

*Housing*

This is not criticism by a member of the N.D.P. or the Conservative party. This is a criticism coming from the number two Liberal of this country, as of yesterday.

Let me make a very quick review of the housing problem that faces Canada. When we came to Ottawa, the members of this party had a program in respect of housing which we thought would work, and we presented it to the Canadian nation. I have no regret because of the stand we took. Last September when we came to Ottawa for the first session of this particular parliament we were told by this government we were to expect a just society. What a wonderful vision this was. The poor "Joe" in the most humble home began to think that at last we had a Prime Minister and a government which might do something for Canadians. I came here filled with the hope that at long last the government and the Prime Minister were interested in the problems facing all Canadians. What happened?

We had not been here very long before this problem of housing was pushed aside. We then had to appoint a task force to look into housing problems. We have been looking into housing problems in Canada for many years. I am sure every hon. member has a thick file with suggested solutions to this problem.

In order to stall for time, this task force was set up. It travelled across the nation and heard briefs from a number of organizations. We were told the report would be made in December. Then, we were told it would be made in January, or that legislation resulting from the report would be presented. We were told the same thing in February, then in March and then in April. We are now very close to May. There is an indication that at long last some legislation is to be brought before the house.

**Mr. Alexander:** Don't bet on it.

**Mr. Harding:** If there is one thing I will bet on so far as legislation is concerned, it is that the minister would not have offered his resignation at this time had the proposed legislation included a majority of the recommendations of the task force.

● (7:50 p.m.)

The task force report was extremely weak. The need for public housing was completely ignored. Then, we find the Minister of Transport handing in his resignation because of lack of action by the cabinet. I ask, Mr. Speaker, who in Canada needs housing? It is

not the members of the House of Commons; it is not people in the higher income brackets. The people in Canada who need adequate housing are those in the lower income brackets. What has been done about this problem? What are the suggestions from the government benches? Statistics have been thrown at us today by the Prime Minister and others. With regard to housing starts and houses constructed in Canada over the past two years, the vast majority have been for people in the well-to-do class in terms of income. Today, you have to earn \$8,000 or \$9,000 a year before you can obtain a loan under the National Housing Act. What about the people in the \$2,000 and \$3,000 a year income class—what is the government doing for them? Is this part of the just society? Is this the Liberal vision of bringing justice to a group of people who are in dire need? What are the plans of the government?

I have read the report of the task force and listened to speakers from the government side of the house, but nowhere do I find even the suggestion of solutions to the problem. In Canada today one million families live in poverty; this is the estimate of the Economic Council of Canada. One hundred thousand Canadian families in our large cities are waiting for public housing accommodation. We are told that the government cannot do anything about it because it is a municipal and provincial problem. There are recommendations in the task force report, inadequate as they are. One solution is to bring down the cost of housing to a level which people can afford. Then, they will be able to own their own homes; young couples will be able to live in homes of their own and raise their families. But we find that recommendation after recommendation has gone by the board.

Our recommendation, to cut out the 11 per cent federal sales tax, has been stamped upon by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson). Just yesterday or the day before he indicated, in answering a question in the house, that the tax would not be removed. This is one solution, but the government has not the gumption to act up on it. There is the problem of land assembly, and the curtailment of costs. If you go down the line you can find 20 or 30 items in regard to which the government has done nothing and intends to do nothing. The people of Canada should know what this government is doing to solve the problem. They should know why there has been this stalling by the government. That is why I welcome the opportunity to raise this issue in the house.