

THE SENATE

Tuesday, March 16, 1954

The Senate met at 3 p.m., the Acting Speaker (Hon. J. H. King P.C.) in the Chair.

Prayers.

Routine proceedings.

THE PRIME MINISTER'S TOUR

ARRIVAL AT ROCKCLIFFE AIRPORT

Hon. Mr. Beaubien: Honourable senators, before the Orders of the Day are proceeded with, may I advise the house that the Right Honourable the Prime Minister, returning from his tour of occidental and oriental nations, is due to arrive at Rockcliffe Airport at 9.30 tomorrow evening. Will members of the Senate who have motor cars available to drive to the airport please get in touch with those of us who do not have cars, so that as many as possible may be on hand to welcome him home?

NATIONAL HOUSING BILL

SECOND READING

The Senate resumed from yesterday the adjourned debate on the motion of Hon. Mr. Macdonald for the second reading of Bill 102, an Act to promote the construction of new houses, the repair and modernization of existing houses, and the improvement of housing and living conditions.

Hon. John T. Haig: Honourable senators, I am in difficulty today. I like to make a speech without any notes at all, but if on occasion I do prepare notes my supporters, who are few in number, unanimously agree that I am the poorest reader that ever stood up in this chamber. But I have written out notes on this bill because I wanted the press to have them. Representatives of the press cannot say I have spoken too fast or that they did not hear me, for I handed a copy of my notes to them four hours ago. Secondly, I wanted to be able to hand a copy of my notes to *Hansard* for purposes of reference, in case I read too fast or do not make myself clear.

A bill dealing with housing is an important piece of legislation. It is bound to be, in any country, at any time. In my humble opinion, nothing created by human endeavour contributes more to the life of the nation than does the house or home where the father and the mother and the family live together. I cannot imagine any blight on human progress greater than that caused by the shortage, the lack, or the destruction of homes. So we

are now addressing ourselves to what is probably the most important subject that any legislature can deal with. True, it is our duty to provide for defence against aggression; to pass laws dealing with penalties for offences; to legislate in the interest of new enterprises, and the like. But foremost in the minds of us all is the hope that when young men and young women are ready to take our places in the activities of life they will be able to afford, not merely to buy a home, but to be in a district where a home can be bought. That, I think, is fundamental.

To come to the consideration of this bill: I do not think that the things which it is proposed to do meet the issue at all. I may be wrong, but I believe that the limit of demand in Canada for houses which people can afford to buy, with a reasonable deposit on the purchase price, and to furnish with equipment, has been reached, and that the ordinary activities of the country will take care of replacements of houses of this kind. We therefore have to deal under this bill, whether the government admits it or not, with a class of people that cannot afford to buy homes. That may be a very strong statement, but I am persuaded that no one who cannot afford to make a cash payment of more than \$2,000 is able to buy a house of which the minimum price is \$12,000, and to meet also the cost of furniture and equipment. There may be districts which require more houses, and there, probably, more will be built and more will be sold, but I do not believe that under present conditions people with an income of between \$3,200 and \$4,000 can afford to buy a \$12,000 house. Under our economy it is not possible, no matter what anybody says to the contrary. Whether or not one believes in the principle of the original housing legislation—and I do not say I do or I do not—that law, from the standpoint of economics, went as far as this or any country can afford to go.

There appears to be only one object to this bill. The government wants to get right out of the house-building business. At the present time a down-payment of approximately \$2,000 is required on a home costing \$10,000. The balance of \$8,000 is mortgaged, with part of the money being supplied by the federal government through its agency Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Under this legislation the government will no longer lend money for house building purposes, and life insurance companies will not lend for this purpose either, otherwise this bill would not be before us now.

Hon. Mr. Euler: Life insurance companies have done a large volume of lending for building purposes.