

The Address—Mr. Fleming

Allowance Act at the present time. On that subject I simply say that in the light of the question I put this afternoon to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, to which I am sorry to say I received a very unsatisfactory answer, I hope when the Pension Act amendment is before the house an opportunity will be given not simply to bring needed assistance to those who are within the scope of the statement outlined by the minister last Friday when he referred to the pensioned widows and others, but also to relieve the lot of the dependent parents of veterans who have paid the supreme sacrifice in the service of their country. All of us in this house want to do justice to the veterans' widows. Why should we then put limits upon that justice and deny, as the minister apparently indicated this afternoon the government proposes to deny, any further consideration to the dependent mother of a veteran who has given his life? There is simply no justice on the part of the government in turning a deaf ear to the plight and need of the dependent mother or father of a veteran who has given his life in the service of his country.

Mr. Mutch: If the hon. member will permit, the minister in response to the question put to him made no statement of policy whatsoever. He stated what is the effect of the present legislation and with respect to that which is to come he said: Wait and see the bill.

Mr. Fleming: I do not understand the point of my hon. friend's interruption.

Mr. Mutch: I will explain it if the hon. member will permit.

Mr. Fleming: The minister stated what the situation is, and when invited to indicate if there was any intention on the part of the government, or any provision in the bill, to meet the need of the war mother he did not have anything to offer. Notwithstanding the fact that he did not embrace the opportunity offered this afternoon to make an announcement to that effect, if he is going to have something in the bill to deal with this matter I think the house will welcome it. For my part I am glad to take advantage of this opportunity to urge that when the bill is brought down it should take account of and seek to meet the need of that very worthy group whom we commonly call war mothers.

I propose to devote the balance of my remarks to the subject of housing. May I therefore ask you to call it 6.15, Mr. Speaker.

At 6.15 p.m. the house took recess.

[Mr. Fleming.]

AFTER RECESS

The house resumed at eight o'clock.

Mr. Fleming: Mr. Speaker, I feel constrained to speak this evening on the subject of housing because apparently this will be the last opportunity afforded at the present session for the discussion of that subject. The house will recall that on October 16 the Minister of Resources and Development (Mr. Winters) made a statement with respect to housing, which has had little if any discussion in the house since.

I am sure that members of the house heard with amazement the statement made on October 18 by the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, when he said as reported at page 158 of *Hansard*:

—it would seem that the only real domestic problem we have is the high cost of living.

The high cost of living is a tremendous domestic problem; but for any hon. member to say it is Canada's only domestic problem simply establishes how far he is removed from reality, because in housing conditions in Canada today we have a domestic problem of gigantic proportions. Against the statement of the parliamentary assistant, who I presume was speaking the mind of the government, let me put to you, sir, a statement that comes from a body of public servants who are much closer to the people than is this government or the parliamentary assistant to whom I have referred. I refer to the Canadian federation of mayors and municipalities. At their annual meeting in Montreal on February 15 of this year they said the housing shortage is Canada's No. 1 problem. That statement was made ten months ago, when housing conditions were not as difficult as they are today and when the failures of government policy were less manifest than they are today. I therefore choose to take the evidence of the mayors of Canadian cities on that subject in preference to that of the parliamentary assistant speaking for the government. These mayors are close to the problem. They see it literally on their doorsteps. One city in which the mayor can see this problem in reality is the city of Vancouver, from which the parliamentary assistant hails.

This, sir, is a problem of critical proportions; and I say to you that it owes its critical proportions largely to the government's folly and failure. This is a national problem; and at their annual meeting last February it was recognized by the federation of mayors as a national problem to be found in every municipality in Canada.