

government. I do not mind confessing, and I have said this before, that no person was better liked for his essential honesty than the present Minister of Finance. He has been around this House for 13 years now.

Mr. Paproski: He should know better.

Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain): He should know that even if you are honest yourself, when you take over the job as Minister of Finance you have a job to do, that is, to face up to the fact which everyone knows, that the advice civil servants have been giving their ministers for 30 odd years has been consistently wrong, because it is based on a theory not supported by quantitative evidence. We have found a failure in the theories for the past 15 years, particularly for the past five.

The government resists many new ideas when it deals with advice given to it where it affects the Department of Finance. I am not the only one putting forward this concept of potential budgeting. The Economic Council of Canada, which was set up to give alternative advice to the government, over and over again has appealed to the government to use some form of potential budgeting. It is not the answer to everything, but it is a help.

We have been in a classic situation for the past four years with rising unemployment, rising inflation, and rising deficits in the budget. The minister could have helped balance his budget, helped people get jobs, and helped get the country going again, but the civil servants in that department forced this minister, well liked and honest as he has been, into a position where he is down on his knees exactly the same as his predecessors. He walked into this House with a neutral budget which ignored this principle to move forward.

Coming from Shawinigan in Quebec where people are known for their common sense and their disregard for experts, I had hoped he would stand up for his proposal that he was personally in support of and say, "I am the Minister of Finance. I want this done. Get me the details and make it work".

Whether he had the support of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) or not, I do not know. However, that poor Minister of Finance has been forced to come into this House in the two or three weeks since his budget to defend himself on a hopeless issue of trying to start a political fight with the province of Quebec. This is the tragedy we have witnessed here.

A fine person, a nice person, has been forced to accept the will of the civil servants on this question, not taking advantage of the opportunity to balance the budget and to use a better idea, namely, potential budgeting and, second, to fight on the grounds that he was not going to do anything to help the country economically, but going to start a political fight with the province of Quebec, hoping to create a division between Quebec and the rest of Canada, then walk around and pretend he is the only person who can get us out of the mess the Prime Minister got us into.

It is a tragedy to see a very fine human being destroyed, not only by civil servants but by the Prime Minister who seems to

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have only one motive for being in this House, to keep a glorious fight going between various parts of this country. With all this opportunity to help the country economically and to get people working again, the Prime Minister chooses this particular time to start a political science fight with his old friend and buddy, the premier of Quebec. When you get down to it, they will end up the same buddies they have always been, running that phony fight on both sides, all in the name of keeping in the headlines.

The province of Quebec is part of Canada. The province of Quebec wants to be part of Canada. The province of Quebec is suffering more than most parts of Canada in this present stagflation. They would give anything if the government in Ottawa would grapple with the problems of agriculture and industry in the province of Quebec and get at the great development opportunities which exist in that province.

Resource wise, that province is one of the richest places in Canada. They are hard working people with great resources and great opportunities for markets, and all they get from their politicians in that province is a fight, and name calling, or something that does not even count.

● (1602)

This pretence that our country is disunited because people speak a different language in Quebec is as phony as a three-dollar bill and worth as much. The people in Quebec are united with us in believing we have a good country, and they would like to make it even better. But the minister did not take the opportunity of the budget to use the income tax provisions to get the country rolling again.

Mr. Hugh A. Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and the Environment): Mr. Speaker, perhaps I could comment on the remarks made by the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton). By the end of his speech I felt that the only thing he left out was that Mr. Levesque had become a Father of Confederation. It seems the premier of Quebec has become a folk hero to the conservative opposition.

Mr. Paproski: That is what you would like people to believe.

Mr. Anderson: This is an historic budget. It is historic because it is the first time since Confederation that the federal government has brought in a budget in co-operation with the provinces of Canada, the first in which a common approach was taken in deciding the best means to stimulate the economy. This is sometimes overlooked, perhaps for political reasons, but as I say, I believe the budget will be marked by historians as a turning point in federal-provincial relations very similar to what happened earlier this year when the provinces sat down with the federal government, not in a spirit of confrontation but regardless of party, realizing they were engaged in an attempt as leaders of the country to chart a course which would benefit the people of Canada.

It is, indeed, a turning point when politicians can forget political grandstanding and look at the good of the electorate