

The Budget—Mr. Peters

vast riches of the north but let us remember all the north of Canada. I doubt very much if there are any great oil deposits in the part of the north I am thinking about, and I doubt if we will ever have any winter games there, but I can tell you that there are Newfoundland Canadians there. At least they thought they were Canadians, but they are still trying to find out about this great Canada of ours they heard or read about after Confederation. Will they ever get the opportunity, after 20 years of disillusionment and promises, to know that they are also part of this great democracy and that they will be able to become involved in this opportunity of empty words?

They never got a chance to utter those magic words "just society" which held such high hopes but turned out to be nothing more than an electioneering gimmick that became distasteful to even utter. What have we accomplished in the province of Newfoundland since Confederation? We top the list in everything that counts. We have the highest cost of living in Canada, the lowest wages, the highest unemployment rate—some 20 per cent—and we are closing in on the first billion dollar debt of the ten provinces. What price glory, Mr. Speaker?

We have one of the great potentials of any province in respect of our God made resources. We have the fish in the sea, vast timberlands and unmatched beauty. What do we develop, or I should say try to develop? We develop shoe factories, rubber factories and candy factories. We have just about obliterated our fishing industry over the years, to the point where I doubt that even the minister of fisheries, who has done such a commendable job, can save it.

We have given away most of our areas through rights to explore for minerals and oil. This denies any clear thinking planner the opportunity to develop our park potential. Why we have not heard about gold and diamonds I will never know. It might be surprising to western members to know that Newfoundland has areas of rich farm land which has been allowed to deteriorate through a lack of care and planning. We have lost an important means of communication in our Newfoundland passenger service, to the inconvenience of many hundreds of our people, through a callous and determined attempt to eventually remove the CNR from Newfoundland. The rail express and freight service is following the same trend in Newfoundland and the CNR is deliberately, at this

moment, gradually, but completely and progressively, downgrading the maintenance of our tracks and services. It is closing down railway stations. We will very soon again hear the tale of woe from the president of the CNR that this service has not paid and Newfoundland will once again, through out and out treachery, pay without a whimper because of those who should be concerned but who will do nothing.

One of the most acute problems in Newfoundland today, apart from all the shortcomings of our province which I have mentioned, is the serious lack of housing. This is a situation which is not only serious but is desperate. Here again, even though the measures taken by the minister responsible are commendable, the situation is not being helped. The \$200 million allocated for low cost housing in parts of the Atlantic region, especially in isolated parts of Newfoundland, does not do us one bit of good because where land is available it is not serviced so it cannot qualify under CMHC. Where the land is serviced, the people who need the homes are in the lowest salary brackets or are unemployed and could not qualify for a loan. So, I say to the minister, and I have discussed this with him, we must take another hard look at the situation. I hope he will save some of the \$200 million for those people who are living in housing conditions which in some cases can only be termed as unbelievable.

The next 25 years will be critical for the economy of this country. We must, in our planning, consider not only the necessary dollars, factories, skilled workers or natural resources, to run our country but we must consider the people. I plead with this government not to forget these hard facts in the coming years.

● (5:00 p.m.)

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, in the past 12 or 13 years I have listened with a great deal of interest to a number of budgets, probably 20 in number. This is the first occasion on which I have asked myself why the government bothered bringing down a budget at all. It is not absolutely necessary. This budget did not do very much. For this reason one might wonder why it was presented at all. The attendance during the debate has been such that many members must be asking themselves the same question. The attendance this afternoon has been as low as 14.

● **An hon. Member:** Nine.