

National Housing Act

said for that; but the difficulty is, as far as the dominion government is concerned, that it is likely to be called on for practically all the investment. It believes that, being responsible for appropriating the taxpayer's money for that purpose, it has a responsibility also to see that money is well spent.

The federal government has been in the housing business now for five or six years. It has built up a valuable experience and an able organization. I believe that the federal government is getting good value for its expenditures in housing.

Mr. HARRIS (Danforth): Fair value.

Mr. HOWE: It is pretty good. I do not know of anybody who builds them as cheaply as we do.

It has been said in this house that it is impossible to build a house which will rent for \$35 unless it is a subsidized house. The federal government is finding that it can build houses without subsidization which can rent for \$35 and below. Therefore I say that neither of these amendments is likely to add anything very much to the housing that will be built in this country.

It has been said that this bill simply makes it easier to finance private enterprise in building housing accommodation. I agree. That is the purpose of the bill. It has also been said that private enterprise cannot afford to build houses under these conditions. May I point out that of the 78,000 houses built in 1947 private enterprise built five to the government's one. In other words, it built five units out of every six.

We believe the quickest way to obtain adequate housing is to make it possible for private enterprise to carry a very large part of the burden. That is the purpose of the amendments being introduced in this bill. No amendment is required to enable the government to enter into the field of direct building; it has that authority already under the housing act. We hope and believe the amendments now being introduced will encourage more building by private enterprise than has been visible over the past twelve months.

Mr. W. CHESTER S. McLURE (Queens): Mr. Speaker, I am not going to make any long address on housing or housing problems, but I want to draw to the attention of the minister a project in my constituency known as Maple Hills. A short time ago I mentioned this matter, and stated that the veterans occupying this accommodation have been notified that they must get out by September 30, 1948, or

[Mr. Howe.]

be ejected. However I should like to review the history of this project, and find out from the minister what is to be done.

I think the minister will agree when I say that housing as carried on by the various companies under his department has been an entire failure in Charlottetown and, in fact, in all Prince Edward Island. Somehow or another they did not get into gear and get to work, so that very few houses were built. In 1945 the veterans began to arrive home; many of them were looking for houses, but they could find no place to live. The city of Charlottetown decided to come to their rescue, and took over the buildings at the airport, now known as Maple Hills. With some assistance from the provincial government they fixed up one hundred housing units for veterans and their families, and at the present time ninety-six of those units are still occupied by veterans and four by civilians.

The city of Charlottetown undertook this project to provide for the immediate accommodation of those veterans. That was in 1945. In February of 1946 a new city government came into power, and when they looked over the situation they decided they could not afford to carry it on. So they said to the authorities who were associated with them, "We cannot carry this on beyond May 31, 1946." The position of the veterans had not changed; they had nowhere to go with their families. In 1946 the provincial government decided to come into the picture. They had been assisting the city of Charlottetown, but the city withdrew from the proposition and the provincial government took over, and decided they would continue if they could get assistance from Ottawa. They came here in May of that year and made arrangements, I suppose with the right hon. minister, to carry on under a fifty-fifty plan with respect to the expenses in connection with Maple Hills, and this arrangement continued until September of 1947.

Finally, last August it was understood that some change would have to be made with respect to the veterans who had these homes. I understand that on that occasion the provincial government approached this government and requested that the plan be extended for one year, until September of 1948. Of course that was not hard to arrange, because at that time a provincial election was in the offing. Maple Hills had a registered vote of some three hundred, and to turn those men out would mean a loss of that many votes. So the federal government granted the request, and the provincial government has continued to operate that project on a fifty-fifty basis.