

LABOUR CONDITIONS

INQUIRY AS TO INTRODUCTION OF LABOUR SAFETY CODE

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the Minister of Labour. In view of the promise the minister gave to the Canadian Labour Congress convention yesterday, to the effect that the Canada labour safety code would be introduced at this session, can he say when notice of this legislation will be placed on the order paper?

Hon. J. R. Nicholson (Minister of Labour): It will not likely be put on the order paper for another few weeks. Progress has been made in the preparation of a draft bill, but it involves consultation with the provinces because of the enforcement angle. It will be placed on the order paper as soon as we can get it there. We are making good progress.

Mr. Knowles: Mr. Speaker, may I ask a supplementary question. Will it be put on by the end of May?

HOUSING

REPORTED STOPPAGE OF MORTGAGE LOANS BY C.M.H.C.

On the orders of the day:

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Labour in connection with Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Is it a fact that Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation now has stopped lending even on pre-sold houses and thereby has dried up the last source of mortgage loans for residential purposes? Will the minister say now, for the benefit of expectant householders and builders across Canada, that there is going to be some alleviation of the serious situation which has been created as a result of the virtual stopping of any additional amounts by way of mortgage loans.

Hon. J. R. Nicholson (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I regret I cannot give that assurance. The situation is serious, but I am happy to say, as a result of studies I personally have made in conjunction with senior officials of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, that while it is more serious in a few areas than in most others, it is not as serious as one would be led to believe by the telegrams and messages coming to members of this house. Further reports are coming in

Inquiries of the Ministry

daily and it might be a matter of another few days before I can give the hon. gentleman the assurance he has asked for. However, I can say that an announcement will be made in a matter of days.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In that connection would the minister say whether it is a fact that in the housing construction field this year there will be some 35,000 fewer homes built than last year.

Mr. Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, even if things proceed as they now are, and even with the conditions which now prevail, the situation is not as bad as the right hon. gentleman would indicate. Last year for the fourth consecutive year we had an increase in house building. We reached a record figure of 166,000 odd houses. We are not likely to reach that figure this year, but certainly we do not anticipate that it will be down by anything like the figure the right hon. gentleman has suggested. It may be down 10 or 15 per cent from last year, however, largely because of the actions of private investors.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Does the minister not agree with Mr. Herbert Hignett, the president of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, who predicted that as many as 35,000 fewer homes will be built this year as compared to last year? Does he not agree with what the president of the corporation said?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I suggest to the right hon. gentleman that the question to some extent is argumentative. In any event it has been answered in a general way by the minister to whom it was posed in the first instance.

Mr. G. L. Chatterton (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question. The minister has indicated the situation is critical in certain areas. Is the government giving consideration to the providing of perhaps more direct loans in those critical areas.

Mr. Nicholson: That aspect of the matter will be included in the announcement which can be expected within the next few days. In order that there may be no misunderstanding, I think I should say that the statement attributed to the president of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation is taken out of context, it is predicated on the expectation that there might be no additional speculative loans made this fall. If no such loans were made during the fall months, as has been the case in the last three years, this forecast by