

There is new legislation in connection with the National Housing Act. Then there is the question mentioned this afternoon by the hon. member for Eglinton in connection with private enterprise. These are conjoined methods of solving the problem in Canada.

I think we are all of one mind, that all the energies of the government will be directed toward the solution of this problem. What the Minister of Munitions and Supply has accomplished has been really wonderful.

In the department over which I preside we have touched only the edge of the problem. Then, the National Housing Act has really not thus far got fully under way. We have passed the legislation, and I think once the mind and purpose of the house is known in regard to this housing problem, we can direct all our efforts and our energies toward a solution.

I would therefore ask the committee, in all kindness—and I am not lecturing, at all—if it would be good enough to let us get ahead. I can assure hon. members that the Minister of Reconstruction, and the rest of us who have some responsibility in the matter, will direct all our efforts and all our energies toward a solution of the problem.

Mr. KIDD: I take issue with some parts of what the Minister of Veterans Affairs has said. We have been sitting in the veterans affairs committee for several days. It is hard to nail the minister down to the right point. I have one point and the Minister of Reconstruction has another. But you are not doing anything for the soldiers in outside centres.

I think of my own constituency of Kingston City. The Minister of Reconstruction has about 300 wartime houses there. There the Minister of Veterans Affairs has a project; 50 or 60 houses are under construction outside Kingston. I am trying to urge upon someone who represents some part of the government the necessity for releasing material immediately for the 300 soldiers who are walking the streets, looking for homes.

I pressed this point about two months ago when I put on the order paper a question directed to the Minister of Reconstruction. The returned soldier who has received his discharge from the army, the navy, or the air force, wants to build a home for himself right away, before his gratuity is used up. However, the Minister of Reconstruction says that he cannot do so. The man will be given a permit, but everything is frozen. The man wants to go to a lumber dealer to buy lumber, or take his Ford truck, or his father's truck, and get an order to purchase a few window-frames or doors so that he may proceed to

build his home at once. But that cannot be done. Something should be done immediately for those men.

Mr. MACKENZIE: Let me tell my hon. friend that there is, and for several months has been, an interdepartmental housing committee of permanent and able civil servants, representing the Department of Reconstruction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Finance, and other government departments. They are trying to operate a coordinated and unified plan in connection with housing in Canada. There is no minister who can control the question of materials.

Mr. ADAMSON: Who is in charge of that committee?

Mr. COCKERAM: Would it not be better to combine them all?

Mr. MACKENZIE: It is an interdepartmental committee reporting to the cabinet.

Mr. ADAMSON: Who is the chairman of it?

Mr. MACKENZIE: I think it was Doctor Clark. He has been ill for some time.

Mr. ADAMSON: I thought it was a colonel somebody. I know of whom you are speaking.

The CHAIRMAN: The Minister of Veterans Affairs has suggested that we might proceed with the consideration of this item with as little repetition as possible. I believe the committee would be agreeable to that suggestion. However, the hon. member for Weyburn has asked certain questions, and in fairness to him I think they should be answered.

Mr. McKAY: I had asked the minister if he would explore the possibility of using prefabricated houses.

Mr. HOWE: We have watched closely the prefabricated housing situation. In fact, we gave some assistance to get the factory-built Faircraft houses started. I think we guaranteed the sale of the first 200 houses.

As a matter of fact, any prefabricated houses being built are being sold. Whether they are bought by the government or by private industry does not matter. They go to fill a gap in housing, and I can assure hon. members that the government will encourage any development of that kind which may be undertaken.

Mr. LOCKHART: With all due respect to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, may I ask him a question as to the length of time the interdepartmental committee has been in operation?