

*National Housing Act*

of the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation gave me some information which the committee might like to have. My question could not be answered at it appeared on the order paper, but they kindly gave me information along the lines I asked for. It shows that quite a number of municipalities in Canada have passed resolutions asking the dominion government to amend the National Housing Act so as to make funds available to the municipalities. Resolutions have been passed, for example, by the city of London, the city of Brandon, the district of Burnaby in British Columbia, the city of Edmonton, the city of Hamilton, the city of Prince Albert and the city of Regina in Saskatchewan, the township of Stamford in Ontario, the city of Toronto, the city of Winnipeg, the city of Windsor, and two resolutions by the city of Vancouver. Perhaps I might read one which is fairly short and typical, although the resolutions are not similar in all respects. This resolution was passed by the city council of Toronto:

That the dominion government be petitioned to bring in new housing legislation along the lines of public low-rental housing legislation in effect in England and the United States and providing for federal loans up to 90 per cent of the construction costs of low-rent housing projects to be built and managed by proper municipal housing authorities and further providing for annual federal subsidies to such housing authorities up to three per cent of development cost to enable such housing to be rented to low-income families.

As I said, no two resolutions are alike, but this one is typical.

Mr. HOWE: It may be typical of city councils to pass resolutions, but I would point out that, outside the province of Saskatchewan, no municipality in Canada has authority under its charter to enter into a housing project. The city of Toronto obtained authority from the electors to enter into the Regents Park project, and that is the only exception so far as I know, except that blanket authority has been given to the municipalities in Saskatchewan. However, it has been the feeling of the government that if a city wants to go into housing the authority that provides the money should make the investment and supervise its administration. The history of municipalities in the housing field has not been entirely happy, although there have been notable exceptions. Certain cities have made a great success of municipal housing projects, but a far greater number have made a dismal failure. The federal government believes it has an efficient administration for the building and administering of housing and that any federal money to be spent in that

field should be spent through the administrative machinery set up by the federal government.

Mr. NICHOLSON: To be logical, the same principle should be carried out with the life insurance companies if they want to go into the housing business. I think the federal government has just as much right to make money available to municipalities for housing as to life insurance companies. The resolution says that the purpose is:

... to empower life insurance, trust and loan companies to purchase, improve and sell land to be used for residential housing developments, and to authorize Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation to guarantee to such companies the return of the principal invested in such land and improvements, together with interest thereon at a rate not to exceed two per centum per annum.

I cannot imagine any municipality in Canada that would not consider this a very good proposal to be made to them. I know there are two cities in Saskatchewan which would be prepared to go along now because they have enabling legislation. There is a shortage, and resolutions have been passed. I know the experience in municipal housing in Canada was not a very successful one following the last war; but we have such an organization as Wartime Housing. In spite of previous criticisms I have made of Wartime Housing, there has not been any question about the administration or of the efficiency of that organization.

In all countries in the world we have had some valuable experiences since 1918 and 1925. In the United States, in Great Britain, in Sweden—as a matter of fact, in nearly every important country with the exception of Canada—we have had experience where local authorities have gone into housing and made an outstanding success of it. I am greatly disappointed that the minister is not prepared to give to local and provincial authorities at least as favourable a break as he is prepared to give to life insurance companies. I know it is now too late for many of the cities to get enabling legislation through for 1947, but when this bill is going through, I cannot see any reason why we could not establish the right of the local authorities to get at least the same consideration as the lending institutions get. I would say that the local authorities should get greater consideration because they will be driven, by public opinion, to provide housing for people in the lower brackets, whereas the life insurance companies will be able to cater to the people who supply the funds to life insurance companies and will be able to select their risks, and, as in

[Mr. MacInnis.]