

Housing

Notice, Mr. Speaker, the "renewal plan". He goes on to say:

—it enables the government to act more effectively in stimulating production of rental housing, and makes possible new kinds of assistance for young families who are buying for the first time.

Those are very optimistic words. However, we are getting used to hearing optimistic declarations from the government. Unfortunately, time usually proves that that optimism is ill-founded.

I remember years ago—I have been around here a little while—the response of the government to the inflationary problem was that it was going to wrestle inflation to the ground. Those are noble words, Mr. Speaker; a ringing clarion call to challenge the forces that were driving prices up and causing such havoc in the country. I think just about every budget that has been brought in since that time echoes the same words—perhaps different words but the same sentiments.

We also heard the statement made that we were overcoming the problem of unemployment. Once again, every Liberal budget that has been brought in since that statement of many years ago has reiterated this statement, that the government will bring this demon of unemployment under control. We heard the assertions that the government will assist the farmers in riding out the critical financial problems they are currently facing. We know what has happened. I suggest there have been many other similar declarations which have indicated the same determination and same direction, but, in the final analysis, nothing has happened. Instead of getting better, things get worse, and we all know where inflation stands today. We all know the level of unemployment in Canada today. We know the situation in which the farming community and small businesses are finding themselves today. Instead of getting better, the situation is worse. Yet hon. members on the government side sit and laugh, sneer and joke. They are at it again now. I do not know what it will take to shake them loose and make them show at least some compassion and understanding of the problems Canadians are facing at the present time.

● (2140)

There are three basic needs of mankind; food, clothing and shelter and when we consider the climatic conditions in Canada, we know that shelter certainly is without question basic to our survival. Shelter or housing, is a right, but unfortunately this is not one of the rights enshrined in the charter, thanks to the insistence of members of the New Democratic Party who, it appears, made its deletion a condition of support for the government's constitutional package. The government backed up and said it would not guarantee the right to own a home or property.

Mr. Cosgrove: It is the provinces which have jurisdiction.

Mr. Patterson: Although the government has declined, no doubt for political purposes, to guarantee the right to own property in the charter, the ownership of homes has been a dream of most Canadians throughout past generations and is today the objective to which a great many still aspire. This was

one of the magnets which many years ago drew my parents from the old country to this land of promise. There was an opportunity to own better property, to make a living, to raise a family and to contribute to society. I suggest that hundreds of thousands of others from all over the world were drawn to Canada for the very same reason. Now people are in danger of being deprived of that.

According to another report, consideration is to be given to penalizing thrift, initiative, and sacrifice on the part of home owners by deeming the rental value of their homes as taxable income in order to increase government revenues. This would be a blatantly reprehensible act. It would erode the desires and dreams of would-be home owners. It would destroy the dreams they have had and undermine and destroy the fruits of their labours toward building and achieving stability in their home circumstances. These two factors the refusal to guarantee the right to own property and the possible imposition of taxation of imputed rent on owner-occupied homes could bring the present government's commitment to home ownership—I was going to say into question, but it goes far beyond that.

These ideas show how hypocritical the government is. Hon. members opposite talk about doing things for people and helping them to own homes but then say they will not guarantee that Canadians can own homes and that if they do own homes, the government is considering taxing their rental value. The government is considering making people pay tax on money they have saved, slaved and sacrificed to get in order to build up equity. People will be taxed because they own homes and do not have to rent.

The writer of an article which appeared in a newspaper a short time ago suggested that the principle of home ownership is becoming obsolete. I think I heard a reference to that tonight. Apparently someone else read that article. I believe home ownership is still a desirable and legitimate aspiration and, instead of being undermined, eroded and destroyed, it should be encouraged and nurtured. I believe the ownership of a home promotes a sense of achievement. It brings a measure of satisfaction and contentment. After all, what is life without a feeling of achievement, without satisfaction and without contentment? Instead of that, people are living in fear and agony because what they have achieved is about to be taken from them, and they will be set back years and years to the position from where they started.

While I have little confidence that the measures proposed in this bill will be as effective as the minister implies, I suppose any help is better than none. My lack of enthusiasm is based on the fact that the basic direction of government policy as laid out in the budget brought down by the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) is having an extremely detrimental effect upon the housing picture and will more than offset any possible benefit which might be brought about under the provisions of this measure.

Reference has been made in this debate to the fact that there are two basic considerations in the matter of housing policy and the provision of housing, and the first is the availability of housing. We are told that Canada needs 220,-