

At some point during the following speeches, CLARISSA gives POTTER some pretty close scrutiny.

POTTER. Wait for what? I claim this institution is not necessary to this town. Therefore, Mr Chairman, I make a motion to dissolve this institution and turn its assets and liabilities over to the receiver.

BILLY. George, you hear what that buzzard...

POTTER. To the public Peter Bailey *was* the Building and Loan.

BILLY. Oh, that's fine, Potter, coming from you, considering that you probably drove him to his grave.

POTTER. Peter Bailey was not a businessman. That's what killed him. Oh, he was a man of high ideals, so called, but ideals without common sense can ruin the town. Now, you take this loan to Ernie Bishop... You know, that fellow that sits around all day on his brains in his taxi. You know... I happen to know the bank turned down this loan, but he comes here and we're building him a house worth five thousand dollars. Why?

GEORGE. Well, I handled that, Mr Potter. You have all the papers there. His salary, insurance. I can personally vouch for his character.

POTTER. A friend of yours?

GEORGE. Yes, sir.

POTTER. You see, you shoot pool with some employee here, you can come and borrow money. What does that get us? A discontented, lazy rabble instead of a thrifty working class. And all because a few starry-eyed dreamers like Peter Bailey stir them up and fill their heads with a lot of impossible ideas. Now I say...

GEORGE comes to the front of the meeting.

GEORGE. Now hold on, Mr Potter. You're right when you say my father was no businessman. I know that. Why he started

this cheap penny-ante Building and Loan, I'll never know. But his whole life was... Why, in the twenty-five years since he started this thing, he never once thought of himself. Isn't that right, Uncle Billy? He didn't save enough to send his boys to college. But he did help a few people to get out of your slums, Mr Potter. And what's wrong with that? You're all businessmen here. Doesn't it make them better citizens? Doesn't it make them better customers? Do you know how long it takes a working man to save five thousand dollars? Until they're so old and broken down that they... Just remember this, Potter, that this rabble you're talking about... they do most of the working and paying and living and dying in this community. Is it too much to have them work and pay and live and die in a couple of decent rooms and a bath? My father didn't think so. People were human beings to him. In my book he died a much richer man than you'll ever be!

POTTER. I'm not talking about your book. I'm talking about the Building and Loan.

GEORGE. I know exactly what you're talking about... something you can't get your fingers on and it's galling you... Well, I've said too much. I... (*To audience.*) You're the board here. You do what you want with this thing. Just one thing more though. This town needs this measly one-horse institution if only to have some place where people can come without crawling to Potter.

POTTER. Sentimental hogwash! I want my motion!

CLARISSA. Oh dear...

They freeze.

I have a bad feeling about this. Something's going to happen. Poor old George... I can't stand the suspense... what happens?

They unfreeze.

BILLY. You did it, George! They voted Potter down.

Freeze.