

Housing Prices

it is a good basis from which to begin improving our policies.

During this period, the government's efforts have been directed not simply to creating numbers of dwelling units but to ensuring that housing is available to those who need it most. Policies have been deliberately aimed at providing for those who need financial assistance in getting housing. Through its agency, the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, more than 140,000 housing units have been created in the past four years under programs designed to help people with low incomes—more than twice as many low income units as were built in the previous 22 years. Therefore more has been done in the last four years than in the previous 22 years, including the five years in which the Conservatives were in office. I have not included in those figures some 50,000 hostel units built with CMHC financing.

In dollar terms, more than \$2 billion in loans at favourable interest rates have been made available for low income housing in the past four years as compared with less than a billion dollars back to the end of the second world war. By far the largest proportion of CMHC loan and capital commitments for housing over the last four years has been directed to housing for people in the low income group. In 1971 this proportion amounted to 83.2 per cent. In 1972, more than \$500 million is allocated for this purpose. The hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) a few moments ago, asked "For whom?" I answer him by saying the efforts of the government have been devoted almost exclusively to providing homes for those who do not have the financial resources which enable them to acquire homes in other ways.

Our policy in this regard is clear. These programs have been carried out and have achieved their outstanding success through the co-operation of the provincial governments and their housing agencies which are active and enthusiastic partners in helping to meet the housing needs of Canadians. I do not wish to imply that all the solutions have been found. Much yet remains to be done in developing new techniques, new mechanisms for co-operation, new policies. Over the last few years we have carried out a number of studies and appointed a number of task forces. Some reference has been made to this today. I agree with the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants (Mr. McCleave) that the time for new legislation is here. Already one piece of legislation has been introduced—Bill C-209 which is presently before the House. The time has come, now, for changes to be made in the National Housing Act, and I am glad that hon. members opposite agree with me. The record in housing achievement is more than satisfactory and we are also putting before the House and the country new, bold and imaginative policies.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): What are they?

Mr. Basford: I wish to mention three aspects this afternoon—the legislation relating to mortgage financing, the National Housing Act amendments and the process of tri-level discussion and consultation with the provinces and municipalities. I refer, first of all, to Bill C-209, the residential mortgage financing act which I had the honour to introduce a few days ago and which is on the House leader's agenda for business. I hope it can be dealt with

[Mr. Basford.]

next week, be given second reading and sent to committee for study as soon as possible. There will, I hope, be opportunities before the end of June for members to deal with this bill, give it third reading and see it proclaimed. The measures contained in the residential mortgage financing act represent the latest in a series of initiatives by the government to bring more private capital into the residential mortgage market. Our purpose in doing so is to ensure that financing is available at the most reasonable cost possible to people in the middle income group and for those who cannot obtain financing in the usual way. The two institutions to be created through this legislation are the Residential Mortgage Market Corporation and the mortgage investment corporations. These institutions will eliminate some of the difficulties which institutions and individuals have found in investing in residential mortgages, and will make these mortgages more nearly as attractive and convenient as are other kinds of investment. Even a small shift in the investment policies of the banks and financial institutions could lead to huge injections of capital into the residential mortgage field and cause a depressing effect on interest rates, making access available to greater amounts of money.

I should like to turn, now, to consider a piece of legislation which the opposition wants me to introduce forthwith. I can undertake, on behalf of the government, that the bill amending the National Housing Act will be introduced shortly. I do not want to anticipate the business of the House, but since the subject is relevant to this debate I believe I would be in order in speaking briefly on the government's intentions with regard to the National Housing Act. The amendments which will be introduced fall into a number of categories. There are amendments relating to the repair and rehabilitation of existing housing stock. There are proposals for neighbourhood improvement programs to replace the old urban renewal provisions under the National Housing Act. There are provisions designed to assist people with low incomes to buy their own homes. There are provisions relating to non-profit housing to accommodate elderly people and people with low incomes.

There are new and important provisions relating to the co-operative movement, and I shall be particularly happy to introduce these because I shall be the only minister in 70 years to bring forward federal co-operatives legislation.

• (1450)

The amendments which we will propose are intended to modify and strengthen the act, and to make it a more precise and effective instrument for dealing with the most pressing and significant housing and community building tasks. They will provide the federal, provincial and municipal governments with a greater flexibility and permit different approaches, in different parts of Canada, to different kinds of problems. The amendments will also be a response to the growing concern throughout the country, not only with houses but with the neighbourhood environment. They will support provincial and municipal initiatives to preserve the neighbourhood as a living community and where possible to improve and enhance it—instead of destroying it by bulldozing it away.