

*National Housing Act*

The question will be raised immediately, "Have we the labour available?" Last evening the Minister of Finance (Mr. Abbott) said we were short of labour, that we had used up our resources. I say that simply is not the case. We are not using the labour supply we have at our disposal. Just to show, for instance, the situation that obtains in the city of Ottawa, I have in my hand a letter dated May 19, 1948, prepared and sent to me by Mr. Redverse F. Pratt, manager of the national employment service here. In this letter he says:

I may say I am not able to give you the figures for May, but I am giving you the figures as of July 31, 1947; the 45 to 64 age group, 517; and the total live file, 1,804.

That is the number of people in the city of Ottawa who were seeking work on that date.

The April 29, 1948, figures: age 45 to 64, 575; total live file as of this date, 2,113.

I do not see why many of those people who were unemployed as of those dates could not have been employed in putting together prefabricated houses, for example, or in driving nails and sawing boards, if they were under the supervision of someone who knew his business and who was working on a scientifically prepared plan.

Then the question may be asked, have we the materials in Canada? My inquiries have satisfied me that we have reached the point where we have plenty of materials if we choose to use them. We might not have all the iron or steel pipe we would like, but vast numbers of the people of Canada, in fact by far the greater percentage of them, have grown up without ever having had steel or iron pipe in their homes. There never was a bit of steel or iron pipe in my home from the time I was born until I left, and there has been none since; but my father and mother raised thirteen or fourteen children, and the boys were able to go to war when the time came; they have been able to make a living.

Therefore I see no reason why we could not be building without steel pipe in many parts of Canada. Why should we give up house building simply because for the time being we are short of steel pipe?

If we would be realists in this matter we would not allow problems of this kind to hold us up. Let us permit the people to build the houses they can build with the material we have available. Let us make available to them loans with which they can build, at rates which will permit them to pay off their loans in the course of a few years. Let us provide them with means such that, with good, hard, earnest work and thrifty living, they may come to own their own homes.

[Mr. Blackmore.]

Mr. ANGUS MacINNIS (Vancouver East): I should like to say a few words in support of the amendment moved by the hon. member for Mackenzie (Mr. Nicholson). I think it is conceded on all sides that the core of the housing problem in Canada at the present time, as it has been for a long time, is low-rental housing. I believe it is also conceded that we are doing very little to remedy that situation. There is an assumption, which I believe is apparent in the bill now before us, that if we build homes for people in the middle or upper income brackets the benefits will seep down to those in the lower income groups. I believe that assumption is a myth, that it just will not happen; because long before there is sufficient seeping, that section of the community that can pay for homes, either in purchase price or in rent, will have been saturated, so we just cannot remedy the situation in that way.

In a report made in January of this year the Vancouver housing association pointed out that at the end of 1946 there were 4,400 active applications for wartime housing on file with the emergency shelter administration in that city, while today that number has increased to 6,600. That is not solving our housing problem.

Almost all organizations and associations interested in social welfare and community work and, as has been pointed out this afternoon by the hon. member for Mackenzie, even the Canadian construction association has gone on record saying that the only thing which will meet the present situation is low-rental housing. In the report of the Vancouver housing association which I mentioned a moment ago, it says that in recent months the following organizations, among others, have come out in support of subsidized low-rental housing: the Canadian federation of mayors and municipalities; Canadian construction association; Canadian Legion; national council of women; Canadian welfare council, and the community planning association of Canada. These are important organizations in our country, and I believe they have some understanding of the country's housing needs.

In my opinion Canada's housing policy is becoming more and more a policy of guaranteeing the interest on the investments of those who have money to invest, and less and less a policy of building houses for people who need homes. Let me quote the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe). I have in my hand a copy of *Public Affairs* for October, 1947, a Canadian quarterly published by the institute of public affairs