

*The Address—Mr. Skey*

It is not amiss for me to point out at this time that, immediately following the war, the housing problems of our country were largely under the control of the federal government through the wartime powers that they had assumed. In 1945 they gave the electorate to understand that they intended to deal with the housing problem. It was not many months after that before they almost threw up their hands in despair and handed it back to the municipalities.

May I turn to another phase of this question, Mr. Speaker? In Toronto on February 13 the veterans held a meeting in Earls court legion hall, which was reported in the *Telegram* of February 14, 1949. The report reads:

At the meeting attended by representatives from Ottawa and Queen's park as well as local housing officials, the veterans aired hundreds of cases of poor accommodation for which returned men are paying high rents, and other housing complaints.

If there is any group in this country to which this parliament and the people owe a fair deal, it is the veterans, and yet they have been those most penalized. I need only remind the house that after we rose on August 31, 1946, the Veterans Land Act was amended and the acreage provisions were raised from half an acre to something close to three acres. With that one stroke of the pen literally thousands of veterans in Canada were denied the thing that they wanted most, namely, a home, a home in which to settle themselves and their families. The Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Gregg) is in his seat and I am sure that he will not deny the fact that the effect of the alteration made by order in council was to stop thousands of building projects and building plans for veterans across the country. Perhaps the government could argue in this instance that the Veterans Land Act was a small-holding act, and was being used for purposes different from those intended by the government. But what it was doing, even though it might not have been used for the purpose that the government originally intended, was meeting the veteran's greatest need at that time. His greatest need was a home, and he was using the half-acre provision to get himself a home. Since then there has been practically no assistance to this group, which deserves it above all others.

My constituency is in the most crowded part of the metropolitan urban area of the city of Toronto. There we see the full effects of inadequate housing. Hardly a week goes by that I do not get a number of appeals from my constituents, asking me for help in the housing field. I think I can speak with authority when I tell you, Mr. Speaker, and hon. members, that it is causing broken

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families. It is placing a tremendous strain on the budgets of veterans and the workingmen. With high rents and high costs for makeshift accommodation, with the number of restaurant and outside meals that have to be paid for, the crowded housing conditions are causing problems of health which the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Martin) should be aware of. In some ways it is contributing to juvenile delinquency. Recently it was reported in the press that one family was using sleeping drugs on their children in order to keep them quiet so that they would not be evicted from accommodation which they had secured after great difficulty. That is certainly bad for the children; it is seriously affecting their health and the well-being of that family. But that is not all, Mr. Speaker. It is contributing to another social and political problem. It is contributing to communism.

Yesterday I was interested when the hon. member for Macleod (Mr. Hansell) spoke of communism and referred to it as "organized desperation." I do not think that that is a bad description, because people get to the point in this housing problem where they say to one another: "Things could not be much worse for us. We are ready to try anything." That sort of thing is true not only in my city but also in Montreal. I am sure that it is true in Vancouver and from coast to coast.

May I give you some insight into that, Mr. Speaker. When we had a provincial election in Ontario last year, in my constituency the returning officer looked for polling stations. In some parts of the constituency he found that there was no place in which to place a poll for the people to vote, because the people in those sections were sleeping in shifts. They were on the twenty-four hour shift, and every bit of accommodation was being used in these parts of Trinity-Bracondale.

Now where is the individual to find any help with these problems? He has not received it from the federal government up to the present time, because, just when the young men and the young women need most to save, they find themselves subjected to taxation which can be described as extortionate or confiscatory, and they cannot put aside anything with which to pay for a new house or to provide any part of the cost of a house under the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation plans. Not only has this taxation been imposed on his or her savings or earnings, but the government's financial policy has led to a cut in the purchasing power of the dollar which amounts to 50 per cent over 1939. In 1939 the Canadian dollar would buy 65 cents worth of goods, using the year 1901 as a base. Now, on the same basis of compari-