

Mortgage Financing

The other headline stated the minimum wage would soon be increased to \$2.

An hon. Member: Is that too much?

Mr. Hellyer: No. It is not enough to live on, not enough to buy the products made by those earning \$8 or \$9 an hour. It is out of joint. The pecking order is distorted, it is not fair, reasonable and just. We have to regulate the strong on behalf of the weak. It is ridiculous to have a minimum wage of \$2 when the houses those people have to buy are built by people earning \$9 or \$10 an hour. It is absolutely and utterly ridiculous.

The situation is actually deteriorating. It is getting worse as time goes on. If you go on the basis of percentages, when the fellow earning \$8 and \$9 an hour gets an 8 or 9 per cent increase, that is a big increase in terms of cents per hour. When the fellow making \$2, \$2.25 or \$2.35 an hour gets that type of increase, he starves. He cannot afford food, clothing or shelter. He cannot afford to live. What do you do? You subsidize food, clothing and housing. You have to twist everything around and hire hundreds of thousands of bureaucrats to pass the money back and forth. These people should be paid a decent wage in the first place. They should have enough to look after food, clothing and shelter.

It is very disappointing to get all of this righteous indignation from the far corner of the House about interest rates on housing. No one is more concerned about it than we in this party. The present situation is absolutely unacceptable. It has deteriorated consistently over a period of about 15 years. Fifteen years ago, a working man in this country could aspire to owning his own house. That is not the case today. It is getting worse all the time. If we want to reverse the trend, we will have to do something about land costs, as recommended long ago by the task force and supported by this party. Something will have to be done about interest rates. To do that, we need an incomes policy to stop this cost-push element of inflation in our country.

Let's be realistic. Let's be honest. Let's not kid ourselves and the people. Let's stop this inflationary cycle. If the New Democratic Party is really serious about trying to do something about the housing problem, the next time there is a motion from this side of the House condemning the government for its lack of action in respect of an incomes policy, let's have some support from that part of the House.

An hon. Member: Vote against this bill.

Mr. Hellyer: This is an innocuous bill. It will not do any harm. It may do some good. I spend a lot of time worrying about this. Why not do something about the fundamental situation? The NDP say this bill will not solve the problem. They are right. This is not the solution. The solution is much more fundamental. The solution is to have some basic relationship between wages and prices and productivity so there are fair shakes for all of the workers of Canada and not just the powerful getting the big stakes while others do not have enough to live on and look after the needs of their families. The Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand) understands this. It is too bad he cannot persuade his colleagues to do something about it.

[Mr. Hellyer.]

If the hon. gentlemen in the far corner of the House really want to do something for Canadian workers and housing, they will reverse their one-sided, myopic policy and come out in favour of an incomes policy which is realistic; one which applies realistic guidelines to the profits of the oligopolies, and the wages of the members of the big powerful unions. We could then start to bring the situation under control. When we do that, interest rates will come down. When interest rates come down, ultimately the average man in this country will again be able to look forward to getting a house for himself and his family. We hope we will have the support of the NDP in this endeavour.

[Translation]

Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, I do not want to take the floor too long during this debate, but as a result of the intervention of the leader of the Social Credit Party of Canada, the hon. member for Témiscamingue (Mr. Caouette), I must specify a few points. As a matter of fact, the hon. member made a fair and honest description of the situation and the problem of income as regards housing in Canada, and he proposed a real solution, namely the use of credits of the Bank of Canada, which belongs to all Canadians, to help bring about a fair situation in housing, to enable low income people to have access to family and suitable housing.

Faced with such facts, Mr. Speaker, it is not the first time that members of the Social Credit party call for a policy of income based on prices, on the cost of living in general and on the needs of citizens. It is not the first time that we say that the same causes bring about the same effect. As a matter of fact, three years ago, we passed a similar legislation. We will pass again—I hope personally that it will be turned down—a measure designed to increase a little bit the interest rate, create a new ivory tower dreamed up by public servants, which finally will not solve in any way the problem of housing.

Mr. Speaker, ministers and hon. members return the ball to one another and play politics. The Progressive Conservative members say that what the Liberals are doing is no good; the Liberals say that the Progressive Conservatives have not understood anything and New Democrats say that an interest rate of 6 per cent would be more suitable than the present rate of 7¼ per cent, and, as one of the previous speakers said, when we proposed a rate of 6 per cent, these people called for a 3 per cent rate.

In any case, Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind a former Minister of Regional Economic Expansion, the hon. member for Langelier (Mr. Marchand), and the minister responsible for CMHC and mover of this bill (Mr. Basford), of the current situation in my part of the country in Quebec. Today, we heard at length about the problems of Newfoundland. Let us now hear what goes on in Quebec.

In my remarks on the subject, I shall base myself not on the literature influenced by the social credit doctrine but rather on that supplied by the civil servants and the government itself. I shall refer to a publication, a working paper prepared by the Department of Regional Economic Expansion as a contribution to the federal-provincial consultations bearing on a regional development policy for Canada, published in April 1973 and entitled "Quebec—Economic Situation and Development Possibilities".