

*The Address—Mr. Coldwell*

our economy, on external trade and exports as we are in Canada. It is true that we should make every attempt to improve and increase our domestic consumption, but even if we increased our domestic consumption greatly we would still have vast surpluses which must be disposed of by export trade.

Now I want to turn to another problem which I think affects a good many of our people and which requires immediate attention. In the speech from the throne we are told that new legislation will be introduced to broaden the scope of the National Housing Act. As we have contended for some years, the need is for subsidized, adequate low-rental housing for the low income groups. That is made particularly necessary by the very high cost of living which is now, according to our bureau of statistics, at record heights. It is possible that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Abbott) may announce some dollar policy tonight—I do not know—involving further increases in living costs in this country. I do not propose to say anything further about that until I know what he has to say this evening.

Cases have been brought to my attention from time to time, and I am sure to the attention of every hon. member, of families, including many young war veterans, who are compelled to pay one-third or more of their meagre income for accommodation in what is often submarginal housing. Go around this city and you will find families with one room and a clothes closet turned into a little kitchen with an electric grill or oil stove. You will find them paying one-third of their income sometimes, particularly if they are students, for that kind of accommodation. When the government has provided housing as for instance for veterans, as in my constituency of Rosetown-Biggar in a suburb of Saskatoon, the quality has often been unsatisfactory. I use this as an example. Contractors from time to time—not always of course—have failed to live up to the specifications, and the veterans have sometimes been left to make expensive repairs in the first year or two of occupancy. In some cases inferior equipment has been installed and little or no redress has been forthcoming either from the contractor or from the responsible department of government. In Montgomery place, Saskatoon, hot-water tanks installed had not been in use for one year before they developed holes in the sides from poor quality or deterioration. Veterans and their families, with houses having ill-fitting doors and windows, doors and floors that sag, poor insulation, lacking eaves-troughing, and with no sidewalks to save them from the mud, have in my opinion a legitimate complaint

against the failure of contractors or the government to live up to the specifications and proper standards. There has been inadequate planning for the comfort and convenience of residents in new districts of that sort.

As I said at the beginning, we believe that low-rental houses must be subsidized; there is no other way of dealing with the problem. But in the interests of health and of happiness, planning and construction should be given careful supervision in order that proper standards of building and equipment should be maintained.

I know that the project to which I have referred, and other projects of a similar sort, have been brought to the attention of the government from time to time, but in some instances—and in the instance to which I have referred—while some improvements have been made, they are insufficient to rectify entirely the unsatisfactory conditions. If public moneys are expended in the construction of homes, or financial guarantees given to investors and veterans, and others are forced by circumstances to purchase homes, then it is the duty of the government to exercise supervision and to rectify any defects in construction or material within a reasonable time of occupancy or sale.

A national subsidized housing program, then, as we have said for several years, is essential. But parliament must insist that the government should assume responsibility for the supervision of construction, and guarantee satisfaction to the purchaser or occupant. When I refer to the "government" I do not necessarily mean the federal authority. If it is a regional plan, then the responsible authority should see to it that these abuses do not occur.

One other point in connection with housing: meantime, the public must be protected against excessively high rentals by the continuance of rent controls. Indeed, persons who have been compelled by circumstances to rent new occupancy housing units should be given the right to appeal against unreasonable rents to which most—and again I say not all—have been subjected. Let me emphasize that this is particularly true in view of the spectacular heights to which living costs have risen since the removal of other beneficial subsidies and controls.

While the level of employment is high, there have been some disturbing lay-offs in Canada. Unemployment in the United States, we read, during the summer reached approximately 4,000,000, although there has been some seasonal diminution lately. We have no assurance, other than expenditures for European aid, that lay-offs will not increase in Canada during the next year or two. So