

shamefaced reversal of attitude, it is still the same old crowd, still the same old government.

This is the same government that day after day, week after week rejected our demands for its forecasts of economic trends. It is the same government which, refusing to give such forecasts, expressed its confidence that everything was going better and better all the time. It is the same government whose past decisions now stand revealed by the minister himself as ineffective, irrelevant and inappropriate to the needs of the country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to describe the government as a bungling, incompetent group of economic ignoramuses, because in the present circumstances of the country I do not feel like being that charitable.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: It will be sufficient to say that the policies of the government have been bankrupt in every sphere of economic activity, bankrupt to the extent that this afternoon the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Marchand), in trying to defend his policies, the inadequacy of his regional development policies, had to retreat into the weaknesses of the national economy. Yet, Mr. Speaker, it is not his policies that are inadequate; it is the economy of the country as a whole.

• (8:30 p.m.)

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): Be serious, please.

Mr. Stanfield: I listened to the Minister of Finance and now I am trying to listen to some of the rabble across the way and their catcalls, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hees: They are a very rude lot.

Mr. Stanfield: Whatever else the minister's speech may have demonstrated, the statement he just made constitutes the clearest possible admission that the government has been wrong in its policies over the past six months and over the past year, and that we have been right.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hees: Pierre told us inflation was licked.

Mr. Stanfield: His admission is wrong to the extent that he is coming forward tonight and announcing the government is to spend a million dollars. That is how right we were and how wrong he has been—a million dollars!

Mr. Benson: You don't know the difference between a million and a billion.

Mr. Stanfield: A billion dollars, Mr. Speaker. I know the difference. I do not expect the minister to apologize; I do not think that is particularly relevant. But we now have the government's admission of its own economic incompetence. I do not suppose it came very easily, certainly not in terms of the long time it took for this announcement to come forth. It came from a government cornered in a hole of its own digging. It came when there was no alternative. But it came, and that is about the only good thing, without qualification, that I am able to say about this government.

Nothing could be a clearer demonstration of the inadequacy and inappropriateness of the June budget presented by the Minister of Finance. The predictions of the minister have been wrong all year, Mr. Speaker. Outside economists have predicted some growth in the economy, but independent economists have not predicted any significant reduction in unemployment in the course of 1971 based on the fiscal policies that the minister produced in his June budget. The minister cannot quarrel with that; he knows it is so. Based on what independent economists were saying, I predicted earlier in the year that the seasonally adjusted rate of unemployment would not fall during 1971, unfortunately, below 6 per cent. The minister jeered at me. He ridiculed me, Mr. Speaker.

Now we have lame explanations about an unexpected growth in the work force, increased participation in the work force. The government has not run into anything that was not predicted long ago by the Economic Council.

Mr. Hees: Pierre told us inflation was licked.

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): How is the heavy water there, Bob?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Stanfield: It is all right.

Mr. Ricard: If you had something heavy in your head, it would be better.

Mr. Stanfield: I know that I am doing all right, too, when I hear that sort of remark from across the floor.

Mr. Ricard: There is a hole in your head; that is why you are not heavy at all.

Mr. Hees: Pierre is ready to leave town.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Stanfield: We now have massive unemployment. We now have continuing inflation, massive unemployment and a massive deficit. The Minister of Finance has worked himself and the country into a very considerable bind. He has left himself very little room to manoeuvre. It is in this unfortunate stance that we are now caught by the United States initiative. Mr. Speaker, the hon. member can read this speech if he cannot listen.

It is very late now to tackle problems for this winter—it is mid-October. I am enjoying the good humour of the House tonight. Certainly there has been no sense of urgency shown on the government benches in recent months—no sense of urgency in regard to inviting the provinces to meet, no sense of urgency with regard to announcing a program to tackle massive unemployment; simply the repeated pretence that everything was going along all right and everything was improving.

Mr. Speaker, I think the government must have been incapable of recognizing that the budget was wrong and that its forecasts were wrong. I think its attitude must have been that it just cannot be wrong in its forecasts. Last month it took refuge in the argument about our