

these estimates are open to debate under the present or under civil estimates after the answers are given.

Mr. SKEY: I have another question. Does the minister guarantee against any damages which may ensue in a breach of contract suit that may result from the unlawful disposal of lumber which is not the property of the mills but which is disposed of to Wartime Housing on their orders?

Mr. HOWE: I can assure my hon. friend that there is no breach of contract in that case. I would suggest to him that the fact that the crown intervenes is a sufficient defence.

Mr. SKEY: On that question I have two communications. One is from the Ontario Lumber Dealers' association, the other is from the Canadian Lumbermen's association. The Ontario lumber dealers say that they dispute the right to take the lumber from the yards of a sawmill where it is in pile, but in many cases does not belong to the manufacturer, the owner being a wholesaler or a retailer who has bought it under contract and in some cases has already paid for it. This is from a reputable association, I submit, the lumber dealers' association for the whole of a province. The Canadian Lumbermen's association has the same question, whether the government will assume the damages which may result from breaches of contract by the unlawful disposal of this lumber which, as the hon. member for Eglinton pointed out this afternoon, is being requisitioned and taken from its legitimate owners. The association points out that in some cases it has already been paid for. I submit that the answer I have received in this case is hardly full enough to cover an invasion of property rights of this order; and I would associate myself completely with the hon. member for Lake Centre and the hon. member for Eglinton when they brought up in committee this invasion of property rights. I believe that the feeling of this committee will be that the owners of this lumber should be guaranteed compensation if they are sued for damages.

Before I resume my seat, I should like to tell the committee what the achievement of Wartime Housing is to date, since this year's programme of Wartime Housing came into being, according to the chart submitted by the minister this afternoon, on January 1, 1945. The committee will remember that we were freed to a certain extent from restrictions after the first week of May. Wartime Housing plans to build 7,000 houses; it has been in operation for ten and a half months of this year and it has produced ninety-five houses which are occupied.

Mr. HOWE: I may say that Wartime Housing came into being either late in 1941 or early in 1942 and has built some 19,000 houses which are occupied. The last programme was decided upon late in July of this year, and it is well under way at this moment. The number of houses built since the programme was undertaken in July, as given by the hon. member, is probably correct; nevertheless the 7,000 houses are well launched.

Mr. SKEY: I am quoting from the figures which the minister submitted this afternoon. It says quite plainly on the chart that the programme is as from the 1st of January, 1945. It also shows the progress in all fields. I can give him the exact figures. From the municipalities there have been 7,955 requests; there have been 6,955 agreements; property has been appraised in 6,480 cases. It goes all the way through, and at the end it says, "houses occupied, 95."

Mr. HOWE: If that is the case, how have we caused this great disruption in the lumber market and stopped all other building?

Mr. FLEMING: By requisitions.

Mr. HOWE: My hon. friend has made a great case that we are abusing the lumber trade. I have dealt with the lumber trade for the best part of thirty-five years, and I think they are well able to take care of themselves. I doubt if they would welcome any intervention on the part of young members of parliament. Be that as it may, have we not lost sight entirely of the men and women who will occupy these houses? I am trying to do a job for them. If I tread on someone's corns in doing so, I have the satisfaction of knowing that the dealers are doing very nicely, making more money than they ever made and handling more material than they have handled in their history. Just take a thought for the users of these houses. I am surprised that there is not one man opposite who would say a word for the veterans for whom these houses are being built.

Mr. SKEY: That is just what I am doing. I am talking for the users of these houses. I am saying exactly this, that there are not enough users to make this a worth-while project, if there are only ninety-five users of these houses for 1945.

Mr. BLACK (Cumberland): What is the present policy with respect to the final disposal of these war-time prefabricated houses? My understanding is that when they were built, or agreements entered into with the municipalities, there was a provision that they would be removed six months after the termination of the war. I should also like to