

Adjournment Debate

to take seriously the warnings of the Minister of Agriculture, he is attempting to arrange a further meeting with representatives of the industry. This will take place very shortly. At that time we shall fully consider fertilizer pricing policy. The minister is optimistic that this meeting will provide tangible results, as several companies have indicated, since the minister's address to the Canadian Fertilizer Institute, a willingness to discuss this matter.

HOUSING—NATIVE HOUSING PROGRAM—REASON FOR
REDUCTION IN NUMBER OF STARTS—ABILITY OF NATIVE
PEOPLE TO AFFORD MORTGAGE INTEREST RATES

Mr. Wally Firth (Northwest Territories): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be able to pursue some questions I directed to the Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Danson) today regarding native housing in this country. I hope the minister will take this opportunity to elaborate upon an article that appeared in the *Toronto Star* of May 14, 1975. The article referred to a confidential document prepared by the federal cabinet.

● (2210)

I have raised this topic in the House before, but once again I should like to put on record the drastic housing situation in this country, and more particularly in the Northwest Territories. As a matter of fact in a speech of mine on January 27, reported in *Hansard* at pages 2144 to 2146, I described the housing situation in the Northwest Territories as a disaster. There is some kind of program to ship up north prefab houses which are really inadequate, most of which can only be described as death traps and which indeed have been working in that fashion.

I referred in my speech of January 27 to the possibility of implementing a housing program in the Northwest Territories making use of local materials, such as logs, which would help many people there who have no jobs. It would also certainly help alleviate the housing problem. I have received some comments from across the country which were quite favourable to the idea, and I hope that the minister has also received some comments in this regard.

One of the main objects and purposes of a housing program should be—indeed, must be if it is to meet with any measure of success—to find some way of adequately sheltering all families and individuals. This is, indeed, a basic human need. I do not think we can afford to go on much longer without some good programs to alleviate the very bad housing conditions.

The price we are paying for this situation, both socially and with lives, is simply far too high, and the government should give it very high priority. I was pleased to see, according to the article in the *Toronto Star* of January 14, some points for which I think the government can take credit, such as an admission that the programs that have been tried have failed. In this event I should like to know what has happened to the money that was put into these programs. I think a lot of money was spent. I also hope the government has learned that it should consult the people more, particularly those people the programs are designed to help.

[Mr. Cafik.]

Another point for which I think the government can take some credit is that it is considering spending a realistic amount on the programs referred to in the article. I understand that the government is going to consult with the people the programs will serve.

Other questions I should like to ask the minister in regard to this document is whether it does in fact exist, will it be made public, what is going to happen to it, and does it include a program for the Northwest Territories? This is one area of Canada that is really in desperate need of housing. If the north is not included, then the people of the north are not going to be very happy. Any step to remove poverty in the smaller villages down the Mackenzie valley, in the eastern Arctic, and indeed in the smaller villages and reserves across the country would be a good move indeed.

The article also refers to mortgage rates that people would have to pay, and I think this is something that should receive serious consideration. There are large numbers of people who presently have poor housing and would be unable to pay a mortgage rate of even one per cent.

These are the points that I wanted to make, Madam Speaker. I wish the minister would elaborate a little more on the question I raised earlier today, as well as elaborate on the document referred to in this newspaper article.

Hon. Barney Danson (Minister of State for Urban Affairs): Madam Speaker, I appreciate that the hon. member for Northwest Territories (Mr. Firth) is referring to a document which is alleged to have been leaked from another department. I think he can appreciate, therefore, that it would be inappropriate for me to comment on an alleged leak of an alleged document.

Having said that, I think we are reflecting the very deep concern which the hon. member shares, and I can speak only on behalf of my own area of responsibility, that is, CMHC, which deals with Métis and non-status Indians living off reserves. The matter of non-status Indians and those on the reserves is, of course, quite a different thing. If I can respond in that context I shall be pleased to do so.

I am deeply disturbed to hear prefabs referred to as death traps. I am interested to hear about the interest in local materials such as logs. This is an avenue we are pursuing in the areas of my responsibility. I am rather embarrassed after all these years that we still have to stand and debate these things in the House of Commons of Canada. It is an indication that something is wrong somewhere.

We are trying to correct the situation. In my own ministry for 1975 we have an allocation of \$5.7 million to assist associations and many non-status Indians in the field of housing. We have established a cadre within the corporation to train native people in skills, including administrative skills, in order that they will be able to take advantage of the program and to administer housing for themselves. This is still a tortuous process at times, and the need for coordination and for giving assistance to the native people to get them started, often under extremely difficult conditions, is highly appreciated.

In our own CMHC rural and native housing program we still have a target of some 50,000 new and rehabilitated homes in five years. This program is intended to improve