

National Housing Act

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps we should call it one o'clock. It being one o'clock I do now leave the chair.

At one o'clock the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

Mr. Herbert: Mr. Speaker, before lunch I was talking about the conditions some of us experienced in the late twenties in moving to the massive housing developments that were constructed in the thirties in order that these terrible slum accommodations could be demolished. Row upon row of well constructed houses were being built to move these families into accommodations the like of which they had never before experienced. They had running water, a real luxury. They had electricity, another luxury. Each house had a little garden. Trees were planted and there were hedges. There were also parks and open spaces. In every way, the environment was very pleasant. Within a period of two years the trees had been broken; the hedges had been pulled up and the children played in the street because they must walk the distance of a block to the park. The locks of the houses were destroyed and the community as a whole was slowly being destroyed.

I mention this in connection with this bill because we all recognize that today changes are not made simply by moving people out of the accommodations in which they are presently living or attempting to change their standard of living. The change must be brought about by a mix involving the different levels of society and the example of other people, whether neighbours and so on. At the present time we are very fortunate in Canada in that in many areas we see this mix of different social levels which is so essential if we are to achieve our objective and give everybody the opportunity they seek.

Shortly after the war, the kind of low-cost housing I was speaking about was still being built in Montreal. I was involved in projects in Montreal in the St. Michel and Saint Laurent areas where, in those days, houses were being built at a price of between \$8,000 and \$9,000 with down payments of around \$500. I mention these figures because many figures have been thrown at us by previous speakers in respect of the high cost of housing. I want to compare what happened immediately after the war with another side of the situation.

Let us see what is happening today. Within 20 miles of downtown Montreal, less than a 30 minute drive on fine expressways, one can find well constructed homes the down payment on which is \$750 and the cost of which is \$14,000. These houses are on beautiful lots and are within two blocks of the lake and the river. They are within walking distance of churches, schools and shopping centres. Those houses are being built in large numbers. So, Mr. Speaker, let us not generalize and use as a basis for that generalization the conditions we find at present in Toronto.

[Mr. Herbert.]

• (1410)

I want to refer specifically to conditions in Toronto because it is acknowledged to be one of the fastest growing cities in North America. It is also a city in which you can find houses going up in fantastic numbers. Costly they may be, but they are being built because they are being bought. They are being bought because people think they are a good buy, because they want them in that location and at those prices.

Because of my keen interest in this subject, I listened very attentively to the three lead-off speakers for the opposition parties. I was particularly keen to learn their proposals, and not just to hear their usual objections to everything that is introduced by the government party, because that is taken as normal these days. But what concrete suggestions did they come up with, Mr. Speaker? I noted the second speaker made some proposals which I found very interesting. I noted, too, that the third speaker made some proposals, which I did not find quite so interesting, but they were certainly specific. I will deal for a moment with the lead-off speaker for the Official Opposition, and I am very glad to see that he has entered the chamber so that I can address my remarks to him through you, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams) spoke for a long time. I tried very hard to find something in his speech that might be a specific proposal. I did not succeed. In fact, I might say that he must have been boring his chief supporter, the hon. member for Prince Edward-Hastings (Mr. Hees), because at one point I thought he was asleep, but then he yawned and I realized he was not. And he did waken up to applaud very loudly when the hon. member for Calgary North referred to an elephant eating a peanut. I could not discover the relevance of that, but this is the kind of thing we get when we listen to the Official Opposition trying to put forward something that should be worthy of them by way of valid comment, criticism, and suggestions for improvement.

One of the things the hon. member for Calgary North stressed, and that I want to deal with briefly, was the relationship that exists between the federal government and the provinces. He did this through many indirect references. He talked of revenue sharing with the provinces. He talked, for example, of the elevator strike, which certainly most of us consider to be a provincial responsibility. But what interests me is that at no time did he make any specific proposal whatever on what could be done to get at the root of the problem, which is the relationship between the provinces and the federal government. In fact, Mr. Speaker, if it is a constitutional problem why do we not have some specific proposals from the Official Opposition for amending the constitution, so that we can tackle this problem?

The hon. member also made us listen to a piece of poetry at the end of his speech, and I listened very carefully to see how my favourite province was going to fare in that poem. I found, as with most things with which the Official Opposition is concerned, that Quebec did not appear once in the poem. It just wasn't there, as with all their considerations. So far as they are concerned that province is not taken into account, and perhaps because of this the hon. member's speech was distorted. He obvi-