

The Address

problem. Small factories across the land are closing every day. Nobody can count on this government. This government has turned its back on all the people who are having problems in Canada.

These days the only people who can find work are Tories who work for committees and royal commissions.

We know what has to be done. We have to make sure we have an interest rate policy that makes some sense. We might have to accept a lower Canadian dollar.

What is the problem with the business community today? Look at its situation. Five years ago the dollar was at a more competitive level according to the reality of Canada. That means that today 20 per cent have lack of competitiveness because of the high dollar. The interest rate is 4 points higher on average than the United States. If it is 10 per cent it means that on the item of interest rate for any business the Canadian businessman and producer have to pay 40 per cent more than an American in interest rates. No wonder they cannot compete.

I was in northern Ontario last weekend. In the lumber business sawmills are closing down one after the other. It is the same in Quebec and New Brunswick. Why? Because now we have an export tax imposed on Canada by the American government of 15 per cent. So when you add the 15 per cent plus the 40 per cent for interest costs plus the high Canadian dollar it is no wonder factories and sawmills are closing by the dozen.

I see the minister is now in his seat. He has changed jobs. In research and development we are now 17 out of 23 in the OECD.

The Prime Minister said to Canadians in 1984: "I will double research and development". We went down from 1.42 per cent of GDP in 1984 to 1.28 today, a decline of more than 10 per cent, and the Prime Minister said he was going to double that.

An hon. member: Shame, shame.

Mr. Chrétien: I can go on and on. The former Minister of Finance, the one who caused all these problems, is coming to clear the air. He is the one who created the problem. How can he make Canadian industry competitive when he is the one who caused the decline in research and development? How can he make Canadian

workers able to compete in the world when he is the one who cut education year after year after year?

How can we be the best in the world when they have made cuts in training year after year after year. The Prime Minister has put the fox in charge of the chicken coop. No wonder this government is now fourth in the polls.

I said at the beginning of this speech, and I repeat, we are at a crossroads in this land. We want to help the government to solve the national problems and quickly. I am very disappointed that it is waiting three months, because by the end of January there will be a lot of pressure on it to postpone and postpone. I have been there before. I remember very well one time we were to solve a problem and we had from September to December 1980 in which to do it. It took longer than that. We listened to the people. We accepted many amendments to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms because we listened to the people and to the parliamentarians and to the groups. It took longer.

The problem is that if the Prime Minister does not act quickly, we will again have our back to the wall. The problem of the economy will not be solved in that time. Political instability will grow in Canada and investment will dry up because the government is not accepting its responsibilities. We are willing to help. We are willing to help because we believe that, as Canadians, we are very privileged people, including the people who sit there. When you are a Canadian, the best asset you have in your pocket is that little piece of paper that says you are a Canadian citizen. It is the greatest asset we all have.

If Canada had not existed, Quebec would not exist anymore. Look at what happened to the francophones in Louisiana and in New England. Here in Canada, at the time of Confederation, we were one million francophones.

[*Translation*]

There were one million francophones in Canada at the time. Now there are 6.5 million of us.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Chrétien: There are more francophones outside Quebec than there were in the Canada of 1867. In Quebec, 84 per cent of the people are francophones, Mr. Speaker, and 94 per cent of Quebecers speak French. All