

INQUIRY AS TO THIRD INTERIM REPORT OF
ROYAL COMMISSION

Hon. GROTE STIRLING (Yale): Mr. Speaker, may I ask whether it is the intention of the government to distribute copies of the third interim report of the royal commission on the espionage affair? We have received copies of the first two interim reports, but not the third.

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): Yes. I gave instructions at the time the report was handed to me to have copies printed. I shall make inquiries as to why they have not been distributed, if they have already been printed.

HOUSING

RESTRICTION OF USE OF BUILDING MATERIALS

Hon. C. D. HOWE (Minister of Reconstruction): Mr. Speaker, I desire to table copy of order in council P.C. 1184, of March 27, 1946, passed under the powers of the National Emergency Transitional Powers Act, 1945, the Department of Reconstruction Act, 1944, and the Department of Reconstruction and Supply Act, 1945.

The order in council provides a method of restricting the use of building materials for purposes that may be inconsistent with Canada's paramount requirement for an adequate supply of materials for housing. I have previously stated that the number of houses that are to be built during the year 1946 will in all probability be limited by available supplies of building materials. While sources of building materials have been enlarged, the demands for housing, together with the enormous expansion in other types of building, are likely to absorb materials faster than they can be produced.

Steps have already been taken to make the best possible use of available supplies. I have previously called the attention of the house to priority officer order No. P.O. 11, which requires the supplier to fill orders for government housing projects and for houses of individual veterans whose houses are 75 per cent completed. This order will later be enlarged to give priority to all housing for veterans, whether built by the government or by the individual veteran. Nevertheless, priority orders cannot be filled unless the supplies are in the hands of local dealers.

The special committee of the Canadian Construction Association that has been studying the building supply situation has recommended that steps be taken to restrict certain types of building during the period in which acute shortages will prevail. Certain municipalities and a large number of organ-

izations, including veterans' organizations, have recommended that all types of construction other than housing be prohibited or controlled.

During the war years, the Department of Munitions and Supply maintained a rigid control of construction for the purpose of providing material for the war. During that period our citizens accepted this control as necessary for the successful prosecution of the war and its regulations were observed. However, after the end of the war, construction control regulations were no longer observed to the same degree. It was recognized by the department that it was impossible to judge from Ottawa the essentiality of different projects and the local conditions which necessarily must govern each decision. For these reasons, construction control was abolished on December 5, 1945.

In considering ways and means of giving effect to the recommendations for reestablishing the building control, we must again face the problem of a method by which due weight can be given to local conditions in deciding what buildings are to be authorized and what buildings are to be prohibited in different localities. The housing problem is not one that normally lies within the jurisdiction of the federal government. The intervention of the federal government in this field was brought about by war conditions. In this transitional period it seems desirable, wherever possible to arrange that the authority which normally exercises jurisdiction in the field of housing shall exercise the additional powers necessary by reason of the housing emergency.

In the matter of prohibiting the construction of buildings where deferment of the project will cause no serious hardships to the public, there is the added advantage that the decision can be made most effectively by the municipality. As hon. members know, a building permit must be obtained from the municipality before any building can be erected within its borders. The most appropriate time and place effectively to curtail unnecessary building is prior to the issuance of the building permit. The authority that issues the building permit is in the best position to determine whether the permit should be issued or deferred, having regard to the possibility of shortages of housing in the area, and having regard to employment conditions in the area.

The order in council therefore provides that—
... every municipal body and every officer, employee or agent thereof having authority in relation to building permits shall, in the exercise thereof during the current calendar year, have power