

• (1040)

In his budget a month or so after we announced that emergency plan the Minister of Finance, to his credit, did adopt two of our points, those two which relate to housing. As he will know, there has been a strong response from the housing sector, a response that impresses even the most optimistic supporters then and now of measures concerning housing.

However, while we welcomed those initiatives, the budget as a whole lacked a very clear strategy oriented toward economic growth. The minister himself admitted in that budget that the recovery will be "weak by historical standards".

The question is, now that the budget has been in effect for a full quarter, did he expect the recovery to be this weak? If not, then what is he going to do about it in light of the even more dismal figures that we see from day to day?

This government's track record is nothing to get excited about when it comes to making projections. If we look at the 1989 budget, the 1990 budget, the 1991 budget or this year's budget we will find that in terms of gross domestic product, inflation, deficit reduction and unemployment both finance ministers—the current minister and his predecessor, the present Minister for International Trade—in the last four budgets have been painting a very rosy picture, one that has not been borne out by reality.

Take 1990, for example, when the then Minister of Finance projected gross domestic product growth of 1.3 per cent. He was off by a country mile. It was only about a half of one per cent. Other figures for those four years will illustrate a similar picture.

That is the broad brush approach to this issue. That is generally why we in this party cannot stomach the idea of giving another *carte blanche* to this government, because of its track record to date.

Generalities by themselves, whether in this Chamber or in the country at large, do not really convey the agony and the human pain that is out there as a result of the terrible leadership of this administration.

Mr. Boudria: Lack of leadership.

Mr. Simmons: To put a human face on it, let us look at some of the realities as they relate to a particular part of the country.

Supply

My friend from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell says: "Lack of leadership". As usual, my friend is being his generous self. If it were only a lack of leadership, if only the Conservatives had not led at all we would not be in as bad shape as we are. However, I say to him, and I know he means well, that not only has there sometimes been a lack of leadership but there has also been some terrible leadership in the absolutely wrong direction.

We saw an example of it in the last few days when the Prime Minister pounded his chest for taking this great brave step in signing the biodiversity agreement. He became the champion because he had taken on the United States. Of course, the reality is somewhat different. Mr. Bush needed a favour.

He needed to appeal to the right wing that Ross Perot is appealing to in the United States. He picked up the phone and he called the man who has, without fail, delivered for him over the last few years. He said to him: "Prime Minister, pretend you are painting me into a corner because every time you attack me on this issue of biodiversity you get me votes down here in the United States".

Is it not more than passing strange that the two statements, the American President saying he would not sign the biodiversity agreement and the Prime Minister of Canada saying that he was going to sign it and lead the charge, synchronized almost within minutes, certainly within hours?

An hon. member: Coincidence.

Mr. Simmons: They were orchestrated to be done exactly that way.

We have heard from this Prime Minister before. Whether he is rolling the dice on constitutional matters or strutting the international stage, the script is the same. He tries to hoodwink as many people as he can at any point in time.

It so happens that the people he attempts to hoodwink have been hoodwinked once too often. He is transparent. They see through him.

Let me talk about some of those people, because I want to put a human face on this situation. I have the privilege to represent about 90,000 people in 158 communities in rural Newfoundland, on the southwest coast and a bit of the west coast of Newfoundland.