

Business of Supply

should like to know how close we are to the present ceiling of \$350 million and how much student housing is anticipated over the next year.

My third question relates to vote L118b which deals with insurance of loans and the proposal to increase the ceiling for the aggregate amount of loans in respect of which insurance policies may be issued from \$9.5 billion to \$11 billion. How close are we now to the \$9.5 billion and when is it anticipated that we will reach the \$11 billion ceiling? I think this is a very important question because we are getting into the field of activity of private lenders.

Finally, under vote L119b, which deals with home improvement loans under section 26 of the National Housing Act, how close are we now to the ceiling of \$500 million and when is it anticipated that we will reach the new ceiling of \$550 million?

Of all the items we are asked to consider this afternoon I think none will give us more regret than the failure of the government to come to real grips with the problem of providing houses for the lower income groups in Canada. This is a conspicuous failure and it has been conspicuous in the past. The need certainly has not lessened because every day more and more people are being driven into the position of not being able to afford their own housing because inflation makes it less and less probable. Increasing interest rates make this dream less and less likely to be realized.

In spite of this fact one approach to the problem in respect of the poor people of Canada, and this is of particular significance in metropolitan areas where the problem is particularly acute, has been put in abeyance by this government as a result of a recommendation on page 55 of the report of the minister's own task force. It is that the federal government initiate a thorough research program into the economic, social and psychological issues of public housing, and that until such a study is completed and assessed no new large projects should be undertaken.

I do not blame people, certainly those in large public housing projects in Canada, for being angry and upset by what the minister has said or by what his task force has recommended in the paragraphs leading up to that recommendation. I cannot blame them for being angry about what one of the independent studies, on which the task force has partly relied, has said. I think people in public housing, particularly defamed projects, have

a legitimate squawk. Those people who might qualify for public housing also have a legitimate complaint.

The fact is, though the task force report does not say this, that one of the reasons public housing has failed or encountered difficulties in Canada is that we have not gone far enough under the National Housing Act. We have not tried through the National Housing Act to create livable environments in many of these public housing projects because we have not provided any of the auxiliary features which make for good living. We have not provided assistance for the development of parks, recreational and community facilities which one would associate with large scale, high density projects. Every apartment of any size that is erected in the city of Ottawa has a swimming pool. This is at least a start on something in which the tenants can take pride, something in addition to mere bed and eating facilities.

When the task force categorizes public housing as it does, criticizes it and puts a stop to large projects without pointing out the reason for some of the difficulties that public housing has encountered, it can only annoy people without adding to an understanding for the poor who are in desperate need of decent accommodation. I regard the action taken by the minister through the four \$1 items as partly to overcome difficulties of inflation and partly to place more appropriate ceilings on lending or insuring activities. This is nothing like the action one would expect a responsible minister to take to assist the low income groups.

It may be suggested that through the new approach to mortgages there might be help for these low income groups. Something was made of the fact that longer term mortgages should be allowed. The suggestion is that this would make it easier for people to own their own homes so that in some way the problems of the low income groups would be solved. There are some snares and delusions in this regard. I do not think this is a panacea to cure all ills. Let me refer to one very real snare or delusion. I refer to the suggestion that mortgages up to 35 years be permitted. Perhaps mortgages of an even longer period might be allowed but the interest tables I have are only calculated for up to 35 years. These figures are horrifying.

If one could get a \$20,000 mortgage for a period of 35 years at 6 per cent the monthly payment would be \$113.06, and the total amount payable over the 35 years would be