

Interim Supply

did not cost the company a great deal of extra money. They negotiated and everybody was happy.

In this case, because of the terms of the Pipe Lines Act the power of expropriation is given to the company. It is bad enough, Mr. Chairman, to have to give the powers of expropriation to the government. It is tough enough to deal with the government on these matters such as highways. We all know that in certain cases it is necessary, but I certainly think powers of expropriation should not be given to big companies except as a last resort, and only as a last resort.

When big companies have powers of expropriation they do not make any attempt at negotiation. In this case you have a very good example of it. They said, "This is our price, take it or leave it. We will take it to court and arbitrate. We can fix you. We can hire expert witnesses, big lawyers and all the rest of it." This is an example of the misuse of the powers of expropriation. If this company did not have those powers but had to negotiate, as the Imperial Oil Company did a few years ago, a satisfactory solution would have been reached. It is true it is more expedient and easier for a big company to have these powers of expropriation, but it is kind of hard on small land owners who find it pretty tough to stand up to these companies.

I mentioned also that the powers of expropriation should be given only very sparingly to these companies because often it may not be the decision of the top executive; often they may not be aware of these matters, but some of the people occupying the position of fifth or sixth wheel down the line do these things. They bring big business and private enterprise into disrepute by carrying on in this way. Acts such as these are unhealthy for our economy and business in general.

In my submission, whatever party may form the government next year it should make appropriate amendments to the pipe line act and perhaps give further powers to the board of transport commissioners to prevent a situation such as this arising in the future. The damage has been done in this case and I suppose it cannot be repaired now but I certainly hope that provision will be made to prevent such activity taking place in the future. There is no doubt that there will be further oil or gas pipe lines passing through western Ontario, and the rest of the country too of course, and I think this kind of activity is something that should be discouraged.

Mr. Regier: Mr. Chairman, in this session of parliament we have not had much discussion on one of the major problems affecting most of the growing areas of Canada and especially affecting the people of the province of British Columbia. We have not had any amendments to the National Housing Act this year and we also have not had before us the estimates of the Minister of Public Works. I rather regret that he is not able to be here this afternoon but since most of what I have to say affects the responsibilities of the Minister of Finance perhaps even more than those of the Minister of Public Works, I am hoping that the former hon. gentleman who is in his seat will pay at least some measure of attention to what I and the group I represent consider one of the major problems in the country. If I am not mistaken in my calculation parliament in this session has met for some 70 days now. I have gone through the records and I find that on no less than 14 occasions hon. members in all sections of the house and even some on the government side have cast some doubt as to the wisdom of the present housing policy of this government and the effectiveness of the National Housing Act.

We began the year with some questions being directed to the minister concerned on orders of the day and for a considerable length of time we were faced with rather flat denials that Canada could expect a decline in housing this year. It took several weeks of questioning to wear down the resistance on the part of the government to the charge that was being rather widely made by various organizations from one end of Canada to the other to the effect that there was going to be a serious decline in the number of houses built this year. However, even though the government finally has admitted that there is going to be a decline in home building this year they have failed to admit as yet that the decline is a serious one and they have failed also to take any remedial action. We are now in interim supply which includes the estimates of the Minister of Public Works. We in this group regret that in his estimates there is not a larger sum of money allotted to the encouragement of the construction of more homes for our Canadian people.

Most of the remarks I have to make have to do with the subject of interest rates. Our position in the C.C.F. has always been that for most of the Canadian people the government should undertake measures that will make mortgage money for house construction available to prospective home owners at cost. We also realize that there are many