

National Housing Act

the act but I believe there are some restrictions of a provincial nature which make it impractical for a credit union to apply to be considered as an approved lender. We should be glad to have them included, but apparently it is not the wish of those concerned that this should be done.

Last year, as the hon. member will recall, the corporation brought out two sets of plans, one for a house costing about \$8,000 and the other for a house costing about \$5,000. Apparently I am wrong. It was the same plan but the house would cost \$8,000 in an urban area and \$5,000 in a rural area. Two additional sets of plans for similar houses or similar types of houses are now almost complete. There has been some distribution of the first plan. Not as many people have asked for it as we had hoped. It may be that in the rural areas and indeed in the smaller towns there is not the demand for new housing that we had expected. I think this factor enters into the picture, namely that there is not the same keen demand for new homes in those areas as there is in the rapidly growing metropolitan centres. However, we are prepared and delighted to make loans in rural areas and in the smaller towns.

Then the hon. member for Lincoln made several extremely helpful suggestions. Of course he has had a long experience in the building industry and speaks as an expert in that field. I am afraid that improving the hardware industry is a little bit beyond my scope, other than by getting more houses built and giving them a better market. In this regard they have done fairly well in the last year. I suppose there has never before been such a good market for household hardware in Canada.

Then he mentioned a land assembly plan. As hon. members know, this is a type of activity under the National Housing Act in which the municipality, the province and the federal government join in buying up land and servicing it. Then they sell it. Of course their expenses are recouped in that way. The procedure has been extremely helpful. The result has been that this serviced land is much cheaper than it otherwise would be. The results of this particular part of the housing policy have been extremely beneficial. There is no reason why that plan should not be adopted in many other centres apart from those that are already benefiting from it. We would certainly give favourable consideration to applications for any land assembly project.

The hon. member also mentioned low rental housing. This is one activity which has been somewhat neglected in the debate today.

[Mr. Green.]

It was more or less overlooked when members were dealing with the need to help Canadians in the lower income group.

Mr. Benidickson: Oh, I put on my listening device and listened very carefully to the translation of the remarks made by the hon. member for Levis, and I thought that was the main point he made this morning—this question of the houses available for people in the lower income groups.

Mr. Green: I am talking about low rental houses as distinct from houses which are owned. There are several different ways in which low rental houses are being provided under the housing act. One is under the limited dividend plan which has been used very extensively in the course of the past year. About 7,000 units were built in 1958 under that plan. As hon. members know, funds are provided on very long terms—very easy terms—and the only people who can benefit are those in the lower third income group. If a man's income is above the lower third he cannot rent one of these limited dividend apartments. Then, in addition, there are federal-provincial housing schemes which provide for low rentals and here, too, there is an income ceiling and in some cases these units are subsidized by the government. I must confess that I always look carefully at subsidized rental schemes, because they mean some Canadians are having to subsidize other Canadians in the matter of living accommodation. There are cases where this is necessary, but I think this type of construction should be the exception rather than the rule, because when you get into the field of widespread subsidization of rented accommodation it seems to me there is a very thin line between the family that gets the accommodation and the benefit of the subsidy, and the family which has to pay for it. I think members of the committee will agree that the provision of this type of accommodation has to be considered very carefully.

The hon. member for Levis also mentioned research. I think credit is due to the national research council and also to the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation for the research which has been carried on in the field of building. I can remember very well when the national research council began this activity. It was very badly needed and the results have been excellent. We shall, of course, continue to do all the research possible, and inquire into all the matters mentioned by the hon. member for Kootenay West, but hon. members would be wrong to think that nothing has been done up to this time. Research in this field is probably as far ahead as it is in any other field in Canada.