

*Housing Prices*

think it is worth while to quote from an editorial written as a result of a leakage of the report. It reads:

The pertinent question on a national level is not whether rehabilitation programs are needed, but whether scattered rehabilitation that does exist now, and will increase in the future, will be given its proper place in a policy framework.

CMHC has systematically neglected to gather and organize data on rehabilitation. The formation of local groups came about not only because of a concern for rehabilitation of all too visibly deteriorating housing, but primarily in resistance to the urban renewal policies of government and to private developers' bulldozers.

While government talks about the involvement and participation of people to determine the kind of housing they would like to have, local groups involved with rehabilitation have simply been doing it.

Few large builders are willing to become involved in rehabilitation because they feel they can make larger profits in new construction. This top-down view of the larger builder-developer tends to dominate policy at federal government and CMHC levels.

Only 10 per cent of the builders consider rehabilitation an important part of their business. These builders, according to the report, are the small firms that construct fewer than 25 housing units a year.

Rehabilitation builds on the resources available to low-income families and does not cause the disruption of a family or a neighbourhood like urban renewal schemes, the report said.

The over-all costs are generally less than new construction, especially when evaluated in terms of social costs. It serves to upgrade the general adequacy of housing at the neighbourhood level—one of the initial objectives of urban revitalization.

The report said there should be grants available, without a means test, for improving the structure, exterior, electrical and mechanical services, for conversions and for revitalizing neighbourhood and community services. It also suggested that technical assistance be offered by the government.

It is easy to see that many of the things the minister said are taken directly from the Charney report.

There are virtually no programs aimed at revitalizing the neighbourhood and social development at present, the report said.

The report continues on and on. I do not wish to take up too much time because I know other members wish to speak on this subject.

It should be the first priority of housing policy to reverse the further deterioration of existing housing through maintenance incentives and assistance programs.

Low-income housing, because the rents are often not as high as other units, often falls into the abandonment spiral. In many cases the housing stock is purposely run-down by owners who see little economic potential in the house, but keep the land for speculative purposes.

Other failures of the builders, CMHC and the government are referred to. One of the things which I think should be done—this is a recommendation of either the Charney report or the Dennis report—is that a national inventory should be taken. The task force recommended that a national housing inventory and building code be implemented as quickly as possible. With the need for employment I cannot understand why we are unable to find people who are interested and who could take an inventory of substandard housing and do something about it.

Just the other day in the House the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Mackasey) welcomed a suggestion of mine that programs similar to the Local Initiatives Program be initiated to help fishermen provide through, their own initiative, the facilities they require in order to

[Mr. Marshall.]

provide employment and give them the base for a better livelihood in an industry which is fast deteriorating. The minister thought this was a good idea and said he would discuss it with the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Dubé) and the Minister of Fisheries (Mr. Davis) for future planning. Perhaps the minister responsible for housing will take a similar step with regard to housing.

Since it is obvious that eventually a program for rehabilitating homes will be introduced, and I hope soon, why not direct some of the moneys that will be available into a type of local initiatives program to allow municipalities and small communities to take an inventory of all substandard housing and submit projects to improve these homes for the benefit of people who cannot afford to do the work themselves or are not capable? This could also be done, based on need, for a community even before it has a housing program.

At the same time, this type of program would bring out the initiative of Canadians and satisfy a critical need which could be relieved by providing the materials and labour under technical leadership. Such an idea would provide employment and avoid duplication of spending with co-operation among departments of the federal government and the two other levels of government. This is one idea on which I could elaborate if the minister is anxious to listen.

My main concern—I say this again—is that regardless of the hundreds of millions of dollars being spent, there are still people living in homes which have been condemned. There are still families like the one I described who are living in an old, abandoned bus at the side of the road. This is the area to which we should direct our programs, and I hope the minister will bring in legislation soon to this end.

• (1520)

[Translation]

**Mr. Marcel Roy (Laval):** Mr. Speaker, I take great pleasure in rising to speak in the debate on the motion which was introduced by the official opposition and which reads as follows:

This House regrets that the government has failed to take measures which would provide all citizens with decent housing at reasonable prices.

I have spent quite some time objectively studying this situation. When one considers the accomplishments of the National Housing Act in Quebec, one cannot help being proud. Of course, we do not pretend that everything has been done nor that the various acts have been perfectly administered. Much remains to be done, but achievements over the past few years indicate that the government has given priority to the housing problem and approached it with determination. We shall continue to give evidence of this interest and determination during the next few years, and with an increasing measure of success ensured by the amendments to the National Housing Act that will be submitted to the approval of the House during the next few days by the hon. minister responsible for Urban Affairs (Mr. Basford).

During the four-year period 1968 to 1971, there were nearly 190,000 housing starts, of which 5,800 took place in 1971, which represents a production rate that few indus-