

Inquiries of the Ministry

collectors as some others. I doubt very much if a large proportion of these orders will be resubmitted. There is no record of the orders that came in and were returned, and there could not be with the facilities that were available.

Mr. Starr: They could have retained the envelopes which had been postmarked and which were returned.

Mr. Gordon: Mr. Speaker, with the benefit of hindsight the mint could have been three times as big and all orders could have been accepted on January 2. The fact is that the mint was confronted with an impossible situation and, with respect, I think the steps that have been taken to deal with that situation have proven to be satisfactory to the great majority of people, excluding the speculators.

Mr. H. W. Herridge (Kootenay West): Is the minister aware that I have received numerous complaints from my constituents where it appears that hundreds of letters were turned back by the post office unopened, stamped with the words "The Quota for 1965 is Exhausted"?

Mr. Gordon: That was done because at that time no decision had been taken to expand the production of the 1965 sets so that everybody would be taken care of.

Mr. D. V. Pugh (Okanagan Boundary): Would the minister indicate whether or not the government makes a profit on these sets? In other words, could we have the exact cost of production?

Mr. Gordon: I am not sure whether this is the time to answer a question of that kind, Mr. Speaker, but, if it is, the answer is in the affirmative.

Mr. S. J. Enns (Portage-Neepawa): The minister said earlier that applications would be filled in the order in which they had been received. Does this mean that speculators in foreign countries will be given preference over Canadian applicants?

Mr. Gordon: I do not know how anybody could tell whether an order came from a genuine collector or from a speculator. I fancy the speculators would like to withdraw their orders if they were able to do so. While it was said a week ago in one or two papers they were advertised for sale at \$12 a set—

Mr. Diefenbaker: Eighteen dollars.

Mr. Gordon: —if, as and when available, nobody is going to pay that price when they [Mr. Gordon.]

know they can get sets for \$4 by waiting a few months.

HOUSING**REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF WINTER CONSTRUCTION BONUS**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. R. N. Thompson (Red Deer): My question is directed to the Minister of Labour. It concerns an urgent problem which I know exists throughout the western part of the country in particular, due to the long period of bitter cold weather experienced there this winter.

What consideration has been given to extending the loan period in respect of housing construction under the winter house building incentive program? As the minister knows, in order to qualify for an approved loan house construction must begin within 45 days of the application being made; if construction has not been started within this time, the loan period may be extended for a further 30 days on payment of a small fee. However, if construction has not begun by the end of the renewed time limit the loan cannot be obtained.

In my home city of Red Deer, 12 loans were cancelled during the month of December as a result of the cold weather. Because of continuing cold weather, a further 16 loans will be cancelled. A similar situation exists in other cities, involving hundreds of homes. Since many people use the \$500 bonus to assist them in making the necessary down payment, a definite hardship is being worked through no fault of the individuals concerned.

My second question is this: under present regulations, houses which have qualified for the \$500 bonus must be completed by March 31 or lose their claim to the bonus. In my own city, some 30 homes which have already been sold and which, because of the inclement weather, will not be completed by that time, will lose the benefit of this bonus. Again, this delay has been caused by the bitter winter weather. What position does the government intend to take with regard to the numerous requests which have been made that the loan period in relation to house construction should be extended, and second, with regard to the postponement of the completion date once construction has started?

Hon. A. J. MacEachen (Minister of Labour): I have no comment to make on the loan aspect of the housing industry but I have received representations that the exceptional weather conditions have slowed down the