

National Housing Act

Does he feel that no effort should be put forth to provide home ownership for that group?

Of course, the minister will immediately say, what about section 16, what about section 36 of the National Housing Act? He will say that provision has been made there but, as the hon. member for Eglinton has pointed out, the initiative is placed on municipalities which are already overburdened. It is like a great many other things. We had a discussion last year on the grade crossing legislation, and the same situation obtained there. It is all very well to say to a municipality, "Well, if you will come along and put up so much money we will accommodate you and put up a certain amount." If the municipality lacks the funds to do anything it means that the matter stands and nothing whatever is done. That is precisely what has happened.

I know that under section 16 a limited dividend company has built a certain number of suites in my own city, but perhaps the only reason those suites were built under that section is the fact that the limited dividend company had as a wholly-owned subsidiary a construction company. If it were not for the fact that they were also in the construction business they likely would not have built under section 16. I think the minister must agree that, admirable as he may feel the aim is, the results are far from satisfactory.

I had hoped that there would be substantial changes to enable municipalities to be better able to enter into agreements with the government for the purpose of providing low rental housing. Incidentally, I think the joint labour brief presented to the government by the two labour congresses, now the Canadian Labour Congress, pointed out the fact that the most admirable part of the National Housing Act was the one which, in their opinion, the government had played down. They said there was very little publicity given to those sections to which I have just referred, and that the government apparently was not going to be too much concerned if municipalities were not in a position to rush forward and take advantage of the provisions of the National Housing Act.

The situation simply is that the municipalities do not feel they are in a financial position to engage in the type of construction activity envisaged under those sections of the National Housing Act. I would say that we must try to sell this problem to our people. I mean that the need for new and more adequate housing is something we have to impress upon all our people, our provincial governments and our municipal governments. I want to be fair in that respect. But when you find, as you do in this country today, that the municipalities are overburdened and mill rates are

[Mr. Ellis.]

skyrocketing, it is not likely under those circumstances that the municipalities will undertake the type of work which the government presumably expects they will undertake under this legislation.

It seems to me that Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation is quite well aware of this great lack in government policy. I should like to quote an extract from page 24 of a brief prepared by that organization. It is under the heading, "Needs of Low Income Households" and reads as follows:

There are some kinds of housing requirements which are not satisfied through the normal operation of the housing market, either through the production of new housing or through handing down used housing. The need to provide housing for low income households, particularly large families and old people, is likely to call for special attention during the coming years.

I am convinced, Mr. Speaker, that the personnel of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation are quite well aware of the problem. I think the difficulty is the unwillingness on the part of the government to permit them to do the type of job for which Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation was, I presume, originally created. Rather than enlarge the scope of their activities, there seems to be a tendency on the part of the government to curtail or to clip the activities of that government agency.

It seems to me that this trickling down process that was referred to in the joint labour brief to which I made some reference in a question to the minister on Monday last certainly fails to take into account the need for the replacement of houses which for reasons of public health should be replaced. In other words, it is all very well to say that if someone earning \$4,500 a year builds a new house and he moves out of a cheaper house, that will enable somebody earning \$3,500 to move into that house. Eventually you will get someone living in accommodation which is unfit for human habitation. While that procedure may, in the actual provision of dwellings—if we use that term very loosely—provide some sort of accommodation, it is not the type of accommodation we should tolerate in a modern community.

On Monday last I stressed the relationship between public health and other social problems such as juvenile delinquency and so forth and Canada's lack of an adequate housing program. In taking this callous attitude, and saying that the solution of the problem with respect to the housing needs of the low income people is to allow them to take the cheaper houses which are discarded by those in slightly higher income groups, I think the government is failing to meet the health needs of this nation.