

*National Housing Act*

Mr. McILRAITH: I will tell the hon. member, through you, Mr. Speaker, what is so extraordinary about it. On a great many occasions in this house I have had the pleasure of listening to one of my hon. friend's colleagues, from the city he represents, the hon. member for Eglinton (Mr. Fleming)—

Mr. FLEMING: The world's greatest constituency.

Mr. McILRAITH: — and from him I have heard stories of what little had been done in this country in comparison with other countries. I was so much impressed with those speeches that I took the trouble to check up. I found, as I have said quite frankly, that the forecasts and the actual record of accomplishment are almost identical. For instance, I point out to hon. members that last year the forecast was 80,000 houses, and I am advised that the figure of actual construction is 79,000.

Mr. GRAYDON: But that is not the election forecast; that is the House of Commons forecast. I am talking about the election forecast.

Mr. HOWE: You pay attention to the present election; they need your help pretty badly.

Mr. McILRAITH: If the hon. member for Peel wants to deal with elections I shall be glad to do so. However, there are one or two other things I should like to mention. We speak of the housing problem here as though the only authority having anything to do with it were the dominion government. The plain truth of the matter is that the direct responsibility of the dominion government in the field is fairly limited. Rightly or wrongly, property and civil rights were left, under our constitution, to the provinces, and they also have a responsibility. I am one of those who believe that the housing needs of this country can be met only through co-operation on the part of all levels of government having responsibility. That means simply the dominion government, the provincial government and the municipal governments. The municipalities have their problems in connection with taxation and so on—

Mr. NICHOLSON: But the hon. member would admit that the federal government should give the lead in convening these conferences?

Mr. McILRAITH: No, I will not admit that it should give the lead, but I do say most emphatically that it has given the lead. I pointed out to the hon. member a short time [Mr. Jackman.]

ago in my remarks that last year the federal government built directly, of its own volition, 13,000 houses, and provided direct priority assistance for some 16,000 more; and in addition it made money available for a great deal of other building; a very substantial amount of money, indeed.

I come back to the question of co-operation. Hon. members directly opposite have seemed to talk about elections. The simple truth of the matter is that in meeting this most difficult type of problem, a type which requires co-operation from three levels of government, municipalities in the main have co-operated very well. I suppose in a country of this size it is inevitable that one would find a municipality somewhere where co-operation is not as good as it might be. In the main, however, they have tried to co-operate. Sometimes they have been a little slower than some of us might have wished; but I think it is fair to give them credit for trying to do something in co-operation with the dominion government.

The record of provincial governments is something I invite hon. members to think about a little bit. I hope that, with the years that lie ahead, it will increase rather than decrease; if indeed it is possible for the small quantity which has been forthcoming in the past to decrease at all.

It is not my intention here to make any remark which in any way could be used as giving any provincial group the right to come out and say, "How can we co-operate with anyone in the dominion parliament who is making remarks about lack of co-operation?" But I would invite hon. members from Ontario, who were so vociferous a minute ago, to recall what the record of that province is. I invite them not to take my word for it, but to read the legislation of the province of Ontario on the subject. It is on record in our library here.

In Ontario they have had two bills—rather interesting ones. One of them is called "An act respecting provision of services by the province and municipalities to persons occupying dominion crown lands". Perhaps I should say no more about it because, after the bill was passed, the premier of the province undertook that it would never be proclaimed. I leave it to hon. members to read the bill and to see what interpretation they put upon it. It is not exactly called co-operation.

Then there is another bill, Bill 125, which was passed just on the eve of the announcement of the election in the province. It is a very short bill, taking all of a page and a half—a most extraordinary thing. All I can say about it is that I hope it works. I hope