

National Housing Act

to congratulate the minister on his appointment as minister in charge of reporting for the crown corporation, Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. At this time I would like to thank the hon. member for Trinity (Mr. Hellyer) for his hard work over the years and his deep concern for the working people of this great nation regarding their housing problems.

● (3:50 p.m.)

The riding of London East is comprised of part of the old city of London and the new part which was annexed a few years ago. The people in the offices and factories of our great city are hard workers, and they take great pride in the development of their city. Many have bought homes in the new subdivisions and many others are patiently waiting for their turn. This bill, I hope, will fulfil all of their dreams.

I consider Bill C-192 to be one of the most important pieces of legislation that has come before this new parliament. This bill reaches the very heart of many problems facing the people of this nation. Every Canadian family should be entitled to a home, if they desire one, as a basic, human right. We have been told that the average wage earners in the \$5,000 to \$7,500 range, who in most cases do not qualify for public housing assistance, should not have to seek such assistance in any case. With the present general level of living costs and with single family dwelling prices what they are, the home ownership dream of many of our Canadian families is just that—a dream.

I ask all hon. members to look at these figures of \$5,000 to \$7,500. They work out to an average weekly wage of a little over \$96 up to over \$144. How many working Canadians make these wages? Approximately 1,663,120 people do. What happened to the old concept of some years ago according to which we were told that the guideline should be one week's wage for one month's rent or one month's mortgage payment? That was all the home seeker could afford without going into debt. The only time this theory works is when one applies for a mortgage and is told, "But you do not make enough money." Mr. Speaker, there is something wrong with our system when the average Canadian cannot afford to buy a home that eventually he can call his own. Somebody is making a lot of money, and it is certainly not the average Canadian.

In view of the desire of most people to own their own homes, and also in view of the high cost of housing, it is clear that there is no one solution to the housing problem. Since the cost of housing is affected by many factors such as the cost of land, the cost of material, the cost of labour, and the cost of financing, it would require a substantial reduction in the cost of these factors before a significant solution could be found to our housing problem. Unfortunately, a close analysis of these facts soon reveals that little can be done to reduce costs. A reduction of approximately \$5,000 would be required before the average wage earner could begin to consider buying a home.

It is obvious that some measures can be taken to account for a small portion of this sum. For example, an end to land speculation might account for perhaps \$1,000, depending on the area and the availability of land. Reducing the interest rate might result in a large long term saving, but the monthly payment would be reduced only slightly. However, a lower interest rate would affect very little the selling price of the house or the down payment on it. On the other hand, a lower interest rate might reduce moneys available for housing. The cost of materials could also be reduced by the reduction or removal of the taxes imposed upon materials, but the government must then find other means of raising revenue lost by such action. In analysing the last factor in the high cost of housing, the cost of labour, one need only look at the trend in the construction industry to see that a reduction in the cost of labour is impossible. If the steps I have outlined are taken, the reduction in the cost of housing would still not approach the \$5,000 figure required. Therefore some other method is required to reduce the costs further.

One method would be low cost housing, the use of new techniques to reduce the amount of outside labour required, as well as the reduction, where possible, of the amount of material required, and the replacement of some costly materials with less expensive but otherwise adequate types. This method, however, is not permitted in some areas because of building codes which are outdated and pertain to antiquated construction methods.

A complete revision of the national building code with an eye to the future would help to reduce the cost of housing, especially in respect of floor area requirements. The national building code of Canada, in my opinion, is the only existing code which has any