

*National Housing Act*

of houses; yet I am forced to question a policy which favours the huddling together of people in large cities where they must starve if foreign markets fail. I suggest to the minister that a wiser policy would direct people to abodes nearer the land, where what is called, sometimes with a sneer, subsistence farming is possible. I remind you, Mr. Speaker, that probably ninety per cent of the world's population is yet devoted to subsistence farming. The government should not neglect this relationship between the individual and the soil from which he derives food, shelter and clothing.

I know it is not popular to oppose any policy of housing at a time when there is a great dearth of housing, and when, as has been pointed out by many speakers, suffering, inconvenience, disease and possibly crime may be traced to inadequate shelter in the big centres. Yet, this is a passing phase; borrowing again from the minister the words "long-range policy," which he uses not infrequently, I am bound to question the wisdom of his policy as a long-range policy, because the bill before us tends more and more to make the Canadian people dependent upon markets, the existence of which is not only uncertain but nebulous.

When the minister closes the debate I hope that he will be good enough, out of the wealth of his experience and information, to devote a few sentences to the aspect of the question which I have attempted to lay before the house.

Mr. F. S. ZAPLITNY (Dauphin): I wish to say only a few words on this question, but I was very much interested in the speech of the hon. member who has just taken his seat, particularly the first sentence he uttered, which, if I remember correctly, went something like this, that he is opposed to subsidized housing for the same reason that he is opposed to socialism. I hold in my hand *Hansard* of May 5, in which the hon. member for Vancouver-Burrard (Mr. Merritt) made a rather good speech on the subject of housing. It is unfortunate that the two speeches from the Progressive Conservative ranks in this respect cancel out each other. I should like somebody in that group to tell us what the party policy actually is, because ours is stated in the amendment before the house. I want to quote from the record where the hon. member for Vancouver-Burrard took the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. St. Laurent) to task for having made a statement at an

[Mr. Hackett.]

earlier time. I will quote directly from page 3644 of *Hansard*, where the hon. member said:

I want to call the attention of the house to a statement made recently by the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. St. Laurent) in a public speech. He said:

"No government of which I form a part will ever pass legislation for subsidized housing."

I do not know if he was speaking on behalf of the government in that speech or not. At that point somebody interjected: "Shame!" Then the hon. member for Vancouver-Burrard continued:

That was a dogmatic and definite statement, and I think it is the mainspring behind the minister's recession from his enthusiasm in approaching this problem two years ago. That statement indicates a fatal refusal to face realities in this field.

There is nothing necessarily socialistic about subsidizing housing for the low-income groups.

Take the two speeches together. One hon. member said that there is nothing socialistic in subsidizing low-rental housing, and criticized severely the government for having backed up on that policy. The hon. member for Stanstead (Mr. Hackett) opposes that policy because it is socialistic. Is it any wonder that much of our housing legislation is as confused as it is? I should like to put on the record what the amendment before the house actually is, in order that it may indicate what the vote will be about. The amendment moved by the hon. member for Mackenzie (Mr. Nicholson) is in these words:

That Bill No. 280 be not now read a second time but that it be resolved that in the opinion of this house the government should give consideration to providing subsidized low-rental housing.

In other words, the question before the house is whether, in the opinion of this house, the government should consider the subsidization of low-rental housing or not. I have in mind the action taken about two years ago by the government in giving certain concessions to a company known as Housing Enterprises. In our area we had some personal experience with that company which, because it came under Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, was given the privilege of buying up certain airports, tearing them down and using the material for setting up housing units. The local authorities, who were interested in housing, were not given the same type of concession; yet this company, which was, after all, a private company set up by the insurance companies of Canada, collected much valuable material, much of which the company resold to other people at a handsome profit. In the end, after a certain bit of wavering