

NDP voted, defeating it. It has often been suggested that we in the Conservative Party have no alternatives, but that alternative would have provided an incentive for Canadians to own homes. We on this side feel that those expenses should be legitimate deductions from income and that this was positive action to address the problem. The minister of housing has thrown a papier maché life ring to drowning Canadian home owners.

I should like to draw to the attention of the House the minister's remark when he introduced the bill on February 8, 1982, as reported on page 14760 of *Hansard*. He said:

I would like to add that these 15,000 new units would mean not only affordable homes for 15,000 more families, but also an estimated 35,000 additional jobs for people involved in the construction industry and associated businesses.

In the past I was spokesman for housing on this side. The highest multiplier we could find to which experts referred that related housing starts to jobs—and I checked this information this afternoon—was 1.75. If I take the 15,000 housing starts and multiply them by 1.75, I come up with 26,250 jobs. I suggest that either the minister is guilty of his usual accuracy or, if the figures are true, he is guilty of his usual inaccuracy.

I should like now to deal with the minister's actions as minister responsible for housing when the budget was presented and the bill was introduced. When we look at the attitude of government in regard to the bill, we must also look at the attitude of the minister to government and to the House of Commons. In the week preceding the budget, on November 13, 1981, the minister's officials were busily calling selected Canadian home owners and telling them to hold on until Thursday night, that there would be something in the budget to help them. The criteria for calling was never disclosed to the House, although we asked for it. Some Canadian home owners were called, others were not, but everyone had some hope. Then the bill was presented and everyone lost hope.

Subsequently the minister announced to the House that he had personally signed in excess of 10,000 letters directed to Canadian home owners. To think of a minister of the Crown sitting down to sign personally 10,000 form letters boggles the minds of everyone on this side of the House. Then the budget was brought down, and everyone laughed when the minister of housing made his comments. Then after 19 months of monitoring, Bill C-89 was the piteous and paltry answer. Lo and behold, the next day advertisements appeared in newspapers inviting people to contact CMHC about its new plan. We on this side found it passing strange that the ad had been placed so quickly on Friday by a minister who had advised us on Tuesday that he had no idea what would happen on Thursday. Then we obtained the answer. The officials had worked through Thursday night and, as a result of hard work, produced a cameraready ad in Ottawa which was then taken to Montreal for shooting and delivered to newspapers such as the *Brockville Recorder and Times* in time to be printed on Friday. At a later date it was determined that the ad in fact was produced on the Monday night prior to the budget, that is the Monday night prior to the Tuesday when he told us he had no idea what would be in the budget on Thursday. There are

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two schools of thought on this side of the House in that regard. One believes that the minister deliberately misled the House; the other believes that the minister was misled by his officials. In either case the minister became the laughingstock of the House, the media and the country.

I should like now to turn to the area of housing starts. Under Liberal government housing policies, Canadians are facing an accommodation crisis. In 1980, we required 222,000 housing starts to adequately shelter Canadians, and Liberal government policies resulted in 159,000 starts. They improved in 1981, at which time we required 222,000 housing starts to adequately shelter Canadians, and Liberal government policies resulted in 178,000. This is government by shortfall; housing policy by shortfall! In 1982, again we required 222,000 housing starts to adequately shelter Canadians, and the figures released this week show that we will achieve 148,000 housing starts.

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The housing start figures indicate that both the single family residential market and the multiple dwelling rental accommodation market are facing serious shortfalls. In fact, the single family residential market has become completely unattractive because of mortgage interest rates and present economic difficulties. For the same reason it is unattractive to build rental accommodation.

During the past two years the national vacancy rate for rental dwellings has dropped from an accessible 2.3 per 1,000 units to an intolerable 1.4 vacancies per 1,000 units. The Liberal high interest rate policy has played a significant role in discouraging the building of rental housing.

One of the devices that was still providing some rental accommodation was the multiple unit residential building program. The Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) eliminated the MURB program on November 12, 1981. In doing so, the Minister of Finance eliminated projects which were in process at that date. Thousands of Canadians were thrown out of work by the actions of the Minister of Finance.

Within a week the Minister of Finance backtracked and reinstated the MURB program, provided the footings or other base supports were in place by December 31, 1981, or where arrangements for construction were made in writing and substantially advanced by November 13, 1981 and the footings were in place by May 31, 1982.

I am not here to debate at length the value of MURBs. There is a school of thought that says they are a legitimate device to stimulate the production of rental accommodation. There is a school of thought that says they are nothing but a tax dodge for the rich. But, in any event, that device will disappear on May 31, 1982.

In the House of Commons we have to ask ourselves how the Minister of Finance could have been so out of touch with reality to forget about the provisions to phase in this elimination of MURBs. Why could the minister forget to phase it in and leave all of those people trying to provide rental accommodation out in the cold? Then he backtracked.