

of conventional wisdom—is no longer satisfactory to meet the problems this country faces.

I suggest it is therefore important to turn our attention, as we move through a period of stability and growth in the next year and in accepting the invitation of the hon. member for Fundy-Royal (Mr. Fairweather)—and I have a great deal of confidence that the predictions of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) will be borne out—to the fact that some of these problems should be approached in a broad, non-partisan fashion through the aegis of the standing committees which could examine, for instance, the report of the Prices and Incomes Commission when its findings after its year of study have been completed, to determine what sort of powers, if any, the government of Canada will be forced to adopt in order to accomplish the three goals in which all of us believe. That dimension, in my opinion, has been missing in this debate.

The second point I wish to make by way of conclusion, having explored before six o'clock what I consider to be the inadequacies of either a compulsory incomes program or a system of national collective bargaining, is that one thing we can do is broaden and strengthen consultation between the government and the private sector. As I quoted from the sixth report of the Economic Council, the role of the federal government in dealing with the particular problem we confront is limited. The most honest assessment of the federal government's role will accept the fact that our responsibilities are limited. There is a role for the private sector, for provincial governments and even for municipal governments. There is a role in the allegedly free enterprise economy for the private sector. They have their own responsibilities in this area. But it seems to me that at the national level we have not yet explored these matters fully and openly with the private sector, involving the total talents available there, the leadership of the trade union movement, the leadership among the industrial sector and national policies directed toward a national strategy. I argue that we might develop a national strategy if we can develop within the private sector, labour and management alike, the sort of confidence which will allow for the full co-operation and the full utilization of the talent and ideas that are available.

● (8:10 p.m.)

The challenge to the Canadian economy is a global one. I represent a riding which knows something about Japanese competition. When one examines how the Japanese have organized themselves, the collusion that exists between the industrial and the governmental sector, one notes a concerted, united attack on markets abroad. It seems to me, therefore, elementary that some form of common strategy will have to be developed in this country. We cannot expect the sort of discipline that exists in Japan to prevail here. The culture and the ethic of this country are different. People are not disposed to adopt the disciplined way of the Japanese. I do not intend to question the culture by which they work and live, but I state it as a fact. Here we have to develop a national strategy which is consistent with a generally free economy and a society which is made up of individualists.

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Unless we develop such a strategy at the national level, with the government using the full resources of the private sector and calling upon them for their ideas and their participation, the sort of inroads made into our economy and the challenges we have faced will be even more serious than in the past. My intervention has been brief, Mr. Speaker, and I would now like to yield the floor to the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield).

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, this is my third intervention in this debate, but I make no apology for speaking three times and at some length on the subject of the economic difficulties that the government has created for the country, because each time I have spoken the situation has become more pressing and more serious. As reflected in the remarks of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) and hon. members on the other side of the House, in this debate and elsewhere, the government has its own rather peculiar interpretation of the state of the economy.

It is our responsibility as the opposition to try to bring this government back to some sense of reality. That is a difficult job with the government we have at present, but we have tried and we shall continue to try. We shall do so because this Parliament does not happen to be just a debating society where you score points and you win or lose on that basis. This Parliament, through its theoretical control of the cabinet, is supposed to be a place of decision and a place of power. This is a place where while awaiting their final appeal to the Canadian electorate hon. gentlemen opposite have to defend their actions or lack of same. That is what they should be doing during this debate on the budget. They have a heavy responsibility, which I must say they bear rather lightly—too lightly, some might say—for the serious economic and human condition that exists in Canada today.

The economic management of this country is not just a matter of manipulating figures. I believe there is a moral factor involved in the responsibility for economic management, and surely that moral factor demands that those who are responsible should feel a long-range obligation to do right by the people of Canada. Instead, we are governed today by short-range principles of expediency that seem to be aimed much more at making the government look right at the right time. The immediate past cycle of inflation and recession vividly illustrates a government that is following, not leading, and their method of operation is clear. Their approach to the problem of inflation is clearly defined in this way: play it safe until the cycle has passed its peak, take some initial action that looks good on paper but is woefully weak in fact, and once the crisis has peaked, slide with speed down the slope into recession and define that as the next problem to be courageously met by the government.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) says that his government practises anti-cyclical economic management. I am convinced from the past series of budgets that this claim is specious. All we see are examples of the government either flooding the carburettor or pounding on the brakes as they ride the cycles, and as they make the ride they stop and start at most of the wrong places. There is a political benefit in the approach if you can make the