

HOUSING BILL MAKES MORE PROGRESS IN LEGISLATURE

Urgent Measure Gets Second Reading — All Speakers Endorse Its Principle, Pointing Out Necessity of Providing Means to Immediately Alleviate Shortage of Moderately-priced Dwelling Houses—Standardization of Materials Urged

After an all-afternoon discussion of the housing bill in the Legislature yesterday, the measure was given its second reading. All of the speakers endorsed the principle of the bill and agreed that some action was necessary at this time to alleviate the housing shortage. While various suggestions were put forward by Liberal speakers, the one outstanding proposal, which was put forward by Mr. Sam Carter (South Wellington) and backed up by each of the succeeding Opposition speakers, was that the materials required for the houses should be standardized, and then bought on a big scale by the Government. In this way, it was pointed out to the Government, at least \$200 could be saved on each house. This amount would be of much importance to the small wage-earner.

Several of the speakers also contended that the proposed monthly payments of \$20 were too large, and greater than the small wage-earner could bear. Easier terms were suggested. The Opposition Leader endorsed the principle of the bill, and intimated that he would suggest some important amendments in Committee of the Whole. Sir William Hearst spoke at some length on the bill, pointing out the general need for Government action.

Three Questions to Answer.

In moving the second reading of the bill to provide for the erection of dwelling houses, the Prime Minister said there were three questions which the Government had had to answer. These were: Was there a scarcity of houses in the Province, was the Government called upon to take action, and if so in what direction this action should be taken.

"After having the advice of the housing section of the Resources Committee, and after receiving the information from our own Director, the Government has come to the conclusion that there is no doubt but what there is a very serious shortage of moderate-priced houses available throughout Ontario for returned soldiers and working men and women," said Sir Wm. Hearst. "It is true in almost every industrial centre. We have also come to the conclusion that the situation cannot be met without Government action of some kind, hence the bill, which we think is in the best form to meet the situation, having regard to all conditions and the terms laid down by the Federal Government."

G. W. V. A. the Initiator.

The Prime Minister recited events leading to the Government deciding to take action. The G.W.V.A. had first brought the matter to the Government's attention. The demand, he said, was for four and six roomed houses. Sir William told of the survey which had been made of 13,544 houses in Toronto. This investigation showed that only 36 per cent. of the number of houses were occupied by single families. In 8,739 of the number of houses investigated two, three and more families were living in them. Of the 13,544, 1,338 houses were classed as unfit for habitation.

There was no doubt of the house shortage in Toronto, and the same

was true in practically all industrial centres in the Province. The house shortage at the present time was largely the result of the war, and the consequent shortage of labor, capital and materials. However, the problem existed even before the war, he said, pointing out that the experience in older European countries showed that there had always been an abnormal shortage of the character of houses contemplated here. "The law of supply and demand is said not normally to meet the need," continued the Prime Minister.

A Country of Homes.

"We must in this new country make it a country of homes, not a country of slums nor a country of lodgings. Nothing helps more to settle a man and make him an industrious citizen than a good home. Our homes are the cornerstone of the nation, and it is necessary to do everything we can to see that these are provided," said Sir William.

Private enterprise, the Prime Minister said, had not met and was not meeting the situation. Under those circumstances it was clear that the duty fell on the Governments—Dominion, Provincial and municipal, all of them—to take some action to meet the situation. "It is not in the public interest that the improving of housing conditions should be left to private enterprise, if it fails to meet the situation," Sir William said.

Wider Governmental Functions.

"Functions of Government have been extended greatly in recent years, particularly during the war, and the State is now undertaking obligations and the expenditure of money in different directions, that it would not have thought of taking a short time ago," said Sir William. The war had not only resulted in the shortage of houses, but it had caused higher rents and the asking of higher prices in offering houses for sale. These conditions had to be met as far as possible.

Referring briefly to the clause in the act permitting farmers to borrow money to erect dwellings, the Prime Minister said that reports to the Government showed that agriculturists having cottages for their help had practically no difficulty in securing labor. The scheme was being taken up by numerous municipalities, and the question was whether the Government could keep up to them.

Standardize Materials.

Mr. Sam Carter (South Wellington) said that \$20 a month on the principal, and taxes, was more than an ordinary man could pay. Had the Government listened to wise counsel seven or eight years ago it would have provided for local option in assessment. All cities of even 15,000 population had to face the prospect of slums, and Mr. Carter urged upon the Government the necessity of dealing with the question in a big way. He declared there were men in the Province who would not avail themselves of the provisions of the bill, because there was no arrangement to take care of the abnormal cost of building prevailing at the present time.

It was strongly urged by the