

*National Housing Act*

to come into the picture; and the Minister of Trade and Commerce is quite right when he says that if there is to be any worthwhile element of subsidy in the provision of low-rental housing, it will have to come from the federal treasury.

A few days ago the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) lectured the leader of the opposition (Mr. Bracken)—and some of us thought it "love's labour lost"—when he told him how to get along in political life. The Prime Minister said at that time something he has said on a number of occasions, namely, that even when a government has a good idea it should not get too far ahead of the thinking and desires of the people. The Prime Minister gave that as his reason for taking so long to take steps in the field of health services. That same reason was given when advances at long last were made in matters of old age pensions and family allowances. The Prime Minister's argument, when finally he did start to move in connection with these various matters, was that public opinion would now support these moves. As a matter of fact public opinion had overtaken the government and made it necessary that those moves be taken.

I suggest that public opinion has now overtaken the government in the matter of subsidized low-rental housing. The government needs no longer think it will be doing something out in front of public opinion if it rules in that direction. Every two or three days I receive resolutions from one group or another expressing concern about the housing situation; and it is amazing to note the unanimity with which bodies of various kinds are now asking for subsidized low-rental housing and for a get-together of the three levels of government to proceed with such a plan.

The most recent of these to come to my desk—it arrived only two days ago—is from the Soroptimist club of Winnipeg. This communication is signed by Miss Kathryn M. McLearn, president, whose address is the Shriners Hospital for Crippled Children at Winnipeg. Miss McLearn enclosed with her letter a copy of a resolution passed recently by the Soroptimist club in that city. It is lengthy, and I shall not read the whole of it; but I believe I should place on record two or three of the recitals and the operative part of the resolution. I quote:

Whereas a great many families with low incomes in Canada are living in unhealthy, overcrowded or unsanitary housing accommodation; . . .

And whereas most of the people living in deplorable housing accommodation cannot afford to buy houses at today's high prices;

[Mr. Knowles.]

And whereas bad housing results in higher disease and mortality rates, and in higher rates of crime and delinquency;

And whereas bad housing is not only costly in human values, but also is costly to the taxpayers in providing social services which otherwise would be unnecessary . . .

I would ask the hon. member for Brandon (Mr. Matthews) to note that these remarks are not made by someone who wears politically coloured glasses—to use his phrase—but that they are made by the group to which I have just referred, namely the Soroptimist club of Winnipeg. The resolution continues:

. . . And whereas Great Britain, the United States and the Scandinavian and many other countries have provided low-rental housing for low-income families largely subsidized by the national government, but our federal government has not provided any such housing in spite of many recommendations to do so;

Therefore, be it resolved that the federal government without further delay, institute for low-income families a low-rental housing program largely subsidized by the federal government.

There is much more I would like to say. In fact I confess I have on my desk some notes and quotations which are somewhat provocative; and that is the way some of us feel about this problem. But I am not going to go ahead with what I had planned to say. I would rather leave it as it is. My reason for doing so is that the amendment now before the house poses the issue squarely that what we need is for the government to move in the direction of subsidizing low-rental housing. That is not just an amendment moved by the C.C.F. As already pointed out, it is the position taken by the Canadian federation of mayors and municipalities and the Canadian construction association. That is the position of many organizations, societies and bodies across Canada, which are alarmed and concerned about the menace of bad housing in this country.

The minister has said that the effect of this amendment will be to negate the bill. I will not go into the procedural phase of the matter, but in spirit he is right. What we want and what I am sure the people of Canada want is not this bill, which will not build houses for people in the low-income groups, but that the bill should be defeated and the government informed that it is the opinion of this house that they should bring down a measure for subsidized low-rental housing. I hope the house will see fit to support and pass the amendment which has been moved.

Mr. J. O. PROBE (Regina City): Mr. Speaker, I should like to say a word at this stage. Hon. members on the opposition benches have pleaded with the Minister of