes. Approximately 25 per cent use water hauled from sources that are known to be contaminated, and 40 per cent rely on surface water. As many as 90 per cent use outside pit toilets for sewage disposal and, finally, no organized means of