

Supply—Labour

SUPPLY

The house in committee of supply, Mr. Batten in the chair.

The Chairman: Order. House again in committee of supply, estimates of the Department of Labour for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1968. We are on vote No. 35 dealing with the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

CENTRAL MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION

35. To reimburse Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation for expenditures on housing research and community planning, for the amounts of loans for sewage treatment projects forgiven to a province, municipality or municipal sewerage corporation, for contributions made for an urban renewal scheme or pursuant to an urban renewal agreement, for losses resulting from the operation of public housing projects, and for net losses resulting from the sale of mortgages from its portfolio, \$25,300,000.

Hon. J. R. Nicholson (Minister of Labour): Mr. Chairman, I take it that we are to move directly to vote 35 of the Department of Labour estimates. This is the only item which deals with estimates of the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. I might say, Mr. Chairman, that I welcome heartily the opportunity to discuss these estimates, not simply because of the housing problems which admittedly exist but rather because it affords me an opportunity to present to hon. members a statement concerning some aspects of the housing picture which some statements that were made in the house yesterday and the day before indicate are unknown to them.

I wish to put it on the record at the outset that we do have a serious housing situation in Canada, one which is likely to continue for some years to come. No country can grow as fast as Canada is growing and have a concentration of population in certain urban areas without having housing problems. But I do want to make it perfectly clear that these problems are largely centred in the metropolitan areas in this country, and the record shows that fact quite conclusively. The record speaks for itself. I also want to say that while we do have problems centred in certain specific areas, regardless of what hon. members may say about the housing situation, the situation in these specific areas is not indicative of the housing situation which prevails in the majority of our cities and towns.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

[Mr. MacEachen.]

Mr. Nicholson: I also wish to point out that very little reference has been made to the fact that the housing problems that arise in metropolitan areas such as Toronto, Vancouver and other cities the size of Hamilton and larger arise not so much out of a reduced volume of housing—in fact there has been a very substantial increase in housing—but out of the unprecedented pace of general development and growth in these areas. Much house building has been going on in Canada though not enough to take care of the phenomenal growth that has taken place in Toronto and certain other areas. I also wish to say that notwithstanding the deterrents to house building this year, in 1967 we shall have in excess of 150,000 starts.

● (3:10 p.m.)

Mr. Fulton: That is 50,000 too few.

Mr. Nicholson: If the hon. member is quoting the report of the Economic Council, he has not read it very carefully. It says that 140,000 starts will take care of the new family formations, the other 50,000 being to replace old houses that should disappear.

Mr. Hees: Are they not necessary?

Mr. Nicholson: Of course they are needed, but one must deal with problems like that in accordance with all the circumstances.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Nicholson: They must all be taken into consideration.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Nicholson: Hon. members may laugh; hon. members may well laugh, but the 150,000 starts represent a very substantial increase over starts in 1966. This year's starts represent an increase of about 15 per cent over those of 1966, and this increase, I might point out, has been largely made possible by the vast infusion of federal funds to support housing, an infusion that has been felt in every province of Canada.

There are those who would deplore our not reaching a much quoted figure which has been referred to of 200,000 housing starts. But the 200,000 housing starts are forecast for 1970.

Mr. Hees: Is it not 190,000?

Mr. Nicholson: It is not 190,000, with all due respect. The figure is 200,000 for 1970.

Mr. Hees: But the Economic Council says that we need 190,000—