

Mr. Stanfield: Obviously, any decision of this government has approximately the same life span as a gnat. But whether this policy stays or goes, or whether it is repudiated and returned again in the days and weeks ahead, that particular decision does stand as a permanent monument to this government's bogglement in reacting to the present crisis on the one hand, and to this government's contempt for the rightful interest of the provinces on the other hand. Because of this government's previous opposition to such a proposal to build a pipeline to Montreal, this latest turnabout caused alarm and resentment in many other provinces. There was no previous consultation, despite what they may suggest, which indicates not only this government's indifference and disdain for the interests of the provinces, as I have said, but it also indicates that this decision was made, as has become the custom of those gentlemen opposite, off-the-cuff and in an atmosphere of political expediency.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: We certainly need a national energy policy in this country, but the reason for this new energy policy escapes me, unless it was indeed for some political reason related to the government's very keen self-interest in survival. Surely, Sir, this reversal in decision could have been the subject of consultation with the provinces. But this reversal and this decision does tell us what many of us have already suspected, that the recent government conference with the western provinces was meant simply as a short-term public relations measure. If anything could have been learned from that conference, even by those as slow to grasp matters as members of this government, the lesson was that the western provinces would expect, as a matter of right, to be associated with and partners in the making of decisions on national policy where those decisions had a direct bearing on the affairs of those provinces.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: Gall is not exactly a polite word, Mr. Speaker, but I have not been able to think of a better one. I have long been impressed by the gall of some of those opposite on the front benches. But I thought the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Macdonald) exceeded himself recently, and that is saying something, with his statement that the provinces of Quebec, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland had failed to consult the federal government adequately with respect to their own oil refinery projects.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

Mr. Stanfield: As far as Newfoundland is concerned, Mr. Speaker, the federal government presence there has been constant.

In the case of Nova Scotia, the federal government has shown itself to be a determined partner in its development.

As for Quebec, the projects of that province have been discussed openly for months. Therefore, this accusation of inadequate consultation would rather turn itself back against the minister himself and the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) who have given Quebec a half hour's notice of

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the reversal and change of the federal energy policy, and as far as we know, have not advised at all either Alberta or the other provinces concerned.

[English]

But the country ought not to be distracted by this spectacular example of federalism by fiat. We ought to observe the massive, total arrogance but above all we must continue to focus upon the substantive issue. What has all this reaction by this government accomplished?

An hon. Member: Zero.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, just consider what the Prime Minister did not say last Tuesday. He did not observe that the country is to endure another round of wage increases, work stoppages and strikes and increased pressure on costs and prices. No one could disparage the efforts of those who have the bargaining power to do so for making an effort to keep afloat on this rising tide of uncontrolled inflation. No one could blame anyone for taking whatever refuge he can from an uncontrolled and unchecked period of rising prices and a gutless government determined only to ride out the storm.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: But there are those in Canada who have no powerful trade union or trade association, who have no levers to pull, who have no means of adjusting their incomes to meet the demands of increased prices and rates of interest. They are the great majority of working Canadians and their families.

Mr. Speaker, this government is not kept here by public confidence; they are not maintained in office by faith and trust in their policies. They are not kept here because events have proven them right in their judgment and in their management of the country's affairs. They are kept here, Sir, for the political convenience of a group of members in this House. As long as they are here, the members of this government will keep improvising policies of political convenience. And the real losers, Sir,—

● (1510)

An hon. Member: Are the Conservatives.

Mr. Stanfield: The real losers are not the members of my party who may lose motions of confidence from time to time. The real losers are the Canadian people of ordinary means, because the ordinary Canadian cannot ride things out, Sir. This is a tragic situation, all the more tragic because there is an alternative.

I have spoken many times on the serious and dangerous growth of inflationary psychology in Canada. Nothing fuels and feeds such a psychology so much as the posture of a government that nothing can be done or, on the basis of recent events, that very little can be done. Our fundamental concern from the outset has related to the danger of inflationary psychology taking deep hold and spreading rapidly throughout the country. This, Sir, is not simply an economic condition that can be approached with computers, slide rules and mathematical equations. Inflationary psychology is a social problem. I hesitate to call it a social disease, because that term has another generally accepted