

THE CONGRESSIONAL FRONT.
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WHERE ARE THE HOUSES.

More and more families are looking for a place to live. That's true of small towns as well as large cities. Every Congressman's desk is piled high with literature on the subject of housing. As this is written, Congress has just finished action on an appropriation bill which makes 192 million dollars available for emergency housing. In Washington, there has been one conference after another on the subject of more housing. The President has appointed the former mayor of Louisville, Kentucky as a Housing Expediter. Chester Bowles of OPA seeks to place ceiling prices on houses built for sale. The National Real Estate Association insists that government restrictions mean less housing, not more. The National Housing Agency issues one release after another on this matter. Veterans, recently discharged are writing Congressmen, clamoring for action. Bills are introduced to increase the amount which a veteran can borrow under the GI Bill of Rights to buy or build a home. So, pull up your fireside, while we look at the housing problem in a commonsense way.

WHY A HOUSING SHORTAGE.

Lets look at a half dozen simple reasons why there is a housing shortage. (1) For a good many years before the war, we have not been building enough houses, flats and apartments to go around and as a result, people have "doubled up" on living quarters. Now they want to "undouble" and that means more living quarters are needed. (2) In war time, we built fewer homes than before because neither manpower or materials were available. That's why you had to get a priority before you could build in war time. (3) Fires, windstorm, flood and other natural causes continued to destroy houses even though the number built was much smaller than ever before. (4) Perhaps we're not too conscious of it but year by year, our population increases so that now, we have an estimated 140,000,000 people in the United States. They must have a place to live.

ANOTHER REASON.

As the birthrate increases over the deathrate in this country, it not only increases population but also the number of families who want to live by themselves. In 1939, the excess of births over deaths was about 850,000. In 1940, it jumped to 900,000. By 1943 it had reached a peak of 1,500,000 and then began to decline slightly. As young married folks acquire a family, they want a place where they can live by themselves and solve their own problems. That means more houses.

AND STILL ANOTHER REASON.

Believe it or not, but houses seem to wear out. Houses are like people or machines or trees. They finally wither and become uninhabitable. The 1940 housing census indicated that 20 out of every 100 homes in cities are more than 40 years old. About 40 out of every 100 houses were 30 years old or older. About 40 out of every 100 houses in cities were deficient in some respect such as a lack of running water, proper plumbing, or in a state of disrepair. So, houses wear out and if they are not replaced, it but adds to the shortage.

THE PRESENT PROBLEM.

So the shortage of housing is understandable enough. But what's being done about it? There is a tremendous demand for houses and there seems to be money enough to finance the building of homes, apartments and all other types of housing. Then what are we waiting for? Just one thing - materials. To verify that conclusion - and in fact before this last paragraph was written - the author of the FRONT called the Civilian Production Administration and asked, "What are the prospects for getting a few carloads of lumber for folks out in central Illinois who are anxious to build their own homes?" The answer was, "There isn't enough to go around, and besides, it may be placed under priorities again right after the first of the year." The answer is - building materials. That's the problem at the moment.