

Housing

Married couples are breaking up because of the stress caused by the difficult economic situations in their homes. It is a sad event and in my view the only ones who are benefiting from this are the drug companies. More tranquilizers are being consumed. It is a sad, sad event. The only people I know of who are benefiting from all this are the drug companies. Probably more tranquilizers are being sold in this nation today than ever before and probably more booze is being sold in this nation than ever before, because all the sicknesses which go with a society which is in deep, deep trouble relate to the purchase of those kinds of commodities.

● (1700)

We parliamentarians are charged with a special responsibility to produce some stability in this country again. There is none right now, and while this bill will help some people and while I am quite willing to support it for whatever help it does provide, it is just a drop in the Atlantic Ocean. It will not really bring much solace to anyone, including those who will qualify under it, because a great many businessmen who have been good businessmen all their lives and have proved themselves to be good businessmen are finding that their backs are to the wall and they are facing either closing their doors, or bankruptcy if they keep them open. This is not because of anything they are doing but because of the interest rate problem. They can no longer deal with it and they can no longer survive.

I have before me a chart showing average conventional mortgage interest rates. They have escalated since January, 1978, when the interest rate was 10.32 per cent, to 21.46 per cent in, for instance, September, 1981. We cannot expect people to move forward or even to have any confidence about paying next month's mortgage bills if they know they will lose their homes in five months' time regardless of what they do.

Somehow we must develop a method by which Canadians can see a light at the end of the tunnel. Canadians are not expecting us to produce all the solutions tomorrow, but they are expecting us to give them some realistic leadership and direction to get them out of the mess into which we put them in the first place. I do not see very much coming before us in this session of Parliament which would achieve that objective.

I have great personal respect for the Minister of Public works. During the critical period when all of a sudden people saw for the first time the terrible personal tragedies they were facing in renewing mortgages at probably double the rate of interest they had formerly been paying, I think the minister attempted in his own way to be of some assistance. However, he is a very small cog in a very big wheel and, unfortunately, I must say that this bill is an indication of just how small the cog in that big wheel is.

We must get a great deal more from this government, and we must do it for many basic reasons. We must allow individual Canadians to feel that there is some hope for tomorrow and that we have policies which will meet their hopes and aspirations.

Second, we must try to achieve something here so that we can eliminate, as much as we possibly can, the marriage breakdown syndrome which is developing in this country because of high interest rates and because people are losing material gains they have built up during their married lives. All of a sudden they see them disappearing, and after they finish blaming this government they end up blaming themselves for some of the unfortunate mistakes which, in all too many ways, are not at all their responsibility. We must do this because we want a better Canada tomorrow, but we will have not a better Canada unless we start doing some of the things which were done yesterday and which are not being done today.

I listened to some of the criticisms of the estimates. One of the things I see happening is a restructuring of our country. This government is attempting to withdraw from every federal-provincial program it can and restructure Canada so that the federal government has total command and the provinces will become little more than municipalities. I see no more equal status between premiers and the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) except, perhaps, for the premiers of a couple of provinces which happen to be blessed with the largesse which comes from natural resources. Even in those cases I suppose the federal government will try to take that largesse in one way or another. In the end the federal government will place the provinces in such a position that they will be little more than supplicants coming to Ottawa to see what crumbs they can get off the federal table. That is the way it is happening at this time.

There can only be a better tomorrow for Canadians if there is co-operation between the various levels of government, understanding and a common determination to achieve the greatness Canada has the potential to achieve. We will not achieve that greatness if we fight among ourselves all the time, which is the case right now. The ordinary individual Canadian watches these battles taking place, he sits down at home and looks at the problems he is facing and wonders if it is not better to go somewhere else.

Mr. Cullen: Not for long.

Mr. Coates: Why hang around here?

Mr. Cullen: Not for long.

Mr. Coates: I hope the hon. member is right. I hope it will not be for long. I hope we as parliamentarians working together can give Canadians the feeling that this still is the best country on earth and that this is the place to live and work together.

Mr. Daudlin: Now you are getting there, Bob.

Mr. Coates: I think the first thing we must do is give the assurance to the individual Canadian that he has the right—not the hope but the right—to look forward to owning a home if he involves himself in an industrious way in the building of this country. That is something I do not see at the moment. That is something that is not in the minds of most Canadians