

Bank Act

possible, logically, to relate many subjects to one another in that field. I do not think any occupant of the chair can bring down a particular ruling of relevancy on every occasion on every subject.

I want to point out to the hon. member for Broadview-Greenwood (Mr. Rae) that I did not make a ruling. I did appeal to the hon. member to consider the rule of relevance and attempt to contribute to the debate with that in mind. The traditional role of the Chair has been not to rule on each and every point of order or on each and every question of relevance but to try to draw to the hon. member's attention that some effort ought to be made to stay within some semblance of a rule of relevancy. That is what I have done. I do appeal to the hon. member for Skeena in that regard. I understand the difficulties but I do want to make clear that it is possible, logically, to relate any number of subjects, one to the other. I can only hope that hon. members will see fit to try and relate them a little more closely to the subject matter before the House than has been done in the last hour or so.

Mr. Fulton: Mr. Speaker, before I carry on I would point out that most of my contribution is concerned with native housing. If it is to be your ruling that mortgage interest rates and the impact of the amendment by the hon. member for Edmonton West makes native housing and that type of issue irrelevant to the amendment or to the section of the Bank Act with which we are dealing, I would appreciate your ruling at this point because, quite frankly, that is the subject matter of the remaining speech notes which I have for today. It is the issue I intended to centre on.

I would like to quote briefly from a paper prepared by Mr. Graham Farstad several years ago entitled "Northwest British Columbia—A Social Perspective." It relates directly to reserve housing in my riding and I think it is relevant. It says:

By far the greatest incidence of housing without basic amenities comes from registered Indians on northwest reserves. There was no running water in 41 per cent of houses, no indoor toilet in 57 per cent of houses and no indoor bath in 61 per cent of houses. The percentage of existing houses in poor condition varied from 17 per cent to 23.9 per cent in the northwest Indian districts. These serious deficiencies also affect educational success, health standards and over-all motivation. Consequently improvement of existing housing must be an essential component of any program to assist Indians.

The relationship of families to housing is examined... Throughout the northwest, the number of persons per household is significantly higher than the B.C. average. With more persons per household in the northwest, one would expect more rooms per dwelling to accommodate them. In fact, the opposite is the case. The result is more people living in smaller houses.

In my view this is highly germane to the issue that is before us, because the proposal put forward by the hon. member for Edmonton West clearly has the intention and, in fact, would limit the amount of capital which would be available for housing. It runs parallel to the proposals and the legislative process that we see coming from the Liberal government at this time, which are limiting the amount of capital going not only to native housing but to low and middle-income housing across the country. It is creating a very serious crisis. It is important that we know precisely why members to our right are making proposals such as that. I have not heard any relevant statements from that side as to why they are so

interested in seeing that amendment go ahead. But I find the following somewhat germane to statements made by both of the previous speakers:

It is instructive to look at bank profits. Since 1973, the year when the Liberals passed the residential mortgage financing bill to "enhance the attractiveness of mortgage investment", bank profits have risen by over 250 per cent.

I do not know of very many working families in Canada who have seen their incomes increase by 250 per cent since 1973. I do not know of very many commodities in this country that since 1970 have not doubled in cost to consumers.

In concluding my remarks and in the interest of maintaining good relationships with the Chair I will stay away from going extensively into the problem of native housing, which in my view is one of the most serious and pressing issues in this country. So I will just say that I see the amendment by the hon. member for Edmonton West as being, really, a crudely disguised "perk" for the banks. I am surprised that the points which were raised by the hon. member for Ottawa Centre did not deal either with the serious problems within housing or the serious problems which would be created by the proposals of the hon. member for Edmonton West. Nor did he deal with the serious problems we will still face when the Bank Act is passed.

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): Mr. Speaker, I rise to engage briefly in this debate and to support the amendment put forward by the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert). In pith and substance the amendment relates to the amount of mortgage funds that are available to the mortgage market through the chartered banks. But in the result the amendment is simply another method of calculating the amount that could be made available. I do not think it is intended to control or reverse the policies which relate to the mortgage practices in Canada. It is merely intended to put it on a sounder financial basis.

In effect, the amendment relates the formula to the assets of the bank rather than to the liabilities of the bank. That is in terms simple enough for all to understand. There is no intention to affect the amount of money which is available to natives or any other group in Canada but simply to put the whole matter of the Bank Act, and the provisions of it, on a sounder, sensible basis. I am sure the hon. member for Edmonton West had nothing more in mind than to put forward a change in the proposal to make it more sensible, more amenable to the business practices that should be applied to banking activities.

This points up another aspect, however, which is that the Bank Act and the provisions before us in this bill are not written in stone. They are not things that cannot be changed, that cannot be improved, that members here cannot influence in a way which would change them for the better in the conduct of the business of banking for the benefit, basically, of the people of Canada.

This is just one example and there are many more. We have seen in proposals before us under the Bank Act provisions which would allow banks to get involved in the leasing of