

*National Housing Act*

In some cases, even with the best will in the world some provinces could ill afford their share of the cost.

Whatever reasons the provinces may have had for declining to participate, or for participating in a limited way, their decisions have made it impossible to achieve the original objectives of the Rural and Native Housing Program. I have given some importance to that part of the Bill because, although less dramatic than the Mortgage Rate Protection Plan, for a population which suffers the most from its present housing conditions, that part of the legislation is important.

Most of the provisions of the Bill before us regarding the Mortgage Rate Protection Plan and the mortgage-backed securities have been known for some time. They have been evaluated and publicly approved by organizations representing builders, investors, et cetera. The provisions of the Rural and Native Housing Program are also well known and I think respected by all Hon. Members who have an interest in social housing legislation.

The most significant aspect of the Bill is to make its provisions, for the first time in history, available to all Canadians. In the circumstances, I have no hesitation, in commending this Bill to the House for consideration. Hopefully, there will be a disposition to send it to committee where it can be fully discussed and given reasonably rapid passage.

● (1130)

*[Translation]*

**Hon. Roch La Salle (Joliette):** Mr. Speaker, I must say I have a special interest in the legislation presented in the House this morning by the responsible Minister.

First of all, I should emphasize that on this side of the House, my Party, which formed the Government in 1979, made a very specific proposal at the time to cope with the problems and dangers we were expecting even then. It is with regret that I must say in the House today that this Government prevented us from offering a guarantee, a homeowner-ship plan, when we introduced a bill that would provide a tax credit to help homeowners, who as a result of the present Government's refusal to co-operate, experienced far more serious difficulties in subsequent months and years.

Mr. Speaker, I might add that the Progressive Conservative Party has also been concerned about improving the situation in the construction industry and giving thousands of Canadians a chance to own their own homes, and we expressed that concern in the proposal we made at the time. We have maintained our interest in these problems today, Mr. Speaker, and quite properly so, because we all know how much Canadians have suffered and the problems experienced by the construction industry, and the House is also aware that for millions of Canadians, the accompanying insecurity became almost unbearable at a given point.

I think the Minister will understand from our questions and our attitude in the House that we are very much interested in

this Bill and that with him, we are very anxious to find ways to help more Canadians become homeowners. Home ownership is a concept that we value highly. Security in this vital sector of our economy is also very important, as well as stability, something I think we all want in order to create and maintain employment, for the sake of all Canadians.

I listened carefully to the proposals made by the Minister in this legislation, which is referred to as Bill C-37. I realize that the Government probably has very little room to manoeuvre regarding the amount of assistance it can offer homeowners, and the reason is quite simple: this Government, especially in the last ten years, has put this country deep into debt through its unbridled spending, so it is not surprising it cannot do more, as I believe the Minister remarked earlier. I know he would like to do more for all Canadians with his legislation on housing. However, we too are aware of the state of the Government's finances, and considering the doubts expressed by many sectors of our economy and the Government's uncontrolled spending and rising deficits, clearly the Government does not have much room left. The Minister said himself the government was not offering a subsidy. Thus, new homeowners or homeowners whose mortgage is coming up for renewal will, and the Minister made this quite clear, have to pay the cost of the program. The Mortgage Rate Protection Program tabled by the Government in the House this morning for the benefit of Canadians who are about to buy a home or who will have to renew their mortgage, is a form of insurance that will have to be paid for by the homeowners themselves.

I must add that the fact this Government waited so long before introducing its program . . . I wonder why it did not do so a year ago or two years ago, when it would have been far more beneficial, and the Minister realizes this, I am sure, for all homeowners in Canada. We would now be able to say that home ownership is available to all Canadians.

You know, Mr. Speaker, others often tell us: the right of ownership, the right of ownership! Of course, Canadians have the right of ownership, but can they afford to buy a house? That is why I would rather use the word "accessibility", meaning access to home ownership. However, access to home ownership means something only to the extent that Canadians can have affordable interest rates. It must be said as well—and I think the Government is aware of this, even though its Bill is long overdue—that it is important, necessary and even essential to have housing legislation. That possibility might have interesting effects depending on mortgage rates, and it is clear that home ownership can be achieved if interest rates are affordable, for housing is a key issue in Canada, particularly because of our winters. It is just as important as a policy for the survival of agriculture. Any Government which is accountable to the society it represents must bring forward what I would call very special measures in those two sectors. Since we are on the subject of housing, it has become quite clear that