

already bought this type of housing are unable to keep up the payments. We have heard reports that there are hundreds of thousands of unsold units. With our dreadful unemployment in this country, who can even think of planning to buy one of these houses? There was a hurried approach because the minister wanted numbers, and this has produced economic ghettos. The hon. member for Fraser Valley West (Mr. Wenman) talks about the incredible situation in his riding in respect of these unsold AHOP units. Had there been incentives in this budget to the economy, bringing relief to people who want to buy these or other units, that would have brought a great deal of help to young people and to those of the middle class who need decent housing.

We have a government that has failed in its budget response to rehabilitate the economy, yet it lets a rehabilitation program lapse because the minister is so involved and away from his ministry. This government has failed to deal with inflation, but it certainly knows how to inflate statistics, especially those relating to housing, as though that were a solution to the housing needs in this country. Senior citizens, lower income families and our burdened middle class in the core areas of our smaller towns and cities are crying out for the kind of proper economic planning that should have been in this budget. The housing needs of this country have been ignored by this government. I am deeply sorry for what has happened, because the hundreds of letters that come to us show that this budget could have made the difference but has not.

Mr. Stuart Leggatt (New Westminster): Mr. Speaker, I should initially like to make a few remarks about some of the comments made by other participants in the debate. I was particularly interested in the intercession by the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss. Bégin) who is not one of the least progressive ministers in that particular cabinet. Some of the things she has said are things with which we in this party can agree. It is always interesting to see how much credit the minister takes for those measures that her party fought against for some 40 years. Suddenly her colleagues are running around taking credit for almost everything important in the social field.

The facts are really quite different. There is not much point in taking credit for something that was never initiated by that particular party. Almost none of those measures were initiated by the Liberals. We are not averse to see progressive measures coming from NDP conventions being adopted as government policy. We have always accepted that as one of the prices of failure, but of help to the Canadian people. Of course, that may be the story of our life, but I am surprised that the minister would spend so much time this afternoon taking credit for NDP help over the years in providing decent social measures for the people of Canada.

The other aspect of this budget about which I want to comment briefly is that relating to the sales tax. We had a great discussion today during the question period about the apparent upset of the western premiers over this particular budget. We get back to the question of whether they were consulted, how much attention was paid to this matter, and

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why was it not something raised at the first ministers' conference? The real reason the four western premiers are upset is that the smartest finance minister in Canada is a man called Parizeau, who kept his cards in his pocket until the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien) stood up and committed himself. He then played every one of his cards beautifully. I think it is time somebody stood up in this House and gave Mr. Parizeau some credit. He is a bright minister and this government would be well served to have a minister of finance half as shrewd as that minister from Quebec. The reason the western premiers are upset is that they wish they had been smart enough to do exactly the same thing and not commit themselves in advance and then—

● (1642)

Mr. Lumley: Saskatchewan is going to love you.

Mr. Leggatt: I am pleased we are finally getting a little response. Now they are going to wind up being suckered into that sales tax solution which will see sales tax reduced on imported items—socially undesirable items like the eighteenth variety of under-arm deodorant—or some of the useless imported products that we have. At least we have one government in Canada who was smart enough to say: "Let us just go to the vital areas where additional sales are needed." The reason our western premiers are a little upset is because there is another finance minister in this country who is just a little smarter than all the rest.

An hon. Member: How much money is he getting?

Mr. Leggatt: If he does not get the full share the hon. member can guess who will suffer the penalty. The government cannot get away with treating Quebec one way and the rest of the country another way. It will be very interesting equating Quebec. It will be interesting to see this supposedly fair-minded government handle the distribution of those sales tax moneys. Quebec, Mr. Speaker, has out-thought this particular government, and I give them full credit for having played their cards extremely shrewdly.

Mr. Pinard: Do you wish they win the referendum?

Mr. Paproski: What referendum?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. The Chair recognized the hon. member for New Westminster only.

Mr. Leggatt: I liked that interjection, Mr. Speaker, about do we wish they win the referendum. My answer is, "No". There is no doubt that none of the federal political parties are supportive of separation or that referendum. We have fought just as vigorously to make certain that that referendum is defeated. In fact, at the moment it does not look like it has got a very good chance. Having said that, let us not get confused between the question of separation and the question of good government. The present government in the province of Quebec is a far-sight better than the predecessor, and the people of Quebec understand that.