

Hon. A. K. Hugessen: Honourable senators, like my honourable leader (Hon. Mr. Macdonald) I welcome very warmly the motion made by the Leader of the Government (Hon. Mr. Aseltine). I think it is an excellent thing that he should suggest that a committee of this house should consider this extremely important report that we have just received. After all, it deals with the lives and the homes of many hundreds of thousands of Canadians.

I have always felt that there are large departments of Government, such as Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, which are doing a very valuable work but as to which there is not sufficient publicity or information available to the general public.

I recall that at one time when the honourable senator from Churchill (Hon. Mr. Crerar) was chairman of the Finance Committee we divided between us in that committee the work of examining the activities of various departments of the Government, and to me that was a very salutary and a very useful exercise. I found, and I think the members of the committee found, that the departmental officials were only too glad to have the opportunity of appearing before a committee of this house and explaining to the committee the work that they were doing. They do not often get that opportunity. The other place, for reasons of its own, has not sufficient time to devote to these things, and it seems to me an admirable idea that the Standing Committee on Finance of this house should take up and consider this most interesting report of the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and examine into the workings of a department of the Government which, as far as I know—and I think it is the general impression—is doing a most admirable work for the people of Canada.

Hon. T. A. Crerar: Honourable senators, my contribution will be a very brief one. I myself welcome very heartily the motion that the Leader of the Government in this house has put forward. The matter is an important one, and I would hope that when the committee comes to inquire into the operations of the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation it may be permitted to inquire a little further as to the need of the bill that we put through last evening. What that bill did was increase the charge on the Consolidated Revenue Fund by \$350 million. This was represented—and I want to keep well within the facts—as an emergency measure, based theoretically on the idea that there is a great mass of unemployment in the land, that it is important for the Government to

take action to mitigate the effect of this unemployment, and that this was one method of doing it.

There is here a rather fine distinction that I think should be drawn to the attention of honourable senators. Is this provision of an additional \$350 million a measure for the promotion of housing for the betterment of Canadian people, or is it more in the nature of an unemployment relief measure? In my opinion it is important to maintain that distinction, because there does not seem to me to be very much evidence at the moment of any drastic shortage of housing in Canada.

If we go on building new housing by the tens of thousands a year, we are possibly going to create a situation where the owners of existing housing, who may want to dispose of it, will find themselves handicapped in doing so. There must be a reasonable balance held in this respect. For myself, I am bound to say that I do not think there is the unemployment problem, or any serious consequence from unemployment, that some of our newspapers and publicists try to give the impression there is. We can get some facts in relation to this, and we should have them.

That is why I welcome the motion put forward by the Leader of the Government in this house. While it may not be strictly within the purview of the committee to examine into the need for all this additional housing, I hope that sufficient latitude will be given the committee to do that—

Hon. Mr. Aseltine: It will be wide open.

Hon. Mr. Crerar:—so that we can examine the report and see how effectively the housing corporation has done its work. My own view is that it has, on the whole, done it efficiently and well. However, it is important to pay some attention to the warning held out by the Minister of Finance a week or so ago when—if he was correctly reported—he urged that the corporation should not aim to supplant ordinary leaders for this class of work.

These days we do seem to be getting more and more extensions of government—shall I say, interference, with the ordinary course of our affairs. It has, I think, developed to quite an alarming degree, because ultimately if the Government is going to take the responsibility of building all the houses for people, of looking after them when they are ill, providing for them when they are unemployed, then the question is bound to be raised in some minds whether that is consistent with the maintenance of what we call our democratic freedoms. They do that sort of thing in Russia, and they do it pretty efficiently; but, at any rate at present, I am very far from