

Another example is that when credit circumstances changed during 1951, loans under the National Housing Act were not available in a number of communities of 5,000 to 50,000 in population. We felt, and I am sure everyone in this room would agree, that there was a good reason why a resident in one of these communities, like any credit-worthy Canadian in our larger cities, should also be able to take advantage of mortgage borrowing under the Act. In these cases we were able to follow the basic policy of maintaining the secondary position of Central Mortgage, and yet have loans made in these communities. An agency arrangement was entered into whereby, with funds supplied by Central Mortgage, the lending institutions can make these loans in such communities and act as the mortgagee.

I mention these examples to show that whereas the basic principles behind the operations of the Government under the National Housing Act are designed as stimulus and encouragement in a secondary role, nevertheless where circumstances arise wherein it is felt that the national interest is not being served, the Federal Government has not hesitated, and will not hesitate in the future, to step into the field. But in so doing we make every effort to use existing facilities and avoid a primary position. Nor do I think, Mr. Chairman, that this is in contravention of the basic principles which I outlined as guiding us in our housing policy. We are anxious that there be as little intervention on a direct basis as possible. Rather we lean towards the maximum of stimulus and encouragement to the traditional and relatively satisfactory manners of adding to our housing supply.

I come back to my earlier suggestion, that the ideal condition would be that, through the field of private enterprise, all the housing needs of Canada were looked after. It is only to the extent that this is not taking place that the Federal Government is drawn into the field. The most outstanding example of this policy was the introduction of Section 35, when the Government believed and Parliament concurred that some housing needs in our larger communities could be best met by making an arrangement whereby the two senior governments, in partnership, could provide rental housing when those families not able to afford economic housing of their own could not otherwise secure satisfactory accommodation.

I understand that some consideration has and is being given to a public housing project in Winnipeg. It would be inappropriate for me to make any comments on it at this time because no formal application is before us. I repeat what I said earlier, however - that we are willing to participate in a worthy project provided that the other levels of government wish to proceed.

Our country is growing space, and nothing is more important in its development than that Canadians be adequately housed. I need hardly tell a group like this that a satisfactory economy must have as one of its main elements the welfare of the people who form our nation. The Government places great importance upon a continuing satisfactory volume of new housing, not only to look after our ever-increasing number of families, but also to correct some of the less satisfactory housing conditions which presently exist in many parts of the country.