

provides for the establishment of a dominion housing commission, with the consent of the house we propose not to carry out that part of it, that is to say, the intention at present is that we will proceed with this housing scheme through the Department of Finance, and we shall have an official in that department specially charged with that duty. We wish to move slowly in this matter, which is a very important one, and I am glad to know that the hon. member for Vancouver-Burrard (Mr. Hanbury), on this occasion at any rate, might well come and sit on this side of the house.

Mr. HANBURY: Next year.

Sir GEORGE PERLEY: This question of housing is of great social significance and national importance; I think we are all agreed on that. On that point I am at one with the three hon. gentlemen who have spoken. And here may I compliment the committee that considered this very serious problem. I have read over their report and I see that they gave a great deal of attention and consideration to all the different points. Indeed, it was a very happy circumstance, so far as I am concerned, that they were unanimous, that they passed a unanimous report, which is always a pleasant thing in the House of Commons. I hope it will be found so here.

In considering how far we should go in this matter at the present time, I want to read this paragraph from the report of the committee:

Good housing means less expenditure on prevention of disease, less crime, greater benefits for education, less unemployment as opposed to unemployment. The elimination of bad conditions has a cash value as well as a moral value to the nation. Further, there are wider economic aspects to consider. Bold and constructive housing projects will increase employment both directly and indirectly through the activity generated. To mitigate any liabilities on the national finances the cost of unemployment would be directly reduced, tangible and intangible assets will be created, the yield of sales and income taxes will be increased by the profits of those in building and industry, as well as those who benefit from the increased spending power of wage earners employed through the undertaking.

Personally I entirely agree with that view as set forth in the report of the committee, and it is along lines of that kind that this bill which I hope to introduce before long will be based.

The object of this bill is to formulate a plan to assist in providing houses suitable particularly for the low wage earner and to keep down the cost and interest charges within his ability to pay; it is also to provide work for the unemployed. It is evident that construction of this kind would stimulate

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business and hasten recovery by providing employment for those trades and industries in which unemployment is most acute.

The bill which I propose to introduce recognizes and comprehends two distinct though related points of view in regard to this problem. The first of these is that the dominion may be of assistance in investigating conditions and collecting and disseminating information which may be used as the basis of formulating a constructive policy with regard to housing in Canada. This point of view visualizes the question as a long-run problem and one that will entail a vast amount of research, investigation and preparation, before any action other than purely temporary measures can be taken. It emphasizes the necessity of basing a housing program on a sound foundation of factual information in regard both to conditions in this country and to the experience of other countries. It recognizes the need for cooperation on the part of provincial and municipal authorities, particularly in regard to the institution of adequate zoning regulations designed to assure reasonable stability of property values.

The other point which I wish to stress is the obvious desirability of taking certain immediate steps of a practical nature designed to assist in solving the existing problem of unemployment. This point of view submits that it is not necessary to wait for the formulation of a comprehensive housing problem before any assistance can be given. Not only may the first steps be taken with regard to the housing problem as such, but any assistance given in this direction at the present time will be of value in stimulating business recovery and absorbing existing unemployment. I am one of those who believe a solution of the housing problem will do more good in this country than anything else I know of. There is no question that the conditions under which our people live have more to do than anything else with both their health and their mental capacity. I feel that pretty strongly.

In order to explain a little more fully what is in the bill, which is a very short one and which I am sure will be quite satisfactory to my right hon. friend, I note on page 378 of the report of the committee, paragraph 6, which reads:

The magnitude of the task involved in any program designed to eliminate in its entirety the housing problem in Canada is fully realized and appreciated; that such a program would involve intensive, continuous application and effort over a period of years is manifest; but that the initiation of such is imperative is obvious from even the necessarily limited inquiry into prevailing housing conditions in which it has been your committee's privilege to engage.