

Mr. Crosbie: Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman opposite may be in charge of multiculturalism, but he is not in charge of Newfoundlanders.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Crosbie: In 1976 our cost of living went up 7.8 per cent, after wage and price controls went on, and these controls represented a direct about face on the part of hon. gentlemen opposite. If living costs went down, it was mostly because food prices went down, and these prices have nothing to do with the great wage and price controls program. It is forecast that our cost of living will go up this year at least 7 per cent. That will show you what is happening in Newfoundland.

An hon. Member: Under a provincial Tory government.

Mr. Crosbie: Instead of bawling out and interrupting my speech, hon. gentlemen opposite should be thinking what to do about this problem.

An hon. Member: So should you.

Mr. Crosbie: Mr. Speaker, let us examine again unemployment in Newfoundland.

An hon. Member: What did you do when you were a minister?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Perhaps hon. members would be fair to the hon. member and allow him to make his speech.

Mr. Crosbie: Mr. Speaker, I want to point to another serious problem in Newfoundland. In January, 1977, in Newfoundland 23,700 people were registered with the Unemployment Insurance Commission as construction workers without employment. We have a crisis in the Newfoundland construction industry with 23,700 of our construction workers unable to find employment. What is the Canadian government doing to help us overcome the slump in the construction industry? It is spending less this year on public works and marine facilities than it has spent in the last five or six years. There has been no effort at all to help us overcome this kind of unemployment.

An hon. Member: Tell us about the linerboard mill.

Mr. Crosbie: Thank you for mentioning that, because the Canadian government was appealed to by the Newfoundland government for help, and the government opposite turned its back on the 1,500 people in Stephenville employed in the linerboard mill. The premier and government of Newfoundland appealed to the Government of Canada for special assistance to help Newfoundland put in place some special programs which would help us in this period of tragically high unemployment. But the Government of Canada turned its back on those requests. Actually it helped to push provincial heads farther under water. Yes, cabinet ministers went down to the province; the Minister of Finance (Mr. Macdonald), the

Regional Unemployment

Minister of Regional Economic Expansion, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and all the rest of them went down there, and they helped to push our heads farther under water. That is the only help we got.

An hon. Member: What is the Newfoundland government doing?

Mr. Crosbie: An hon. member asks what the Newfoundland government is doing. The Newfoundland government is borrowing \$199 million this year; God knows it should not be borrowing anything. Of that sum, \$54 million is for debt retirement, and slightly over \$154 million will be used for a capital construction program in Newfoundland this year. That is what the Newfoundland government is doing. It is trying to get its construction workers back to work. They have just had to announce the closure of the linerboard mill at Stephenville. Mr. Speaker, there is nothing humorous about that. They appealed to the Canadian government for help in an attempt to keep that linerboard mill operating, but the Canadian government said no, it is not economic. It would not put its money into the mill and the 1,500 workers involved, it said, will simply have to go on the unemployment list. The government would not help.

That may or may not have been the right decision, but it is a fact that the Canadian government would not help to keep that linerboard mill going. God knows, the province of Newfoundland has done enough in the last five years to keep it going. In addition, the government of Newfoundland has raised its income taxes again. Our personal income tax has gone up 1.5 per cent again. We pay the highest income taxes in Canada. We are the most highly taxed province in Canada. So you cannot say the Newfoundland government and people are not making every effort possible to overcome their problems.

An hon. Member: By raising taxes!

Mr. Crosbie: The Government of Canada in Ottawa seems to be concerned only about national unity. The amount of business activity generated by the Newfoundland government's capital program will amount to \$300 million, including housing, water, sewer and highway construction, and the like. While the Department of Public Works is to spend \$63 million in the elephantine area of Ottawa and Hull, it is to spend only \$240,000 in the whole of Newfoundland on public buildings this year. I was pleased to hear the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Buchanan) announce the other day that the department would undertake a few projects in Gander-Twillingate, and a few in the Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador district. I hope he will announce some programs in a few other districts before he is through.

The government in Ottawa is not taking seriously these tragedies, but the poor, strapped Newfoundland government is undertaking a special job creation program; through its department of social services it is to create 1,000 additional jobs. They are doing everything they can in that small bailiwick to overcome that situation.