

Adjournment Debate

Mr. Epp: He has just proved again, Mr. Speaker, that he does not. I should like to ask the minister why, if the government is truly committed to restraint, are public funds spent by his department to disseminate information concerning public health and why does the minister use those funds to send out Liberal party propaganda under the guise of departmental information?

Mr. Neil: He was talking about the sickness of the Liberal party.

Mr. Epp: My colleague says the minister was sending it out through the Department of National Health and Welfare because he was speaking about the sickness of the Liberal party. Maybe that is the best reason yet.

We must get back to the question of how much government spending can be justified. I have heard members of the New Democratic Party speak about employment strategies and the need for more spending. I imagine they are already heating up the printing presses in Manitoba in the riding of St. Boniface which is represented by the Minister without Portfolio (Mr. Guay). The NDP have a grandiose program but they have not put a price on it yet—they will do that later. At the same time the NDP premier of Manitoba has brought in a restraint program to cut back spending. Mr. Speaker, may I call it ten o'clock?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[*Translation*]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

CENTRAL MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION—
ALLEGATION BORROWERS ASKED TO USE LAWYERS SELECTED
BY CORPORATION

Mr. Robert McCleave (Halifax-East Hants): Mr. Speaker, for a few minutes may I pursue a theme that I have turned to on other occasions in this House concerning the practice of a Crown corporation, namely, Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, with regard to patronage.

First of all I say there is a time for patronage, and a time when it should not be exercised. Unfortunately during the lifetime of CMHC there has been an occasion when patronage should not have been exercised. I do not fault the present government any more than I do the previous government or the one prior to that; I simply say the practice is morally wrong and indefensible.

[Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi).]

If you or I were in charge of a government department, Mr. Speaker, and had to choose a lawyer to conduct some case in the courts, it would naturally be expected that we would look to those who had vigorously seen to it that we were sent to this place. We would not want to look to those who had tried to keep us away from it. In that sense, all other things being equal and the lawyers being good, I think nobody would fault our sense of discrimination.

• (2200)

On the other hand if you or I were in charge of a lending agency and a person came to us to borrow money secured by a contract or mortgage, it would be wrong of us to tell such a person that he or she must choose from among a certain number of lawyers who would transact such business, and deny to that person the right to choose his or her own lawyer.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Shame!

Mr. McCleave: That is what Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation is doing today, and what it has done for years.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): We will have to change that.

Mr. McCleave: Other mortgage companies used to follow such policy. If you or I went to them and wanted to borrow money, they would say to us, "You will have to choose a lawyer from this list," and you would have to use one of the lawyers on the list. That used to be the practice in days of yore. Now, Mr. Speaker, every lending corporation across Canada of which I know allows the borrower to use the lawyer of his or her choice. And so it should be, not only from the standpoint of freedom of choice but also because most of our legal societies are now protected by good insurance schemes, which means that nobody really gets hurt in cases of mistake. Under such schemes all the lawyers in a particular province pay money into a bar fund and, if mistakes are made in the course of a year either through carelessness or negligence, money is paid out from the common fund and nobody suffers the consequences of a sharp blow.

I say to Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, it is time they lost their maidenly timidity and ventured forth into the mainstream of practice, as followed by other lending institutions. They have nothing to fear. However, knowing something about CMHC I must go further than that and say it is time the corporation told the Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Ouellet) who reports for the corporation in this House, to tell the Minister of Justice (Mr. Basford) that it is simply unacceptable for a lending corporation in this day and age, given all the protection available to CMHC, to insist on the right to name the lawyer who shall act on behalf of the borrower.

May I also make it clear that such lists of lawyers are drawn up with great care. Knowing my hon. friends opposite, it is safe to say that the best Liberal lawyers across Canada will be on the list. I say nothing about that, since I know the public will not suffer harm. I know all due attention will be paid to