

Oral Questions

to take 50 families per month in addition to those we have already taken. I am not sure whether they have landed today or not, but one group will be landing very shortly: they were picked up by a Greek freighter. Second, we focused our attention on the overland refugees in Thailand. There were some 180,000; it is down to approximately 100,000 now.

Thailand has indicated that it is prepared to help with resettlement, as the United Nations has requested, on the understanding that some countries will take some of the South Vietnamese refugees. We are looking at the numbers we feel would be appropriate for us. I will make representations to my colleagues to take more in addition to the 7,000 we have taken already since 1975. Probably we will take more on a family basis, bearing in mind the reunification aspect.

Mr. Epp: Mr. Speaker, can the minister indicate whether he had any other refugee movements in mind when he made the statement that we were aware of the boat families and the Vietnamese refugees? Specifically, in respect of groups which are now defined as displaced persons by the United Nations or by the international community, as opposed to the definition of refugee, will the minister indicate whether he is considering changing the definition of such persons from "displaced person" to "refugee"? Would he also indicate whether, as a result of his discussions with the commissioner, persons coming from behind the iron curtain could also be classified as refugees more easily than is now the case?

● (1432)

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I apologize to the hon. member in that I did not answer the latter part of his first question. We did not get into discussion at all about changing the United Nations' definition of "refugee". They may very well do that on their own initiative after discussions—I do not know—but that did not come up. What we are endeavouring to do, in so far as people behind the iron curtain or in eastern European countries are concerned, is find a mechanism whereby we can be of help to them when they come out of the country and have to settle in refugee camps.

They are not, technically, refugees within the meaning of the act, and we are trying to find some way to help them. We think we have done so in the sponsorship program that I announced. We shall see how that works. But so far as changing the definition of "displaced person" to "refugee" is concerned, that has not come up and has certainly not been brought to my attention.

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HOUSING**DEFAULTS IN AHOP MORTGAGES**

Mr. Dean Whiteway (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State for Urban Affairs and has to do with AHOP defaults. In view of the fact that in respect of his new housing proposal, namely, graduated payment mortgages, there has been some reluctance on the part of major lending

[Mr. Cullen.]

institutions to participate because of problems regarding debt being greater than equity after a period of five or ten years, will the minister indicate whether he has done an assessment of AHOP, a program that has seen more defaults in the first three months of this year than was the case totally last year?

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of State for Urban Affairs): Yes, Mr. Speaker, we have done a survey and, as the hon. member asked two weeks ago, we sent him statistics which indicate quite clearly that in spite of the fact that he wants to promote these defaults as being a big thing, they represent less than 1 per cent of our total loan guarantees in Canada for people buying new homes. Therefore, it is a very minimal percentage of all loans are being made in Canada. I really do not know why the hon. member is trying to make such a point of something that is not, in fact, a big factor.

Mr. Whiteway: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question has to do with AHOP defaults as well as with several studies, one of which is an interdepartmental study by his own department and the Minister of Finance and the other by Treasury Board specifically at the urging of major lending institutions and with reference to AHOP defaults. My information is that the study was classified as a national security document. Will the minister indicate whether that study is so classified and, if so, why? If it is not so classified, will the minister undertake to table it in the House this afternoon?

Mr. Ouellet: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member has an obsession about whether or not studies are classified. When appearing before the standing committee of the House, we produced all the available material. We have given ample examples to the hon. member of the type of defaults. The statistics are there to be seen. I do not know what the hon. member is trying to pursue in dreaming of a so-called study that does not exist.

Mr. Whiteway: Mr. Speaker, would the minister not agree that since there are four times more AHOP defaults projected for this year than was the case last year, and in view of the fact that there are as many defaults in the first three months of this year as there were in total last year, he ought to reassess the AHOP program in conjunction with a reassessment of the new graduated payment mortgage program which is similar in its dramatic, disastrous effects?

Mr. Ouellet: Mr. Speaker, I do not know how the hon. member looks at these statistics; but if there was 1 per cent default on 100 per cent at one time, and there is now a default rate of four times that, that is only 4 out of 100, which is still a very minimal number. It was not even 1 per cent last year; it was a portion of 1 per cent. When multiplied by four, it is still less than 1 per cent. I think it is so minimal that we should not worry about it.

IMPROVEMENT OF AHOP TO ASSIST LOW INCOME EARNERS

Mr. F. Oberle (Prince George-Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to direct a question to the Minister of State