

of the houses under construction by private builders are houses being built for veterans.

When I was home the week-end before last a man called me—and again almost in a state of distraction—and stated that his two sons who are home from overseas were building houses. He said, "They have their houses partly constructed. Then, along comes War-time Housing, and requisitions the supplies the builder needed to complete those buildings. Here are my boys, one of them with five years' service, and the other with four years. They will not have this winter the houses they are putting their money into." I mention these facts so that no one will run away with the idea that the methods followed by Wartime Housing Limited are those which in every case meet the interests of the veterans. That is not so.

There are two other matters I should like to discuss briefly. I make these observations because of the statement made in the house by the minister on October 25, when he intimated that he was anxious—and I do not wish to quote him incorrectly—to get out of the construction business as fast as he could. I think hon. members will applaud that worthy purpose, or the expression of such a worthy objective, but we should like to see some evidence of a consummation of that purpose greater than has been disclosed this afternoon.

We have been told that there are 1,566 employees on the payroll of Wartime Housing Limited, and that is precisely the same number set out in a return made to the house a month ago. From what the minister has said this afternoon it would appear that up to the end of this year there will be very little reduction in that number.

If it is the intention and the policy of the administration to get out of the construction of houses, and to leave that work to those who are best qualified to do it, then I suggest we should have evidence of a stronger determination to pursue that intention with greater speed.

Mr. HOWE: Will my hon. friend give me a list of those better equipped to do it?

Mr. FLEMING: If the minister does not know who are best equipped to build houses in this country, it is the builders of the country.

I have just a word to say in conclusion. The government has determined to support the present policy of the Minister of Munitions and Supply in connection with the construction of what they call permanent houses, and during the coming year to do it to a substantial extent, in terms of both the

[Mr. Fleming.]

number of houses to be built and the expenditures which the taxpayers will be called upon to face. It is quite clear from what I have said that the cost of each house will be something like \$4,300 for construction alone, not including the cost of the land or municipal services. That is a costly undertaking which can be justified only by proof that the houses could not be constructed for a similar purpose by private builders.

The means of meeting the need for low-rental housing rests, as it has rested for the past several years, in the hands of the government. The reason, if it be a reason in fact, why low-rental housing is not being constructed to-day by private builders is that the government has not used the instrumentality of part II of the National Housing Act to provide that very need. It is no answer for the minister to say, as he said in this house yesterday, that the proof of the fact that Wartime Housing Limited is popular is the number of requests that he is receiving from municipalities for the construction of that type of houses. I can tell him why the municipalities have been asking for wartime housing. They do it because the policy of Wartime Housing Limited and the Minister of Munitions and Supply has prevented the builders in those municipalities from meeting the need. That is the reason and there is no other reason.

We shall get houses built for veterans; we shall get low-rental houses built for those unable to pay the economic rent of these houses when the government puts to work part II of the housing act in conjunction with the enterprise of the private builders of this country.

Mr. LOCKHART: The volunteer war services committee in my city has written me within the last week or so pointing out the difficulty the veteran is having in obtaining materials. Perhaps the minister will see if something cannot be done to relieve this situation. I have the particulars of a specific case in my office at the present time. This veteran has been waiting for four months to get the necessary gypsum lath to put in his cottage which he started in the early spring. No dealer could supply him with gypsum lath because it had all been requisitioned by Wartime Housing Limited. The local committee mentioned one specific case, but I know of a number of cases. I am trying to show the minister how this works out to the detriment of the veteran who was discharged a year or so ago and has started to build a home. The hon. member for Eglinton has presented this argument in an able manner.