

These men cannot get gypsum lath; they cannot get lumber; they cannot even get sewer pipe because it is all requisitioned. If the minister will consult the local war services committee they can give him the complete picture because they have just written to me. One local lumber dealer told me that he had 200,000 feet of lumber which had been requisitioned for wartime houses before the foundations had even been started. The minister should know these things and I am sure he will do his utmost to try to rectify them. If he can give me any explanation I shall be glad to have it.

Mr. HOWE: Since the beginning of 1945 to date there has been constructed something over 50,000 houses, of which Wartime Housing constructed about 7,000. The requisitioning of material for 7,000 houses could not destroy the market for the other 43,000. This project was started only late in July after it was found that the housebuilding programme of that year did not include low-rental housing which was thought to be necessary by those responsible for housing. Somewhat reluctantly we undertook to do the job because we had hoped we were going out of the housebuilding business. We were liquidating that branch, although there were many employees employed in operating various facilities, such as staff houses, cafeterias and others. We were told it was necessary to have 7,000 low-rental houses, and no other agencies seemed to be able to build them. The insurance companies were considering the proposal, and the government had held back for a long time hoping that they would get under way. By July it was seen there was no hope of their getting under way this year, and Wartime Housing stepped into the field.

I realize that the dealers like to get a commission on materials they never see. They would like to get a commission on the lumber and other commodities that go into these houses. As a builder of some experience and as one who has had some experience in government, I claim that the government is entitled to buy at wholesale in carload lots. I contend that, in doing so, we are violating neither the principles upon which distribution in this country is based nor any other principle that might have obtained in pre-war years.

Mr. PROBE: I was a bit taken aback by the hon. member to my right who insisted on a government policy of coordination in connection with building programmes and in almost the same breath indicated that the best way to get coordination in any programme would be to put all this building into the hands of private builders. He dwelt at some length on

the difficulty that private builders had in getting stocks of materials because these had been requisitioned by the government. I should like to draw attention to certain facts in connection with building material which are not sufficiently emphasized.

Assuming that it takes eight and a half thousand board feet of lumber for each wartime house, which is an average estimate, these would take a total of sixty million board feet of lumber this year. The director of the Veterans' Land Act informed the members of the special committee investigating veterans' affairs a few days ago that they were using something in the neighbourhood of twenty-five million board feet of lumber this year, which, by the way, they had stock-piled. That was the procedure which was recommended by the hon. member for Eglinton. That represents, roughly, 80 million feet of lumber, which is being used by the two government agencies, Veterans' Land Act, and Wartime Housing Limited. Last night the minister informed the committee that the average cut of building lumber was somewhat over 4,000 million feet. A simple calculation would suggest to hon. members that these two government agencies are using, roughly, two per cent of the annual cut for the building of veterans' houses. I would suggest that if there is any hoarding of materials, any stock-piling of them to hinder the building of veterans' homes or the homes of other Canadians needing them, it is being done by private individuals who are stock-piling them in their own bailliwick and preventing legitimate builders from getting the lumber, because the foreign market, I understand from the prices quoted by the minister, offers a more attractive field than does the Canadian market. I want to congratulate any government agency that would take the necessary steps to make sure that our veterans and our Canadian people generally get prior treatment in the acquisition of building supplies. The supplies hoarded or requisitioned by our government departments are an insignificant percentage of the total year's cut. This is not, of course, by way of congratulating the government upon stock-piling a few million feet of lumber.

Last night the hon. member for Winnipeg North mildly castigated the minister's department for building an inferior type of house, and the minister very properly jumped to the defence of his department and said:

I deny absolutely that we are building an inferior house; I deny that we are building a temporary house.

From my own city there have come definite complaints from the trades and labour coun-