

proposals are effective. At one point the minister even tried to insult the intelligence of the Canadian people by suggesting that the measures announced by his predecessor, Mr. Macdonald, on March 31, 1977, had not yet taken effect. I suppose if those measures did not take effect, certainly the ones introduced last fall could hardly be expected to produce results today.

The minister has made his first legitimate budget statement in this House, and as my leader pointed out so aptly yesterday, it was the minister's first and last budget. We find ourselves in the same situation we were in previously. The minister has tinkered here and fiddled there, with the same lack of commitment and the same ignorance of economic reality. The same thing happened in March and in October of 1977. It has been said that Nero fiddled while Rome burned, and I think possibly it would be appropriate to say that in this instance Chrétien tinkered while Canada tumbled.

● (1452)

Nothing illustrates more the utter bankruptcy of this government's policies than the tumble of the Canadian dollar on the world money markets. This has been more pronounced even since the minister made his budget statement a few evenings ago. The morning after the budget announcement, the dollar sank to a low of 87.57 cents. Then it continued to tumble downward to its current level of 86.79 cents in terms of the U.S. dollar as of noon today. This indicates in a frighteningly dramatic way that the international community of economic experts have no confidence whatever in the government's ability to meet the serious problems facing our nation at present.

While I am on this point may I just say that Canadians should be outraged at the way this government has handled the decline of the dollar. It is bad enough that the dollar has fallen, but in the long slide from its former level to its current level Canadians have lost between \$1 billion and \$1.5 billion. This is money wasted, and I say Canadians should be outraged. On the one hand, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) says we have a floating dollar, and this was stated again by the Minister of Finance, and on the other hand the Minister of Finance pours \$1.5 billion down the drain to keep the dollar from floating. It is precisely this kind of indecision and dishonesty on the part of the government which causes lack of confidence in the Canadian dollar.

I believe it is time the Prime Minister and his government came clean with the Canadian people on this issue: do we have a floating dollar or do we not?

**Mr. Sharp:** Yes.

**Mr. Patterson:** If we have a floating dollar, then why go to the trouble of trying to prop it up and, by this means, keep it from floating? Someone said yesterday that the dollar has been floating. It has been sinking until today, and if you want to see it, you have to wear goggles and a snorkel. Perhaps we should consider that. Perhaps it is time to put away the

### *The Budget—Mr. Patterson*

wishy-washy economics of expediency and introduce some basic directional changes.

All of our reputable domestic economic analysts were in agreement prior to the budget's introduction that a complete structural turn-around was necessary in our economic and fiscal policies to restore confidence in our national economy, get the country working again, and stem the tide of spiralling inflation. In this task the minister has failed miserably. All he could do was just to tinker around with it. I think we could say that Macdonald the thumper has been replaced by Chrétien the tinker.

I say that structural changes are necessary in this country, but there appears to be no desire on the part of this tired, aging, weak government to put any direction into our national economy. The government has been preoccupied with many other matters, in fact so preoccupied that it has no time or desire to pay attention to the critical economic matters facing us.

I remember that for months the government trumpeted the idea that, after all, the major problem in Canada was national unity and that, if we were to achieve national unity, it was going to be by the implementation of linguistic policies, and everybody had to accept that. The responsibility and the blame were placed upon the English speaking people of this country, and the result was a great deal of resentment. But in later times, when things began to get pretty tough and the Prime Minister came alive, he and some of his ministers began to say that, after all, the most important problem facing Canada was the economy. I am not just sure what they think is the most important problem. The Prime Minister has been too concerned with the language policy and with other matters concerning the contractual link with the European Economic Community. He and his ministers have been determined to change the social structure of Canada and to change the moral values of this nation. They have been too busy with these things to take care of the fundamental problem that confronts us, namely, that if we cannot solve our economic problems we will not have the occasion to take care of our country in the long run.

We come to the conclusion then that after looking at the picture as it has developed, an exodus of supporters of the government has begun, and an exodus of cabinet ministers, which is very significant. My friend, the hon. member for Labelle (Mr. Dupras), was talking about the ones who have decided not to run for the Conservative party this time, but I ask him why has John Turner left, why has Paul Hellyer left, why have many others left, such as Don Macdonald, for instance? Were they unimportant individuals? Did they not count in the make-up of the cabinet or in the make-up of the party? Where did they go and why did they go? How can the government go to the people and tell them "return us", when many of their most important, influential and able ministers could not stand it and left?

**An hon. Member:** They are left with their disabled.