

The Address—Mr. Drew

Canada needs houses, but the department seems to be giving us only timidity, a cautious approach, and a lack of action.

It is a well-known fact, Mr. Speaker, that recently many insurance companies have refused to lend money in some sections of Canada for housing. The department for some time now has had the privilege of lending the money directly where it was desirable. In this house opposition members have repeatedly urged the department to adopt such a course. According to a Canadian Press dispatch of last Friday the minister finally got around to dealing with the problem. I quote the Canadian Press:

Resources Minister Robert Winters in a telegram to the National Builders' Association said yesterday that the federal government and the Dominion Mortgage and Investment Corporation had ironed out difficulties which held up building programs in the past.

Mr. Winters said loans will be available to would-be home owners by next Monday or Tuesday.

I say to this house, if they can be available next Monday or Tuesday, why on earth could they not have been available all during the building season? The patience of Canadians on this difficult subject is being sorely tried. By its lack of leadership, by its handling of material priorities and by its procrastination on financial assistance, the Department of Resources and Development has actually done much to discourage the building of houses in Canada. By curtailing new construction it has pushed up the prices of older houses higher and higher. The policy of the department today means that people in the lower income brackets simply cannot buy houses. I think that this inertia in the department is going to continue just as long as hon. members are willing to permit it to continue. I realize that there is no easy solution to this problem, but I think the first step should be for the Prime Minister to call in his young colleague, and tell him the facts of life. Tell him that we must have some action on this problem. If I may be colloquial, tell him to get the lead out.

We in the C.C.F. group believe today, as we always believed in the past, that a subsidized low-rental program is the only real solution to our housing problem. Only thus are dwellings going to be made available to those in the lower wage categories. We call upon the government to tighten up sharply on non-essential building and give housing whatever priorities are necessary. As I said a moment ago, we also urge the government to reduce the down payment to all Canadians to 10 per cent; or lower if the minister can find the money. In localities where the insurance companies will not go in to lend money under N.H.A. we urge the

department itself to finance the balance. If labour is short in some areas I think it would be reasonable for the department to approach the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada and say: "We cannot build enough houses for Canadians on a forty-hour week. In this emergency will you agree temporarily to work longer hours?" I think if congress members in most centres knew that houses were being built for some of their fellow workers they would temporarily agree to suspend the forty-hour week. Mr. Speaker, something has to be done about housing. Parliament cannot countenance further delays or excuses.

Mr. George A. Drew (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I am availing myself of the opportunity to speak again in this debate because the very nature of this session and the absence of a budget which makes it impossible to introduce subjects in the usual way. There are one or two subjects that I wish to discuss this afternoon simply because no other procedure is available to me. Before I take up the subjects that have led me to enter this debate again I should like to discuss something which has been very much in the mind of every one of us for some weeks past.

The royal visit of 1951 is now history. We can only hope that the Princess Elizabeth and her husband carry with them across the Atlantic the same happy recollections of their visit which Canadians will always carry with them in the years ahead in their hearts and minds. From the time of their arrival five weeks ago until the moment of their departure today there has been warmth and friendship in all the gatherings that have met them during this most crowded trip. They have felt the unity of Canada. They have seen also the vast diversity of the nation which has the third largest land area in the world but a population which is still very small in relation to that immense area.

In each province they have received evidence of the affection of the people of that province for its history and traditions. The last song they heard this morning before their departure was "Ode to Newfoundland" when the children gathered in old St. John's expressed their love of that rugged sea-girt island in the lovely words of that song which has for so long been associated with the empire's oldest colony which is now Canada's youngest province. It was fitting that from the warm-hearted people of Newfoundland they should receive such a truly royal send-off as they did today.

There can be no better proof of the loyalty of all Canadians to the crown and all that it represents than the genuine enthusiasm