

Discussion on Housing

In the conversations which I and those associated with me, the officials of C.M.H.C., have had with the provinces and the municipalities we have pointed out and stressed the possibilities afforded by the new legislation. Just by way of illustration, not to give them any special pat on the back, but by way of illustration, may I say that in the province of Ontario alone in the last 30 months or so more public housing units have been built than in the whole of Canada in the previous 15 years. That type of thing is going on in the other provinces where we are getting co-operation. It is going on in Newfoundland and Saskatchewan. Despite what the hon. member for Saskatoon said in this debate yesterday, we should keep in mind the situation in his province.

● (5:10 p.m.)

How many hon. members know that housing starts in the prairie provinces this year are 47 per cent higher than last year? We are not getting serious complaints from the prairie part of Canada in the housing field. We are receiving complaints from some centres with special problems. Fort McMurray had a special problem and Saskatoon had one. When we get such requests they are attended to, and I might say that we have had nothing but commendation in the last seven or eight months from Fort McMurray. The same applies to the entire prairie region of this country.

The serious housing problems in Canada are largely confined to the growth areas. More specifically, they are to be found in metropolitan Toronto and in the area between Toronto and Hamilton. There are other, isolated problem areas in Ontario, one of them being Sudbury.

How many hon. members know the real story of Sudbury? The Carter report came out some months ago. In it there was a suggestion that mining companies which had made extensive surveys and tests were to be deprived of certain incentives or tax benefits. The government, through the Minister of Finance, made a statement in May last. In that statement it was announced that for the next three years at least there would be no change in those incentives. Within a matter of days after that announcement, we learned for the first time—when I say “we” I mean the municipality of Sudbury, the provincial government and the federal government—that five new mines were to be opened within 20 miles of Sudbury and that within the next 30 or 36 months 3,000 houses would be needed in the area. Within 48 hours of receiving that

[Mr. Nicholson.]

notice I went to Sudbury with senior officials of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation to inquire into the accuracy of these reports. When convinced they were true I said that two things might be done.

There was a need for public housing. People, I think, should know what is meant by public housing. Personally, I do not like the expression “public housing”. I prefer the expression used in England, “council housing”, or something similar. In Ontario they call it “Ontario housing”. In Canada as a general rule we group all such housing together under the term “public housing”. Depending on the agreement with a province, any person with an annual income below a certain amount may apply for public housing. In Ontario the income ceiling, I think, is \$5,800. Anyone with an income not exceeding \$5,800 per annum may apply for and obtain public housing if it is available.

Many members of the Sudbury mining community and many of those engaged in the service industries around there earn less than \$5,800. There was an obvious need for more public housing in Sudbury. I said to the mayor and the other officials, “I will first take this up with the Ontario provincial government; I am sure that we will get their co-operation. We have had it from them when dealing with problems in other parts of the province.” I also thought that since many people were to be brought into the area or to be transferred from other activities carried on by the mining companies, that perhaps at least some of those coming in would be at salary levels higher than the ones permitted for public housing.

I feel that these mining companies have a special responsibility to provide houses for their senior executives and even for executives at junior level. The companies are there to make money. Nobody objects to that; it is a worthy objective. The companies have their responsibilities. Before there was any public housing these corporations used to provide houses for their staff. Formerly, in the forest industry towns of British Columbia and other industrial communities which sprang up in different parts of Canada housing was not always of the kind we wish to see. Nevertheless the companies did assist in providing it.

I said to the group in Sudbury that I met that I would discuss the matter of housing not only with the province but also with representatives of the mining companies. I did that and the response from the mining