

*Business of the House*

schemes, for the preservation not of uniquely historical monuments but of buildings of general aesthetic and cultural interest.

The United States even has one program under which the government purchases a house, restores it and then resells it to a private owner who undertakes to keep the house in a restored and repaired order. There are many, many things in this area that we could be doing but are not doing.

What has gone wrong? I think the first thing that has gone wrong has been the orientation of the National Historic Sites and Monuments Board. Its members are not so much interested in architecture or general amenities; they are almost exclusively archivists. They are historians and, I suggest, attach too much significance to the principle that the buildings with which they concern themselves should be of national and historic importance.

Another thing that I think has gone wrong has been the attachment of this board to its present minister. The logic appears to be that national historic sites are a little like parks—recreational amenities. I suggest that what we are dealing with here is not simply recreation in that sense but the preservation of a cultural heritage. That function should really come under the umbrella of the Secretary of State (Mr. Pelletier), particularly now that the museum service is there. Because to a considerable extent the functions of the historical monuments board and the museum service are inter-related.

The basic problem of the National Historic Sites and Monuments Board is orientation—the orientation imposed by the law and that imposed by the ministry with which it happens to find itself. I suggest that the government seriously consider bringing the National Historic Sites and Monuments Board out into its proper place, the office of the Secretary of State.

The other aspect that undoubtedly hampers the Historic Sites and Monuments Board is the simple one of money. It is not simply a question of providing subsidies, but of arranging tax incentives so that the owners of buildings will themselves be encouraged to maintain them in a viable and attractive state.

I know the objections that are often presented to a tax incentive system. Yet in this particular area it is often impossible to place

the initial responsibility in the hands of government. When government faces a difficult fiscal situation, the first kind of program that is squeezed under a diminishing budget is one that is oriented toward cultural activities. We would have a much more satisfactory record of preservation of historical buildings in this country were we able to rely upon certain tax incentives. There are many examples of these in the United States and abroad, incentives that give to the owners themselves the primary responsibility for maintaining their buildings in an effective order.

I suggest that we should not simply abandon this type of activity to the provinces. The provinces are doing much. For example, Ontario is doing much through the Heritage Foundation to preserve buildings. It is not simply a question of preserving provincial cultures or provincial heritages; it is a question of preserving a national heritage, one that belongs to us all as Canadians, not simply as citizens of one province or another.

This is an area in which the federal government has a responsibility, but I suggest the federal government has not yet met this responsibility. Nor do I believe that the National Historic Sites and Monuments Board has faced the problem of the orientation of the board and the problem of money. I think the kind of change with which the government has presented to the house today would be a grave deception to many people across Canada. I hope the government will continue to consider this problem and that we will soon be presented with some kind of effective legislation to deal with the kind of problems I have described.

**Some hon. Members:** Question.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I am prepared to put the question, but I had the impression that the hon. member for Vancouver East wanted to speak.

**Mr. Winch:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak on this matter so may I call it six o'clock.

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**Mr. Bell:** Mr. Speaker, may I ask the house leader whether he can say if the present bill and the other two small bills will be called on