

British Gov't Will Boost Prefabricated Buildings

By CAROL KENNEDY
LONDON (CP)—The British government has launched a drive to boost prefabricated building methods as a means of easing Britain's chronic housing shortage. This could lead to an increase in timber imports from Scandinavia and possibly Canada.

Housing Minister Richard Crossman told a press conference here the Labor government hopes to produce 100,000 factory-built homes a year by 1970. High quality prefabrication is relatively new in Britain.

Crossman has already advised towns and counties in England and Wales that by increasing and improving their use of prefabricated methods they could help raise the national house-building program to 500,000 homes a year by 1970. Without increased productivity by these methods, such a target would require an additional work force of 100,000 men—and they would not be available, Crossman said.

The aim is to build 40 per cent of municipal dwellings by these systems, which include timber framing widely used in Canada. The government plans to raise its present £70,000,000 (\$210,000,000) housing subsidies by £15,000,000 (\$45,000,000) in two years.

Some 50 different systems of prefabricated building are being appraised by the National Building Agency, an independent body set up under the Conservative government to help increase productivity in the building industry.

REPLIES TO QUERIES

A. W. Cleeve Barr, deputy chairman and chief architect of the N.B.A., replying to questions along with Crossman, said there certainly would be an increase in the use of timber frames in Britain, but he was not prepared to say how much would come from Canada and how much from Scandinavian countries.

The problem, Cleeve Barr said, is whether Canadian exporters could gear their production of structural timber to sufficient quantities to capture a larger slice of the British market long dominated by Scandinavian manufacturers.

North Sea Gas Outlook Good

LONDON (AP)—British Petroleum Tuesday lit a test flare in one of its recently discovered North Sea gas wells and announced the commercial indications were encouraging.

"Gas started flowing at the rate of 10,000,000 cubic feet a day," said a company spokesman.

"We have to bring in a total of 50,000,000 cubic feet daily to have a viable commercial proposition. This is an excellent start."

The British government last year granted licences to 22 companies, some of them American, to explore for oil under the North Sea.

The strike by British Petroleum was the first reported.

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The government's new push building will concentrate on seven major urban areas, led by London. Only large areas can provide the huge market required by efficient production of factory-built homes.

Crossman said one problem facing the government in selling the idea of prefabricated methods was the "very bad press" the post-war "prefabs" had in Britain—though he added that these much-denigrated homes were often approved by the people who lived in them especially by housewives who found them convenient to run. Noting the criticism that the old-style prefabs were often a blot on the landscape, Crossman said the government would insist that the new campaign make the fullest use of architects to raise the quality of municipal housing.

Compensation Board To Mark Half-Century

KEARNEY, Ont. (CP)—Early in 1966 the Workmen's Compensation Board celebrates a half-century of operations in Ontario.

The first claimable accident happened in this bush community 50 miles south of North Bay, Jan. 1, 1916. A 49-year-old lumber teamster, John Masters, was incapacitated when a fall damaged his hand.

Compensation at that time was 55 per cent of the average weekly wage for the previous year, so Masters was paid \$5.24 a week for his 22 weeks off work.

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