

*National Housing Act*

private home building, which is what is happening now. As a result, we are running into a great shortage of nails, soil pipe, plumbing and other requisites. We have no shortage of labour for a construction program. Someone has said that you need first-class carpenters, at \$1.25 an hour, to build a house. I do not think you do. Certainly the men who are being employed on government housing are not all first-class carpenters. A great many apprentices are being used, as I know from actual experience. I am not criticizing that, because I believe you can and should use many apprentices in this type of work, always provided that you have proper supervision by competent builders. A very large number of people in this country are now unemployed and they could be put to work in the construction business. So there is no comparison between Canada and Great Britain. We have the materials, all the wood materials, at least, and nearly all the metal materials required. The step which the minister announced yesterday of the suspension of the production of barbed wire for two months to encourage the production of nails will help to relieve the nail shortage too. So we have all the requisites for a building program which would be satisfactory to Canada.

A word about subsidizing. I know that subsidization is not a permanent cure, but I suggest it as an emergency program to meet an emergency condition. There is a tremendous shortage of houses, and subsidies would help to offset the tremendous increase in building costs. It is safe to say that building costs have increased from fifty to 100 per cent. The cost of labour and of materials of all kinds has also increased. I do not think there will be much increase in home building, especially by private individuals, until some method of assistance, subsidies or otherwise, is devised whereby construction costs will be offset. Unless a person is right up against it, he would be almost foolish to build under present-time costs. Yet where is he to live, particularly if he has a family, if he does not go ahead and build his own house? I do not believe you can build the ordinary five-room or six-room house under present conditions for less than about \$8,000; I am speaking of the private individual who has to buy his lumber and other materials in small quantities.

Mr. MacNICOL: No working man can afford that.

Mr. JOHNSTON: No working man has sufficient capital to do it.

Mr. HOWE: My hon. friend says that no one can build houses today. Is he aware that

[Mr. Johnston.]

more houses are being built at this particular moment in Canada than ever were built before at one time in the history of Canada?

Mr. JOHNSTON: I am quite aware of that fact, but the minister must acknowledge that everyone who is building a house will go into debt and will be in debt for that house for the next twenty-five or thirty years. The minister will not say it is sound policy for people to be forced to go into debt for the next twenty-five or thirty years.

Mr. HOWE: My hon. friend was saying that no one could build a house today.

Mr. JOHNSTON: He cannot, on his own resources, and if he gets a house through some government plan he has to pay for that assistance.

Mr. WARREN: Is the hon. gentleman interested in knowing that I know a man who built himself a house, and a good house, for \$475.

An hon. MEMBER: It must have been just before an election.

Mr. WARREN: No. There are ways of doing things, if you have initiative. If the hon. member wants to know more about it, I will tell him.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I shall not comment on my hon. friend's remarks because I know from experience that it is impossible to build a house in a city for \$400.

Mr. WARREN: I am not talking about the city. If my hon. friend wants the story I will give it to him.

Mr. JOHNSTON: The ordinary common plumbing in a five or six thousand dollar house in the city costs \$450.

Mr. WARREN: I still have my story if you want it.

Mr. JOHNSTON: In reply to the minister's remark that more houses are being built today than ever before, I do not think he will deny that those who are buying these houses are going into debt. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Abbott) told us in his budget speech last year—and there has been no change in conditions since—that over half the married people in Canada are living on an income of less than \$1,500 a year, and the people to whom we are trying to make houses available under this plan are in that income class.

Mr. WARREN: May I add that the man built this house in his overtime while he was working eight hours a day.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I did not get the question. Was it a question?