

*National Housing Act*

report of the thirtieth annual meeting of the Canadian construction association. The President, Mr. Albert Deschamps, O.B.E., in his presidential address attached a good deal of importance to housing as one of Canada's most important programs. I was interested to note that the Minister of Trade and Commerce has his picture in this issue. The Minister of Labour's picture appears four or five times. One of the most significant resolutions passed at the convention was the one dealing with low-rental housing. This group of men cannot be accused of being socialists, but they went on record as follows:

Low Rental Housing

Whereas inadequate housing has brought widespread conditions of substandard living, disease, family breakdown, moral and spiritual deterioration to a large segment of our Canadian people, creating Canada's most serious social problem, and,

Whereas the costs of labour and materials make it impossible to provide housing at rentals within the reach of low income families, and,

Whereas the critical need of housing for low income families has been acknowledged by dominion, provincial and municipal governments, and,

Whereas with the exception of aid to veterans through Wartime Housing Limited, the assistance necessary to meet the critical housing needs of Canadian low income families is being denied because of lack of co-ordination among the three levels of government, federal, provincial and municipal, and,

Whereas continued postponement of co-ordinated housing action by the three levels of government, in the face of their acknowledgment of the critical need, is weakening our Canadian democracy and providing fertile fields for the seeds of disunity and communism, and,

Whereas our people cannot afford any further delay in co-ordinated measures to provide low rental housing without ever-increasing danger to the Canadian way of life,

Therefore be it resolved that this association urge upon the federal, provincial and municipal governments the immediate necessity of a clear definition of their respective responsibilities and their immediate co-operation in providing housing for low income families through the establishment of a national long-term low rental housing program in keeping with the financial needs and abilities of the Canadian people and the availability of labour and materials.

And further, that this association recommend that, in such a program, full consideration be given to recognized principles of low rental housing such as the creation of local housing authorities—on a metropolitan basis in the larger centres—with due representation to competent agencies to determine family need; rent reduction funds; construction of multiple type dwelling units; slum clearance; community planning; rural housing and research on building materials and techniques.

And further, that this association emphasize to the dominion, provincial and municipal governments its considered belief that they cannot

[Mr. Nicholson.]

afford to permit any further postponement of co-ordinated measures to provide low rental housing for low income families without seriously endangering our Canadian way of life.

Several weeks ago I brought to the attention of the minister the desire expressed by the organization of mayors to have a conference at which representatives of government at these three levels might be brought together. The minister has stubbornly refused to take the initiative in convening representatives of the provinces and cities and towns to meet with the federal authorities and see if some solution of the problem cannot be worked out.

I might mention that in the *Christian Science Monitor* for May 17, which reached our desks yesterday, there is a leading story on the front page headed, "Taft housing bill aided by picture of overcrowded cities." The article goes on to say that housing conditions in one city are so acute that 70,000 families are living doubled up, with 30,000 married war veterans holed up in rooms, cabins, shacks, trailer camps or poaching on friends or in-laws. Then it says this was the picture presented to members of the house banking and currency committee, which is holding hearings on this housing bill, by George Edwards, president of the common council of the city of Detroit, who described conditions in his city but claimed he could have been talking about any one of thirty-two other cities where studies of bad housing conditions have been made. In his evidence Mr. Edwards said:

A free democratic economy should set its sights on raising income levels or reducing costs—or both—to the point where every family can afford to live in a decent house.

The witness went on:

Not necessarily a new house—just a house which meets minimum standards of health and decency. A house to live in—not a house to dream about.

I submit that the Minister of Trade and Commerce could now formulate in Canada a program which would make that objective a reality during his lifetime, not during the lifetime of his children or grandchildren—a decent house for every Canadian family.

I also have before me the report of the hearings before the committee on banking and currency of the United States senate on March 31 and April 1. I was interested in the brief presented by Right Reverend Monsignor John O'Grady, who is executive secretary of the national conference of Catholic churches. He was spokesman for quite a number of national organizations, such as the American association of social workers, the