

*Housing*

It is the government, supported by its backbenchers and the New Democratic Party which at one point said the first Constitution was marvellous, the people of Ontario and Quebec would be first-class citizens, each province with a veto, compounded by a veto in the House of Commons, because of their population majority. Those who live in the other eight provinces of Canada were to be satisfied with one third of the veto. We were one third as important. The NDP, most of its members from the west, said that was marvellous. They stood up in this chamber and voted for it. Several times they made speeches in praise of it. Gradually the people of western Canada began to find out about it. The anger lives on.

● (2130)

**An hon. Member:** Dishonest Tory drivél.

**Mr. Hawkes:** It is a region of the country where I was born and raised. It has some of the most generous people in the world. They are the kind of people who will give you the shirt off their back. They come from a pioneer tradition which says that you cannot take anything. If you ask for a gift, you will get it but if you try force, you will be resisted.

Day after day these people have to face a government which does not seem to comprehend the importance of this principle. It is a region of Canada where a handshake is worth more than a legal document. These westerners can look each other in the eye and say, "We agree". That is binding upon them. They cannot understand a government which says one thing and does another. They cannot understand why a piece of legislation is touted as helping to solve the housing problem when, in fact, it does nothing.

The President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Johnston) knows that it does not solve the housing problem. I have respect for the President of the Treasury Board and I do not think he would stand on any platform to say that this legislation does. I hope I am right.

**Mr. John Bosley (Don Valley West):** Mr. Speaker, before I commence my speech tonight on the housing bill I will say that I found it tragic to see western members of the other opposition party in the House laughing when a member from Calgary tried to deal with the separatist problem which was espoused in a byelection last week. I say this advisedly but I have become used to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) sneering at the views of those who try to express their feelings for the federal government. However, I was not expecting to see those sneers from the New Democratic Party. I was surprised to hear a reference to that tonight. In any event, tonight is not the occasion on which to debate that, but it will be a matter we will be debating in the future, because there are real problems to be solved in the west.

The member for Calgary West (Mr. Hawkes) was correct in raising it tonight in connection with this legislation. This bill represents yet another attack on the dreams of all Canadians, wherever they come from. It represents the conclusion to a string of reductions of federal government commitments to private sector housing which goes back nearly 25 years, and most recently from the last election.

The member for Saskatoon West (Mr. Hnatyshyn) earlier gave a list of the litany of claims by the current minister responsible for housing with regard to this matter. Therefore, I will not go into them now. I happen to know the minister well from our days together on council in metropolitan Toronto. Therefore, I knew exactly what he meant and I am sure he chose his words well when he said, in introducing this bill, "The bill before the House for second reading is a response to the serious difficulty which faces Canadians." I know that the minister chooses his words well. He did not say "a significant response" or "an important response" or "an effective response". He is honest enough to know that it is only "a response". We hear consistently throughout this debate that the mortgage assistance proposal is for \$50 million and the multiple unit assistance proposal in the bill is for \$350 million over two years. That is \$400 million over two years for the total program, if you like.

To most Canadians that may sound like a great deal of money. It is if it is viewed in absolute terms. Perhaps we should try to put the government's housing priorities into context. The government is to provide \$50 million in an attempt to deal with the problems of 920,000 Canadians who will face mortgage renewals during the lifetime of this program; of whom 50,000 fewer will even get help, we are told. What does this \$50 million represent? It represents what we gave to the Algerian government to build a monument. In other words, this government's housing priority is just as important as a 434 foot monument in Algeria.

The government intends to provide \$350 million over two years, or \$175 million per year, to help those in need of rental housing in Canada. This also sounds like a lot of money. Rental housing is no more critical than in my home town where our vacancy rate is approximately 0.03 per cent. But \$175 million per year represents exactly twice what the government wastes on its advertising budget. I will put it in a context which will make great sense to the House. Although we do not have all the details, we have discovered that the government has made a commitment to assist the Soviet Union in the construction of a gas pipeline. It is to be financed, we are told, through the Export Development Corporation guarantee, and although the figures are not confirmed, that guarantee is for approximately \$600 million. Of that \$600 million, approximately \$275 million will be spent in Canada and the interest on that money, since we are guaranteeing the reduction of the rate from 16 per cent to 10 per cent, we are told, will effectively be a gift costing the Canadian taxpayer approximately \$125 million. When those figures are added up, we will give away \$125 million and lose in terms of the support, since the money will not be spent in Canada, somewhere between \$200 million and \$350 million.

In other words, building the Russian gas pipeline is somewhere between two or three times more important to the government than housing for tenants in Canada. If we review it in that context, of a government which came into office promising to lower energy prices and then raping western