

*National Housing Act*

When this bill was introduced on second reading, the hon. member for Kingston and The Islands (Miss MacDonald) said that inadequate housing in Canada is indeed the breeding ground for a lot of human misery in our country. I hope the minister will soon tell us what he intends to do to implement a program for building rural and native people's housing. Unless he implements some such program, the native people of this land will feel they have been cheated once more. I have before me a document showing what has been done in this area since 1971, and it is not exciting reading. Unless the minister institutes an adequate program, the native people will knock on his door again and tell him they have been betrayed. They will insist on an adequate rural and native people's housing project.

If the minister does not intend to participate in this debate, perhaps one of his colleagues will tell us what the government intends to do to meet real needs in this country. It is useless relying on government information services; Central Mortgage and Housing officials know nothing about this program. Frankly, I do not think the minister knows much about it either.

We were promised 50,000 new homes for native and rural peoples in the next five years. We want to be assured that this will happen, that the government recognizes the plight of native peoples and that it has committed itself to solving some of their special problems.

**Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood):** Madam Speaker, this is the first occasion on which I have had the opportunity to speak in the House on this subject since the minister's appointment to his portfolio. May I therefore take this opportunity to congratulate him on his appointment. I would not wish him to think that my congratulations involve necessarily or indeed at all any approbation of the policies that may have been foisted upon him. I hope he will recognize this as a kindly personal wish and not as any political gesture.

● (1750)

Like the hon. member for Prince George-Peace River (Mr. Oberle), I wish to speak first about housing problems as they affect my constituency. The hon. member mentioned certain groups of Canadians who have a very real and serious problem in connection with housing. The same is true of people who live in the less prosperous parts of metropolitan areas such as Toronto. Many of them live in Greenwood.

I do not know whether this coincides with the minister's philosophy, but the major way of helping these people is through an extension of public housing. I find no reference to public housing in these amendments. It may be the minister will put his efforts into that field later. However, let me point out to the minister that the real problem we have today is not people who can finance to acquire home ownership. Admittedly that has some importance, but the real problem is that there are many people in existing housing who are threatened with eviction. These people have rented for 20 or 30 years. They are now older and living on pension. Because of enormous increases they are not able to pay the rent.

[Mr. Oberle.]

I have, as do many other members, a constituency office. No week passes without a substantial number of people coming to my office and urging me to try to assist them in getting low cost housing through the Ontario Housing Corporation, which is public housing supported to some extent by federal funds. I am reminded by my colleague, the hon. member for Broadview (Mr. Gilbert), that the funds for this purpose have been reduced. If that is the case, the minister is proceeding in entirely the wrong direction.

Rents for public housing are geared to income. The people who suffer from lack of housing are those who do not have adequate income to pay rentals at the present time. Many of them are older people. They have lived in the same place, paid their rent regularly and, in many cases in my constituency, have maintained the homes in an admirable fashion. Now that they are older, they are being forced out. They simply cannot afford to pay anything close to the commercial rents that are being required. I therefore plead with the minister to shift his emphasis toward housing and not cut down on the funds available for that.

The major emphasis I want to make is with regard to co-operative and non-profit housing which is being defined as the third force. No doubt the minister is aware that his predecessor, who was in the House earlier—

**An hon. Member:** He is here.

**Mr. Brewin:** I will not try to distract his attention. I do not think I would succeed. The former minister attended a seminar on non-profit and co-operative housing programs which was held at the Holiday Inn in Toronto on March 25, 1974. He was speaking to representatives of this form of housing programs. His words could not have been warmer or more enthusiastic. He said, and I quote:

I would like, first of all, to express my appreciation to all of the representatives of community housing organizations who are here today. I congratulate you and I welcome you as partners in an important humanitarian enterprise. I want to assure you of the continued support of the federal government in your work.

You are in a position to make a unique contribution to the solution of housing problems. As private individuals, living within the community you serve, you are in a better position than any government to recognize and respond to the particular needs of the community. You bring an intimate human quality to the process of planning and managing housing. No one else can do that so well.

I am referring to the former Minister of State for Urban Affairs, now the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Basford). I am referring to him with high praise at the moment. If he listens to all of my speech, he will find that will be followed by a lack of enthusiasm for the follow-up both by him and the present minister. He dealt with the third force. He said:

The third sector can never build all of the housing that we will need but it is a creative power and a very sensitive and responsible instrument which works for the many thousands of Canadians who don't have the financial clout to command much attention in the market place but who, with a little bit of financial and moral support, can look after themselves.

Because I put a very high value on this kind of initiative—

Non-profit and co-operative groups are in an ideal position to use the rehabilitation program as a self-help exercise.

I want to say that we in my constituency accepted this. We have at least 75 units of co-operative housing. It is