

*The Address—Mr. Ross (Souris)*

is headed, "Say Veterans Charged \$4,000 extra for Homes." Will the minister say what foundation there is for this report?

That report said that veterans were being asked as high as \$11,000 for those houses and that contractors had sold them for that amount. That was all published in the press report. The minister's reply at that time was:

I saw the report in the press this morning. May I inform the hon. member that I received notice in January before I went west to Winnipeg, and in five minutes I directed the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to have investigations made immediately. Their final report has not yet come in. If any impropriety is discovered, we shall promptly rest the matter with the courts for final disposition.

Mr. Ross (Souris): But the minister has had reports on it?

Mr. Mackenzie: We have had suggestions of impropriety, but no final report.

Then about six weeks later, in August, I asked the same question in this chamber; and the answer I received from the then minister of justice, now the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. St. Laurent), was to the effect that an investigation was being made and that officials of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police were asking for legal counsel. I do not know where the matter stands now, but after all these months, surely a report should now be given to this house at this time.

Coming back to the province of Ontario, I understand that in the Windsor area some forty houses of the Oliver farm project are flooded to the extent that it is impossible to keep fires in the heating units in many of them. Also, I understand that some reversal of policy is being effected in that area and that one of the officials there who has been in charge of repairs has been let out of the department. Later on, when the minister comes to give an account of the housing situation, I trust he will be able to explain this matter, among others.

I am also told that a housing unit in the Sarnia area now sells for \$400 and upwards more than the same type of housing unit in the Windsor area. Speaking in this chamber a month ago yesterday the hon. member for Lambton West (Mr. Murphy), in whose riding the Sarnia project is located, said, at page 109 of *Hansard* of that date:

Therefore, in view of the excessive and outrageous prices asked by the government for these veterans' homes and in view of the manner of their construction, I respectfully ask that a royal commission be appointed to make a full inquiry . . .

Therefore on behalf of the taxpayer and the veterans who were fortunate enough to return . . . I demand that a royal commission be ap-

[Mr. J. A. Ross.]

pointed to inquire into all contracts for purchases of land acquired for small holdings under the Veterans Land Act and contracts for the construction of roads, the installation of water mains and other costs involved in the purchase price of these homes.

Within the last few days a member of the Manitoba legislature, Lieutenant Colonel Gordon Churchill, who had a very good record in the front line during the last great war, speaking of veterans' housing said this was Canada's second great betrayal; the first was the lack of proper reinforcements by Canada at crucial times during the battles of the recent war. That is the statement by the officer commanding a unit, who saw action himself and was elected by his comrades as a soldier representative in the Manitoba legislature.

I now repeat the request of the hon. member for Lambton West for a royal commission to make an impartial investigation, and following that a recommendation to this parliament, upon the property and construction involved in veterans' housing under the Veterans Land Act throughout Canada. I would also respectfully suggest that such a commission should hold sittings in the principal centres of each province across Canada. This would be an important factor in reducing wasteful public expenditure at this time in the interests of the taxpayers, and in obtaining a better deal for the ex-service men of the last war.

Right Hon. IAN. A. MACKENZIE (Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, with the kind permission of the house and the indulgence of my hon. friend I shall say a word or two at once in reply to the statement just made by the hon. member for Souris (Mr. Ross).

I believe all hon. members of this house should recall how the projects under the V.L.A. in regard to housing were formulated. In the first place, in 1942 we had appointed an excellent committee of this house, of which I believe my hon. friend was a member, which made recommendations in reference to the land act. One feature of those recommendations was that there should be a small holdings section in the act. If we recall what took place on that occasion we will remember that many of those present, including many hon. members here today, were opposed to the idea of having housing under what was really supposed to be a land act as such. That objection was voiced by the hon. member for Souris, the leader of the C.C.F. party (Mr. Coldwell) and others at that time.

We had the housing crisis of 1944, the year I took over this department. Hon. Mr. Crerar was in charge of the department pre-