

*Inquiries of the Ministry*

the latter part of that question is based, and I do not think it is appropriate to base a question on this matter which has already been the subject of a question in this house. So far as the two rates are concerned, they are based, and always have been based, on entirely different considerations. The one is a rate applicable to house building under the National Housing Act, and the other is a rate established by the banks of this country in relation to their advances to the Canadian wheat board. The factors the hon. member has chosen to bring into his question this morning present no basis of comparison.

**Hon. J. W. Pickersgill (Bonavista-Twillington):** Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. I should like to ask the Minister of Finance whether he thinks it is appropriate for the chairman of the wheat board to give information to the public which ministers refuse to give in this house.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Fleming (Eglinton):** Mr. Speaker, there has been no refusal on the part of ministers to give—

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Fleming (Eglinton):**—information to the house that is appropriate to be given to the house, or to be asked for on orders of the day.

I draw attention again to the fact that the last question is based on a newspaper report. I have not seen the newspaper report and I do not propose to make any comments on it or base any answer on it, until I have seen the report and have had the opportunity of verifying it.

**Mr. Hellyer:** Tell us what the rate is.

**Mr. Chevrier:** What is the rate?

## N.H.A.—INQUIRY AS TO STARTS AND COMPLETIONS

On the orders of the day:

**Mr. R. M. T. McDonald (Hamilton South):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Public Works. Could the minister please inform the house as to the number of housing starts and completions under the National Housing Act this year?

**Mr. Pickersgill:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order with respect to the question asked by the hon. gentleman. He has asked for the number of housing starts for the whole of this year. Surely that is not a matter that has urgently arisen since yesterday, and,

therefore, should not be the subject of a question, as the Minister of Finance so vehemently pointed out just a few minutes ago.

**Mr. Argue:** Mr. Speaker, on the point of order—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Argue:** Mr. Speaker, on the point of order, I suggest that if it is in order to ask questions when housing starts have been fewer, it should also be in order to ask questions even though housing starts may have increased. Some hon. members may not wish to hear that housing starts have increased, but I would be pleased to hear such a reply.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. That question is quite different from the earlier question which was asked. Although it might be objected to by the minister on the ground that it is asking for statistical information and should therefore be more appropriately put on the order paper, if the minister does not take that objection I see no reason why the question should not be answered.

**Hon. D. J. Walker (Minister of Public Works):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to thank the leader of the C.C.F. group for his question, and reply that N.H.A. loan approvals in April for 6,252 dwellings were nearly four times as many as the 1,611 reported for April, 1960. Of the 6,252 approvals, the life, trust and loan companies accounted for 4,117 dwellings, the banks for 3, and Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation for 2,132. During the four month period there were loans for 18,599 dwellings, an increase of 443.8 per cent above the 3,413 for the same period in 1960. Actual starts for the first four months of 1961 at 20,559 were up 47.5 per cent over the 13,940 reported for the same period last year.

**Hon. L. B. Pearson (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, would the minister comment on the fact that construction contracts for other than housing during the first four months of this year are 24 per cent below those for the first four months of 1960?

**Mr. Walker:** Mr. Speaker, such construction is a matter which is in the hands of free, private enterprise. I am only concerned with reporting to the house for the department of which I have the honour to be the minister.

**Mr. J. R. Garland (Nipissing):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the minister would be kind enough to give us the number of completions this year to date compared with the number of completions to the same date last year.