

The committee resumed at 2.30 p.m.

DEPARTMENT OF RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT

General—

420. Emergency shelter administration, \$100,000.

The Chairman: We will first take up items 420 and 421, which are to be found at page 56 of the book of estimates, and also item 557 which is to be found at page 74. Hon. members will recall that these three items were referred earlier to the standing committee on banking and commerce and are now brought back before the committee of supply.

Mr. Fleming: I think it is a regret that many members of the house will share that the first debate in this present session on the subject of housing should be reached only on what may be the last day of the session. When the minister's estimates were called some weeks ago, in view of the fact that the banking and commerce committee was sitting under an order of the house reviewing the annual report of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation it was agreed that these three items from the estimates should be added to the reference to the committee on banking and commerce. While that committee submitted its report to the house several weeks ago, this is the first time that the estimates of the minister have been called again.

I submit that a subject as important as housing is for all sections of this country is entitled to more time and attention in the house than has been given to it at the present session. At the same time I wish to commend the reference this year of the annual report of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation to the banking and commerce committee. I believe this is the first time since Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation was established that any report from that important organization has been referred to a committee of the house for study and review. Indeed, I believe this is the first occasion in the lifetime of the last two parliaments when any committee of the house has studied housing in any of its aspects.

In my view the banking and commerce committee conducted a very thorough review of the matters referred to it within the scope of the reference to the committee. The committee held many meetings, had extended discussions and an abundance of evidence from Mr. David Mansur, the very able president of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. I am satisfied that within its terms of reference the committee has done a very thorough piece of work. I had occasion more than once to urge that the

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committee should have broader terms of reference. The reference under the order of the house confined the committee to the annual report of the corporation, and it was the ruling of the chairman, and I believe the view of the majority of the members of the committee, that the committee was precluded from hearing other organizations interested in the subject of housing. The result was that we had no other witnesses before the committee than Mr. Mansur and on one occasion the minister himself.

The only other submissions that reached the committee were letters received from three organizations which have a very important stake in housing, namely, the National Housebuilders Association Incorporated, which wrote a letter dated June 4 to the chairman of the committee, the Canadian Construction Association, which wrote a short letter dated June 4 to the chairman of the committee, and the Dominion Mortgage and Investment Association which wrote a letter dated June 11 to the chairman of the committee. There were some interesting matters mentioned in those letters but I am afraid no one can say that any extended consideration could be given to them under the circumstances, particularly when representatives from those important organizations were not called before the committee.

I do not say that these three organizations are the only ones which could have had interesting and valuable views to submit to the committee. Indeed, there are many organizations which, both from the point of view of the practical problems of construction and also from the point of view of the place of housing in any public policy, would have had much to contribute in assisting the committee. However, so far as the report of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation is concerned it undoubtedly had a thorough review at the hands of the committee.

Opinions are divided, as we found in taking the evidence of Mr. Mansur, as to the extent of the housing problem in Canada today. The dominion bureau of statistics in its daily bulletin of June 4, in summarizing some interesting findings with reference to housing data from the 1951 census, opens its summary with this sentence:

In June last year Canada's ten provinces had a total of 3,587,364 dwellings, of which 3,423,010 were occupied and the balance either under construction or unoccupied for various reasons . . .

Then follows in summarized form a review of the statistics province by province garnered in the course of the census. I think it is not unfair to say that there was some reluctance on the part of Mr. Mansur to put any exact figure on the shortage of housing in Canada today. He did take issue quite firmly