

*Currency Devaluation*

In other words, to make it clear, part of the reason that the Canadian dollar has fallen has been inconsistency between what the government said it was doing and what it has in fact been doing. It is the policy and the duplicity of the government which have driven the value of the Canadian dollar down.

Again, Mr. McLaughlin said:

But surely the experience of governments around the world has shown that any currency defended at a level other than what the market says it should be must inevitably end up at the market level anyway. Government support is not only ineffective but frequently counter-productive.

Certainly last year the defensive efforts of the government had, in my view, a reverse effect. This support probably pushed the Canadian dollar down.

That is the view of the chairman of the Royal Bank. That was his public testimony and, as we in the House of Commons know, he was saying publicly what countless other Canadians expert in this field have been saying privately. There is direct and widespread disagreement with the policy being followed by the government to support the Canadian dollar. There is a widespread view that this policy is, in Mr. McLaughlin's words, "probably pushing the Canadian dollar down."

We know that the dollar continues to drop. We know that every drop in its value adds to inflation in this country. We have a right to know why the government is pursuing a course which has so obviously failed. We have a right to know what forecasts, what expertise in possession of the government, can justify a policy which, on all the evidence, is failing miserably. But this information is not available to parliament and to the people of Canada. Questions put in this House are evaded or else they are not understood.

When the governor of the Bank of Canada appeared before the standing committee, his answer to Mr. McLaughlin's charge was simply: "Mr. McLaughlin is wrong." Nothing more. There was no explanation, no defence. When the minister appears before that committee he is deliberately protected from questioning by Liberal members who ask about everything else, and then he is further protected by a Liberal deputy chairman who tries to deny the official opposition their right to ask questions.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

● (1540)

**Mr. Martin:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Reference has been made to proceedings before a committee of this House at which the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) was not present, and it seems to me there should be an opportunity for the chairman of that committee or someone on his behalf to make a response. Incorrect information is being placed on the record.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The contributions to the debate which ensue this afternoon can take the form of any intervention which may be desired. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) has the floor.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If the deputy chairman wants to have an opportunity to participate in this debate, perhaps he should consult his superiors in his party to see if he

[Mr. Clark.]

can get on the list of speakers. Or perhaps the view of the Liberal party in relation to members of that committee is that none of them should be heard on any circumstance at all. Perhaps that view will prevail and this deputy chairman will be denied his right to make a point, just as members of my party were denied their right to put questions in the standing committee.

**Mr. Leblanc (Laurier):** You are not being fair, Joe.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Clark:** There is a parliamentary secretary opposite who is very nervous. I am not surprised about that. Anyone who has to serve as parliamentary secretary to this Minister of Finance, when we have an economic policy which has driven the dollar down and the rate of inflation up and which is driving the unemployment rate up, deserves to be nervous.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Clark:** What is clear to all the world and even to the very nervous parliamentary secretary is that the present government policy is not working at all.

**Mr. Martin:** Nonsense.

**Mr. Clark:** The hon. parliamentary secretary says "nonsense" because the dollar is up to 83.79 cents today. It has dropped 20 per cent in two years.

**Mr. Martin:** Nonsense.

**Mr. Clark:** The parliamentary secretary continues to speak from his seat. Is he arguing that the Government of Canada has deliberately driven the dollar down, or has it simply fallen down because of the inadvertence of this government? Is he arguing that it is the deliberate policy of this government to allow more than a million people to be out of work in this country? Is the parliamentary secretary arguing that it is the deliberate policy of this government to have the dollar drop in such a way as to increase inflation?

**Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton):** It is no wonder he speaks from his seat.

**Mr. Clark:** There is a very real question as to whether the policy being followed is deliberate or accidental. Most of us think this government does not know what it is doing. Most of us think that is the reason the government refuses to let evidence be public, that that is the reason it put a gag on the standing committee and that is the reason it keeps forecasts secret and refuses to allow witnesses to come before committees so that they can be examined and we can have the benefit of their expert testimony. We think this government does not know what it is doing. We think that the international community, whose decisions affect the value of the Canadian dollar, has also come to the conclusion that this government has no idea what it is doing, and that is adding significantly to the uncertainty which exists both in the international community and here at home. That is another factor which is reducing the