

*Adjournment Debate***PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT
MOTION***[English]*

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.

URBAN AFFAIRS—DISTRIBUTION OF CMHC FUNDS BY MPs

Mr. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon-Biggar): Mr. Speaker, I make this intervention on the basis of a rather unsatisfactory answer I received last Friday from the Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Ouellet). Unfortunately, this is typical of the way he has dealt with many matters in many portfolios.

The minister attempted to mislead the House by stating that he had not received the memorandum and information about which we were questioning him. This was a memorandum from the president of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation to the minister expressing deep and justifiable concern about the possible allegation of political interference with the operation of CMHC by this Liberal government. He gave a most inane response to a very serious question about the policy of this government relating to the distribution of funds under the Municipal Grants Act.

● (2202)

The facts are simple. There is in existence a memorandum from the president of CMHC in which the minister was told in no uncertain terms that CMHC was concerned about a possible interpretation of political involvement because of the way in which the minister wanted to handle the payment of cheques to municipalities in this country. After mentioning that the minister wanted to hand out these cheques, the memorandum says, in part:

If this is to be the pattern of involvement you wish to follow I want to make sure that it will not affect the discharge directly by the corporation of its full responsibilities in administering the program. I am also concerned that it should not lay itself open to criticism of political partisanship by arranging ceremonies for or otherwise involving selected federal members in the grant payment process.

Mr. Speaker, these are strong words from the president of a Crown corporation established to run the housing policy of the federal government. I need hardly call attention to the fact that the reason for the establishment of a Crown corporation in this field was parliament's wish that there should not be political involvement in the administration of these programs but rather that decisions should be made on the basis of need and equity.

What do we find now under this Liberal government? We see a continuation of a practice whereby they seem to treat the Canadian people as though they were a bunch of illiterates who believe the myth that all good things come from the government by way of the local Liberal member. The idea is that he should stand up at a ceremony and hand out benefits in the form of cheques to the municipalities. In taking this approach I believe they underestimate the intelligence of the Canadian people and especially the intelligence of the Canadi-

[Mr. Milne.]

an electorate, if they think this attitude is going to win elections for them. There have been many occasions on which this kind of sleazy and shallow practice has been followed by the Liberal government, handing out cheques rather than going through the corporation which was set up to place money into the hands of municipalities on the basis of equity and fair play.

I can recall one example. It happened in Saskatchewan. A ceremony was arranged to mark the opening of a facility in Regina funded in part by CMHC. The minister was not able to be there and it appeared that no Liberal member of parliament was able to fit the occasion into his schedule. So we witnessed the spectacle of an MLA who happened to be a candidate for the federal Liberals in the next federal election—his name is not important—representing the government. It happened he was a relation in law of a minister of the present cabinet. People generally resent the narrow, partisan attitude the Minister of State for Urban Affairs takes to everything he touches.

● (2207)

If the minister thinks that in the province of Quebec it is better for Liberal members to hand out cheques, he is seriously mistaken because this kind of attitude toward the province of Quebec has led to some of the difficulties we are now experiencing there. It has been the tradition of Liberal governments, both federal and provincial, to treat the province of Quebec like a feudal fiefdom. In other words, the idea of this government is to pretend that all good things come from the Liberal party and that any other party is not in the same category and will not have the beneficence to hand out moneys to the province of Quebec. This kind of attitude does more to foster cynicism with respect to politics in that province and in other provinces—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. I regret to inform the hon. member that his allotted time has expired.

Mr. Maurice Harquail (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State for Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, it is about time the Canadian people were made aware of what the federal government and CMHC are actually doing in terms of housing. There is one fundamental problem the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Hnatyshyn) has this evening, and it has to do with the memo to which he referred. The problem is that his comments with respect to the memo were absolutely false. This is not the first time we have witnessed hon. members opposite making reference to documents whose authenticity has not been verified. I would have thought the hon. member would want to stay in the good graces of the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) and not show disrespect for parliament such as the disrespect he showed last Friday and this evening.

In the short time I have I would like to set the record straight. The minister explained to the House on Friday that to make better known to Canadians the federal government's contributions in helping solve the financial difficulties of mu-