

THE SENATE

Tuesday, May 20, 1958

The Senate met at 3 p.m., the Speaker in the Chair.

Prayers.

CENTRAL MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION

REPORT TABLED—REFERRED TO FINANCE COMMITTEE

Hon. W. M. Aseltine: Honourable senators, I beg to lay on the table the report, in French and English texts, of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1957, as required by section 33, subsection (3) of the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation Act.

I now wish to make a motion with respect to it which, I hope, will satisfy all honourable members. With leave, I move, seconded by the honourable senator from Lumsden (Hon. Mr. Pearson):

That the report of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation for the fiscal year ended the 31st December, 1957, be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance for consideration and report.

Honourable senators, I would like to say a word on this motion now. It appeared last night from the debate which we had on Bill C-10, to amend the National Housing Act, 1954, that a number of senators would like to have the whole matter of housing fully investigated with respect to the past, present and future, and to have the National Housing Act itself looked into. The purpose of my motion is to give the work of this inquiry to the Standing Committee on Finance, which would call officials of the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation and any other witnesses it might desire to hear. The committee would in due course submit a report to the Senate, following which we could have an all-out debate on the housing question. I feel that this would be a fine piece of work for the Senate to carry out. I am sure that if the motion passes everyone will be satisfied in a general way, and it will result in bringing to this chamber a great fund of information which we probably do not have at the present time and which will be extremely helpful to all of us and to the country at large.

Hon. W. Ross Macdonald: Honourable senators, I am quite in accord with the motion. In fact, last night I was very anxious that the bill should be referred to a committee. Nevertheless, I realized that if that were done it could not possibly get to the

committee until tomorrow, with the result that the bill would be reported back here at the earliest tomorrow, and possibly not until Thursday.

In reply to a question yesterday the honourable leader (Hon. Mr. Aseltine) stated that Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation had only \$8 million on hand to provide for any contracts which might come forward for approval; in fact, I think he said there were many contracts awaiting approval. Ordinarily, the bill should have gone to a committee, but I think honourable senators realize why this course was not followed. The leader was kind enough to inform us, in the early part of last week, of his proposal that the Senate would adjourn on Wednesday afternoon until Wednesday this week. That turned out to be impossible; but when he made that proposal to me he mentioned—and I must take some of the responsibility for the decision that was made—the question of when the committees should be set up. I told him I thought there would be plenty of time to do that this week. However, legislation did not come from the Commons as quickly as we had expected, and we could not adjourn on Wednesday. We sat on Thursday and Friday and re-assembled on Monday instead of Wednesday. Under the circumstances, it was impossible to have the committees set up yesterday. I thought, therefore, that it would be advisable for us to give the bill second reading last night, and third reading today, in order not to hold up work on many houses which are about to be started.

Honourable senators, I think the leader's motion is an excellent one. Any of the questions which it is intended to ask of officials of the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation concerning this bill can be asked when the corporation's report is being considered by the committee.

There is one request I would make of the committee, and that is that senators who are not members of the committee be given every opportunity not only to attend the meetings but to ask questions just as freely as if they were members of the committee.

Hon. Mr. Aseltine: And I think the proceedings should be reported.

Hon. Mr. Macdonald: I was just going to suggest that. The committee will be doing a very important work, and I think its proceedings should be reported, and the reports distributed as soon as possible, not only to the public generally but to members of the house. We are all interested in the housing question and it seems to me that the honourable leader's motion provides a good solution of the problem which bothered us yesterday when the bill was not referred to committee.