

National Housing Act

It is well that we bear in mind at all times the fact that we rely principally upon private enterprise to meet the need of housing in Canada. The role assigned to government, as far as home ownership is concerned, is not an exclusive role by any means in the legislative mechanism for the construction of houses in Canada in the total scheme with which we concern ourselves in this house. It is well, sir, that we should not depend simply upon governmental auspices for the meeting of this need. On page 7 of the most recent statistical publication of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation entitled, "Canadian Housing Statistics", for the fourth quarter of 1955, we are reminded that of the total housing starts in 1955 numbering 138,276, there were 68,593 being built without any form of government assistance. This is just about an even half of the total.

Again, in the matter of the provision of mortgages for home construction we do well to remind ourselves that we depend upon other sources than those directly associated with the National Housing Act for the provision of a very substantial amount of mortgage money to assist in home construction. On page 15 of the same statistical publication we see that in the year 1955, according to table 20, there was provided a total of mortgage loans of all kinds aggregating \$1,170,712,000, and of that total loans on new non-farm residential construction aggregated \$850 million. The conventional loans on other property aggregated \$320 million, so there was still a very substantial volume of money going into mortgage investment to assist in financing home ownership with which N.H.A. had nothing to do.

The minister, in the very comprehensive and interesting statement which he read to the house today, has not dwelt on some of the factors which emerged in the course of our discussion during the resolution stage three days ago as factors that are impeding the results that had been hoped for as a result of the amendments introduced from time to time into our housing legislation, and particularly the amendments of 1954. I think I should say to the minister, and to the government, that we intend, so far as opportunity offers in this house, to keep these matters before the government and before the house. I believe their importance is undeniable.

For instance, the minister has not said anything today about the subject of family income and how it determines the rate and extent of lending under part I of the National Housing Act for the construction of houses for owner-occupancy. If we are to hope for a wide diffusion of the benefits of this legislation within the Canadian popu-

[Mr. Fleming.]

lation there will have to be other measures taken than have yet been taken, in order to make the benefits of lending under part I of the act available to persons with modest incomes. I remind the house that the trend in the incomes of those who are qualifying for loans under part I of the act has been steadily upward. The new legislation of two years ago has not had the effect of reducing the average family income of those qualifying for these loans, or, in other words, of making the benefit of mortgage loans under part I of the act available to persons of lower average family income than those who qualified for them up until the amendments of 1954 came into effect. There is a very real problem, Mr. Speaker.

No one, I am sure, is going to advocate that people should embark upon home ownership or load themselves up with an intolerable burden of debt far beyond their means or their prospects to meet. But if the purpose assigned to part I of the National Housing Act has the validity assumed by all who supported it in this house two years ago, and that includes all parties, then we must find some more effective remedy than has yet been applied if the benefits of home ownership are going to be extended to persons of modest income. I remind the house that in 1953 the average family income of those who qualified for mortgage loans under part I of the act was \$4,961. In 1954 that average had increased to \$5,382. In 1955 that average had increased further to \$5,447. It cannot be pretended therefore, Mr. Speaker, that this legislation, in seeking to make mortgage loans available under part I for the construction of new homes for owner occupancy, is making them available to persons of modest income. We just cannot make any such pretense.

Mr. Winters: May I ask the hon. member if he would be kind enough to tell me the first of the three figures he mentioned?

Mr. Fleming: For 1953?

Mr. Winters: There was one, 1949 was it?

Mr. Fleming: That was a figure for half of the year 1955, namely \$5,447. I notice the figures are shaded down a little in the statistical publication to which I referred earlier, and which has just come out. I think they must be using a different basis of calculation than the one that was in use earlier, because the figures I have used were drawn from government sources. But whether or not there is some slight difference in the basis of calculation, the figures appearing in this most recent statistical issue of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation illustrate the