

Mr. GILLIS: Is the Postmaster General's department still considering the extension of the air mail service to Cape Breton island?

Mr. MULOCK: The hon. member's representations will be carefully considered. That is a matter of policy about which no doubt the house will be advised in due course.

Mr. GILLIS: It was definitely promised a year ago.

INQUIRY FOR RETURN

SYDNEY, N.S., WARTIME HOUSING

On the orders of the day:

Mr. CLARENCE GILLIS (Cape Breton South): Some weeks ago a motion was passed for the return of correspondence between the Department of Munitions and Supply and the city of Sydney in regard to Wartime Housing. I should like to ask the minister when I may expect that return to be tabled.

Hon. C. D. HOWE (Minister of Munitions and Supply): I know of no reason why it should not have been brought down before this, but I shall make inquiries and see what is the reason for the delay.

WAR APPROPRIATION

SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISION FOR GRANTING TO HIS MAJESTY AID FOR NATIONAL DEFENCE AND SECURITY

The house resumed from Tuesday, March 24, consideration of the motion of Mr. Halsey that the house go into committee to consider the following resolution:

That it is expedient to introduce a measure to be called the Supplementary 1941 War Appropriation Act to provide *inter alia*,

1. That sums not exceeding \$135,000,000 be granted to his majesty in addition to the sums granted by the War Appropriation Act, 1941, towards defraying any expenses or making any advances or loans that may be incurred or granted by or under the authority of the governor in council during the year ending March 31, 1942, for:—

(a) the security, defence, peace, order and welfare of Canada;

(b) the conduct of naval, military and air operations in or beyond Canada;

(c) promoting the continuance of trade, industry and business communications, whether by means of insurance or indemnity against war risk or in any other manner whatsoever; and

(d) the carrying out of any measure deemed necessary or advisable by the governor in council in consequence of the existence of a state of war.

2. That the governor in council be empowered to reexpend, advance or loan moneys that may be received by way of refund or repayment of

[Mr. Mulock.]

advances, loans or expenditures under the War Appropriation Act, 1939, the War Appropriation Act, 1940, the War Appropriation Act, 1941, and the Supplementary 1941 War Appropriation Act.

Mr. A. M. NICHOLSON (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, before eleven o'clock last evening I was discussing a question which would have been left until after the Easter recess had it not been for the fact that unless something is done immediately in this connection the effect upon our production programme will be very serious indeed. I am referring, of course, to the question of wartime housing. Hon. members no doubt are aware of the fact that during the past year we have had two departments engaged in trying to provide more adequate housing in key centres in Canada. I refer to the activities of the national housing administration and to Wartime Housing Limited.

Last year I expressed the opinion that the entire programme of providing housing in war time should have been administered by the government owned and controlled agency, the national housing administration. The government, however, decided otherwise; and a number of dollar a year men were entrusted with the responsibility of administering Wartime Housing Limited. I do not plan to discuss their activities at this time, but after careful consideration and comparison of costs it would appear to me that we are getting permanent construction under national housing for less than we are getting temporary housing under Wartime Housing Limited. Last night I referred to a return which was tabled some time ago, giving the cost of wartime houses built in North Vancouver. It showed a striking discrepancy between the costs of wartime houses and those built under national housing in that city. I have before me a return brought down on February 3 of this year, giving the average costs of these temporary houses in various cities, as follows:

Fort William.....	\$2,860
Halifax.....	3,742
Hamilton.....	2,818
Welland.....	2,886
Peterborough.....	3,018
Wrightville.....	3,379

Let me remind hon. members that these houses are of temporary construction, without basements and without furnaces. The fuel is stored in a box, attached to the back of the house, capable of holding half a ton of coal. Some of the occupants of these houses in Hamilton spoke of the difficulties they experienced in securing fuel deliveries, since the box has to be empty before half a ton of coal can be put in, and there is an extra charge of fifty cents for making these small

deliveries. In view of the fact that permanent houses have been built in many of these centres at much lower cost it does seem to me that it would be a great mistake to terminate the activities of the national housing administration. I understand that since the commencement of the war that agency has assisted in the construction of over 12,854 houses, at a cost to the treasury of Canada of approximately \$9,700,000. I should like hon. members to remember these figures. According to the information given by the Minister of Munitions and Supply, we are committed to a spending programme of over \$20,000,000 for something like six thousand houses, under the wartime housing programme. I know the answer will be given that these houses have to be built in a hurry, and that necessarily the cost is higher.

Mr. HOWE: Just to keep the record straight, I should say the fact that they are built in a hurry has nothing to do with it, but I would point out that under the housing act the services are furnished by the city, and a tax is put on the property to cover the cost of those services. On the other hand Wartime Housing build their own services, the cost of which is distributed among the houses, and there is no tax against the buildings of Wartime Housing.

Mr. NICHOLSON: I am aware of that, but still it does not explain the cost of \$3,379 for houses of this type across the river in Hull. I would urge hon. members to go and see those houses, and then draw their own conclusions as to whether or not the taxpayers of Canada have received good value for the money that has been spent. What the minister says is true with regard to arrangements under the national housing administration; but in Canada there are a great many cities which would be quite prepared to encourage the administration to undertake a building programme. Of course it must be remembered also that the figures I gave represented only the government's investment, not the total cost of those houses. The average cost of the permanent houses is given as \$3,250. I think hon. members will agree that if permanent houses can be built for anything like the cost of the temporary houses, we should encourage the construction of permanent dwellings as far as possible at this time.

I realize that the whole question of supplies must be taken into consideration. It is quite conceivable that we may have to use very different methods of construction; that we may have to abandon the installation of bath tubs, and that houses may not be wired for electricity if the shortage of copper becomes more acute. We might even be

required to get along without central heating. But I submit that the government should take into consideration the raw materials and manpower that will be available for the construction of permanent houses, so that the promise given by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Halsey) some time ago that we are not going to be governed by dollars and cents but that whatever is physically possible will be made financially possible, may be implemented. That policy should be carried out in connection with housing. It will be a great calamity if the national housing administration is compelled to fold up, with the personnel obliged to go into private industry or leave the country, so that the only building activity will be carried on by Wartime Housing Limited.

I should like to remind hon. members that it is estimated that ninety per cent of the 12,000 houses which have been built since the beginning of the war by the national housing administration have been constructed in centres where we consider there is a definite war-time housing shortage. According to the order in council which was passed when Wartime Housing was established, the places in which construction should be carried on were centres where the production of munitions of war and supplies, or defence projects, would be affected by the lack of housing. There are a great many places in Canada where training centres and military establishments are located to which men of the armed forces bring their families, and if it is physically possible we should be prepared to provide them with housing accommodation. I make this final plea to the government that it give the most careful consideration to providing an appropriation for national housing and that national housing be given consideration in the matter of priorities. It would be unfortunate if all the bathtubs, heating appliances and wiring were directed exclusively into wartime housing so that the national housing administration would find it impossible to carry on. I hope the government will give careful consideration to the argument I have presented, so that our munitions production may not be seriously handicapped in the months to come because of adequate housing not being available.

Mr. J. G. DIFENBAKER (Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I had not intended to participate in this debate until the hon. member for Vancouver East (Mr. MacInnis) last evening brought out a circumstance which, I think, demands reiteration of the rights of parliament. Some time ago an address was delivered in this house by the hon. member for Ontario (Mr. Moore) in reference to the like matter, in which he stressed the situation to-day prevailing in the parliament generally speaking,