

To September 1, 1957, the Federal Government through Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation had agreed to make grants totalling more than \$5,500,000 to three cities--Toronto, Montreal and St. John's, Newfoundland--for redevelopment projects. In addition grants had been made to five other cities--Vancouver, Regina, Winnipeg, Saint John, N.B., and Halifax--to enable them to study their problems before undertaking redevelopment projects.

### The Building Industry

More than 400,000 Canadians are directly engaged in construction work. Hundreds of thousands of others are employed in industries producing building materials or in work associated with construction activity. The industry, in its widest sense, is therefore one of the most important employers in Canada. The proportion of the work force engaged in house building is between a quarter and a third of the total number employed in all phases of the construction industry.

In Canada there are large contractors conducting highly-integrated operations and willing to undertake non-residential as well as residential building, general contractors working on a contract basis, merchant builders and custom builders building individual houses on order for specific customers.

Most building organizations are small in scale. In 1955 two out of every three builders produced fewer than 15 houses a year. However, the increasing use of heavy, costly equipment at the site and the greater degree of mechanization in building operations today have tended to favour the bigger builders. In 1955, for example, five per cent of the builders who built under the National Housing Act were responsible for 40 per cent of that year's NHA programme.

The post-war period has seen the emergence in some of the more important centres of large merchant builders who plan and develop whole neighborhoods for sale. Such neighborhoods can contain hundreds of houses and production may be planned over a period of years. Frequently the builder has subsidiary companies handling real estate transactions and is in a position to arrange not only the financing of the new house but, sometimes, for the sale of the old house as well.

### Winter Construction

Because of the extremes of Canada's climate, a major problem facing the industry is the highly seasonal nature of almost all construction work. This results in considerable seasonal unemployment during the winter months and imposes heavy pressure on the supplying industries during peak building periods. The vagaries of the winter weather mean not only that expensive equipment lies idle through much of its working life but that work forces are disrupted and key personnel have to be carried through the slack months. Larger builders in particular are becoming aware of the problem and in the last few years a determined effort has been made by both government and private industry to increase the amount of winter construction work. In many cases careful planning to ensure that outside jobs are completed during the good weather has permitted builders to continue operations during the winter. Heaters and the use of plastic material to cover partly-finished frames have helped to make this possible. Experiments have been made in the construction of complete houses within protective plastic tents.