

The government has failed to recognize that housing is a social right. It continues to try to rely upon financial incentives of one kind or another. It continues to give special tax concessions to investors. It continues to provide financial subsidies to the banks in order to get them to reduce mortgage rates, rather than deal with housing directly. I see, Mr. Speaker, you are about to indicate that my time has expired, but if I could have a few more minutes I will conclude my remarks.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Broadbent: The minimum need for housing is somewhere between 800,000 and one million units. The Minister of State responsible for housing, last fall said that we needed 800,000; the Canadian Council on Social Development has said we need one million units. The government should have told the Minister of Finance to make provision for this in his budget. As I have said, we must create jobs, with so much unemployment in Canada, so let us create jobs in this area of need. But instead, the government, in terms of real dollars, chose to freeze the housing budget. The 1975 housing budget is no different from the 1974 budget in terms of real dollars.

The housing minister's own target is 210,000 housing units. According to figures released a month or two ago, he will be lucky to get 165,000 units. I say the minimum target of the government for this year should have been 400,000 units, for which they could and should have allocated funds. In view of our unemployment situation, for fiscal reasons this would have been the responsible thing to do because it would create jobs, although in terms of human need also we need additional economic impact. Instead of restricting the housing budget, the cabinet should have doubled it and therefore doubled the projected target of the minister.

In my judgment, the reason the Liberal Party has failed to come to grips with housing is that it has failed to assume the obligation to direct investment into certain sectors of our society at a certain time in order to meet human and social priorities. This would mean they would have to say to the banks insurance companies and other financial institutions in Canada that a certain percentage of their investments in 1975 and 1976 must be set aside to provide the housing which Canadians need. To do that, of course, the government would have to change the Bank Act and other financial legislation; and to do that it would have to take on the banks and financial institutions in a political battle. The Liberal government is unwilling to do that. Therefore, my party does not expect the Liberal government to win the battle in respect of housing as a social right, just as it did not win the battle in respect of medicare or any other major social innovation. This battle will have to be fought and won by somebody else, and when that is done and the situation is politically safe, the Liberal government will come along and take over again.

● (1550)

I want to conclude by saying that we need a new budget within a couple of weeks which will recognize that unemployment, rather than inflation, is the principal issue in 1975. Let me assure the Minister of Finance, in case he should think that somehow it is a bizarre proposal when I

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say that we need a budget within two weeks, that I suggest this with a great sense of probity and responsibility. In view of the answers the minister has given the House since the beginning of this parliament last fall and since the last budget, to the effect that the government is monitoring the situation, it was not prepared to bring in a new budget but might do so in the future, I assume that his professional advice is fully abreast of the current situation. For that reason, and having regard to the request for a new budget within two weeks, I assume the government is capable of doing just that, particularly if it has been doing what the minister has said in his answers during the last few weeks.

We need a budget which recognizes that unemployment in 1975 is the crucial problem, a budget which recognizes that poverty does exist in Canada to an alarming degree and should be eradicated in 1975; and, finally, a budget which recognizes that housing needs in Canada are not being met but ought to be met and will make the kind of funds available so that instead of a mere 200,000 housing units in 1975 we can have at least double that number this year, and within a couple of years totally eradicate our housing problem.

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I personally want to congratulate the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby (Mr. Broadbent) for bringing this subject before the House. No matter how much we disagree as to the ways in which these problems ought to be resolved, this is an issue with which this House of Commons and the country ought to deal. This involves a matter of judgment. As I have said on other occasions in the House—and I will make it quite clear again—we are leaving our options open at this stage until we have completed a further analysis of the facts. As I have made quite clear, we disagree with some of the fundamental positions advocated by the New Democratic Party. I hope the leader of that party will not misunderstand me if in the course of my remarks today I put on the public record some of the inconsistencies which he and his colleagues have presented for the scrutiny of the Canadian people.

I also congratulate the hon. member on his style of debate in dealing with the issues. I enjoyed listening to him. Obviously, when you look around the chamber, in spite of the fact that this is the number one problem in the country it is not a big grabber at the moment as far as the House of Commons is concerned.

Mr. Stanfield: There are four committees sitting.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) points out that there are four committees sitting. This problem is not even a big grabber for our friends of the fourth estate, who seem to be more interested in the Hamilton harbour dredging scandal than in what I believe to be the crucial issue before the country.

Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain): It is not a grabber so it's a wonder you are here at all.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): I would not mind at all if the hon. member for Rocky Mountain (Mr. Clark) would like to take a breather. I want to say at the outset that the nature of the rate of unemployment and inflation is not