

Our great problem has been less an inadequacy of legislation than an inadequacy of effort on the part of the government. We have seen an abundance of evidence lately, yes, and for some time past, of the consciousness of the government of its own lamentable failure. If it would only apply to a constructive solution of the housing problem some fraction of the astuteness, some fraction of the zeal and the stubborn determination which it now exercises in finding excuses for its own lamentable failures, we should be much further ahead toward the goal of decent housing conditions for Canadians.

If, for instance, the minister would be as astute in pressing forward toward the goal I have referred to—the building of more houses and encouragement of the building of more houses in Canada—as he has been in trying to find these excuses for not doing what the house has asked him to do, then indeed we would be in a much happier situation than at the present time.

These excuses on the part of the minister and of the administration in general have taken several forms. First, not in time perhaps but first in its glaring and surprising features, is this. The government now repudiates responsibility for the problem. It fell on shocked ears in the House of Commons on July 12 last when the Minister of Reconstruction and Supply uttered these words, to be found at page 5517 of *Hansard* of 1947:

The government takes no responsibility for solving the entire housing problem for this country. It is perfectly ridiculous to suggest that it is a government responsibility. Every city has its own housing responsibility, as has every province. The government is responsible for the returned men, and its responsibility stops at that point.

I do not think any reasonable member of this house will deny that there is some share of responsibility attaching to the urban municipalities, where these housing problems are most acute, and to the provincial authorities as well. But for a minister of the present government, elected on the promises on which this government slithered into office by a minority vote in 1945, to rise in this house and say that the federal government is responsible for the returned men only and that its responsibilities stop at that point, is to utter nothing more or less than a shameful repudiation of government responsibility and of the promises made by this government to cozen the votes of the electorate in 1945.

First of all, let us take the minister's words at their face value. At least he does admit the responsibility of this government for the housing of the veterans. Perhaps he considers that generous, in the light of the

spirit of the remainder of the remarks I quoted from his speech. If the government had only met the housing problems of the veterans of this country most of the criticism that has been properly levelled against this government might well have been spared. Everyone who has any first-hand knowledge of housing conditions in this country, particularly in great urban centres, knows perfectly well it is upon the veterans that the brunt of the housing problem has been cast. It is to these veterans that the government made its most extravagant promises; it is to these veterans that the government owes its most sacred obligations; and it is these veterans the government is letting down most severely in its failure to meet the problem. Yes; even within the limits the minister of reconstruction placed upon the responsibility of the government there has been a most lamentable and colossal failure.

I said I would deal with the minister's words at their face value. That is what we find when we take the minister's limitation upon his own responsibility. But should we accept the limitation the minister places upon the responsibility of the government? I say we should not. For the government to say it has no responsibility in general for housing conditions; for it to say its responsibility stops with the veterans, is to be false to the promises this government itself has made.

In the first place, Mr. Speaker, as you well know, the housing problem is national in its scope and extent. It is not confined to any province or to any particular municipality. And much of the problem in its most acute forms in the urban centres has been created by reason of the policies of the federal government. We are still seeing these conditions of an emergent and critical nature.

Parliament itself has recognized the federal responsibility. It recognized it years ago by the enactment, in the first place, of the Dominion Housing Act and, later, of the National Housing Act. This government has had plenty of power to deal with this problem. It has had sweeping powers. Our criticism is that it has not used those powers. Had it wanted more powers the house would have been glad to give them on request, provided that the house could have seen some reasonable likelihood of the powers being used to the general advantage in meeting these housing conditions.

But, Mr. Speaker, to those who value the standards of public life which place the fulfilment of promises on a sacred level, the greatest failure on the part of this govern-