

*The Address—Mr. Fleming*

this indication of some proposed limited assumption of responsibility on the part of the dominion in respect to housing conditions in Canada is indeed welcome.

In the third place, if the statement is to be considered as going the full way and justifying the interpretation that has been put upon it in some quarters, that the government is willing to assist in providing for subsidized housing, then the government has gone a long way since October 27, 1947, when the Prime Minister said, "No government of which I am a part will ever pass legislation for subsidized housing". The statement made yesterday represents an advance and I am sure the house will welcome it.

In the fourth place, I would like to comment on the fact the statement does recognize that this country must look to private enterprise to provide in principal measure the answer to the problem of the lack of housing.

I wish to make a special observation, sir, on the proposal to assist in the purchase of new houses by contributing an additional mortgage advance of one-sixth of the building loans provided for under the National Housing Act so as to help to bridge the gap between the present loan under the National Housing Act and the purchase price of a house. The house will welcome this, but the house will regret that the government has been so long in doing something that it obviously ought to have done long ago. The need was there. The need was debated in this house. I well remember hearing the then hon. member for Vancouver-Burrard, the distinguished Mr. C. C. I. Merritt, whose absence from this house today I deplore very greatly, more than once pointing out to the government the great deficiency which was being created in our housing measures by the fact that the government, through the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, was giving a very rigid and unsympathetic interpretation of the provisions of the housing act. In section 4 the National Housing Act deals with the extent of the loans which are permissible under part I. It bases this upon the percentage of lending value, but the lending value as administered by the government agency did not bear a close relationship to the cost of construction. In that way, by writing down the lending value of the house, the government agency created that big spread between the price of the house to the home owner and the amount available to him by way of loan under the National Housing Act.

The province of Ontario took action two years ago to fill that gap in dominion legislation, a gap which this parliament and this government, which are responsible for dominion participation in redress of our housing

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problem, should not have permitted to continue. But now at last the government invites us to believe that a new day is dawning simply because it is moving now to copy the example which the government of Ontario gave two years ago when my leader was premier of that province. Yes; it was this government and its agency which largely nullified the intent of parliament and the National Housing Act, necessitating this additional provision of dominion assistance, which this house will welcome, although it will be regarded as too late.

More will be said on this subject when the house has the bill before it, and there will be an opportunity of reviewing what the government's proposals, are, if any, to assist in slum clearance, to assist in the provision, in greater supply, of needed building materials, and precisely what they propose to do in the statement they have made in regard to assisted rentals, always bearing in mind, sir, that just as important as legislation will be the spirit behind the administration. If there is drive and determination behind the administration of this legislation we can look for some improvement. If there is to be lackadaisical administration, if the government is to countenance, as it has done at times in the past, the nullification in part of measures that parliament has approved, simply because it has not put drive behind those measures, then I think the house will expect to call the government to account.

I shall mention just one other subject because my time is passing quickly. I refer to communism. In the speech from the throne there is only one reference to the subject of communism, and it is in these words:

The menace of communist totalitarianism continues to threaten the aspirations of men of good will.

The measures which the government has in contemplation with respect to this menace of communism apparently are external only. There is no suggestion in the speech from the throne about any measures which may be taken within the four corners of Canada to combat this menace of communism. We congratulate organized labour in this country on the determined steps which it has taken in recent days to expel communism from its ranks, to combat this evil menace. Their example might well inspire this parliament. I recall that the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Pearson) had this to say in his speech at Montreal on July 19, as recorded in the press. He told the Montreal Rotary Club:

The domestic threat of communism must be met "by strengthening, if necessary, our criminal code against actions which threaten the security of the state."