

National Housing Act

there had not been any building whatsoever in several of the towns in his own constituency.

Mr. Nicholson: Under the National Housing Act.

Mr. Philpott: I can remember when this new housing act was before the banking and commerce committee three or four years ago, when one C.C.F. speaker after another arose and said these were wonderful low-rental provisions and asked, "Why have you been hiding your light under a bushel? The government ought to be censured for not letting everybody know that all you had to do was to have a local tie-up, and you could have an unlimited amount of low-rental housing." Therefore I really do not know why the Saskatchewan C.C.F. government has not long since taken advantage of this low-rental housing business and built some of those much-needed houses in the constituency of the hon. member for Mackenzie.

This afternoon the hon. member for Regina City paid me the compliment of saying I was the chief government apologist. I certainly say there would not be any easier task than to be the chief government apologist for this National Housing Act, when the figures plainly show that Canada is building more new housing than any other country on the face of the earth.

Mr. Ellis: What figures?

Mr. Philpott: According to the figures given just a minute ago by the hon. member for Mackenzie, Canada stood about fourth on the list.

Mr. Nicholson: Eighth.

Mr. Philpott: The plain fact of the matter is that Canada is building many more houses this year than the highest figure given in the German paper quoted by my hon. friend. Like my hon. friend, I think I know a good deal about the new housing in Germany because I myself have been in Germany several times since the end of the Hitler war.

The first time I was there I saw the whole country all smashed down as he described it; but I will say this. While I take off my hat to the Germans for their energy in rebuilding the buildings which were destroyed in the conflict which they themselves had precipitated, I venture to say there is not an hon. member in this house who would condone the methods which were used in the rebuilding of Germany. I myself have seen people working two whole shifts in a single day, a day job and a night job. As late as 1951 I have also seen in the great city of Hanover hundreds of people sleeping every night in the public railway station because there was no housing for them to live in.

[Mr. Philpott.]

Therefore I would say, Mr. Speaker, that while I pay all tribute to the great energy of the Germans and what they have done, let us be fair to this act. Let us not be ashamed of the fact that Canada has been able to bring down a National Housing Act that in one respect is the best in the entire world. It has provided more new single dwelling houses for the people rather comfortably off than any other country in the world has been able to provide.

Mr. Ellis: What about those who are not comfortably off?

Mr. Philpott: Hon. gentlemen on the other side sometimes take unto themselves too much virtue. You would think we on this side were not eager and willing to make a good act better. We are offering amendments right now to the National Housing Act which will greatly improve the facilities for slum clearance in Canada. Some people do not like the term "slum clearance". I remember when we brought in the new act we had to change it to blighted areas. I do know that if we had had this act on the statute books last year when the civic elections in Vancouver were held the local vote would have been different, and we would now be well under way with the reconstruction of the downtown area which is needed so badly.

I am not going to stand up here tonight and say that in my opinion the National Housing Act is doing everything we had hoped it would do when we framed the act. Of course it is not. We know perfectly well that we had high hopes about the provisions of the act which were designed to facilitate the construction of unsubsidized rental housing and subsidized rental housing. As I said just a minute ago, we had speaker after speaker and we had representatives of the great trade unions in Canada ask what was the matter with us, why had we not let everyone know how easy it was to initiate the construction of these low-rental housing schemes.

In my opinion the rate of construction of rental housing since we passed the new act has been disappointingly low. I believe it will remain disappointingly low until more organizations, until more municipalities, until more trade unions, until more church groups, until more racial origin societies take the actual initiative of undertaking the construction of low-rental housing projects.

The hon. member for Mackenzie was talking about housing in foreign countries. Apart from the privilege of going to Germany again last year, I spent considerable time in the countries which in my opinion have the finest