

Anti-Inflation Program

Mr. Grafftey: Bungling!

Mr. Chrétien: I think that someone who cannot look after his own luggage should not be commenting.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Chrétien: After all the reductions are made, totalling more than \$1.5 billion from the levels we envisaged in November, expenditures for 1976-77 will still grow by several billion dollars over those of 1975-76. The giant expenditure programs that we have not touched—old age security and the guaranteed income supplement; interest charges on the public debt; fiscal transfers to the provinces; other transfers to the provinces for hospital care, medicare, and welfare; payments to the Unemployment Insurance Commission—all have their own dynamics of growth that add billions of dollars to the total. The hundreds of services that remain have to be financed at higher prices and higher salary levels.

The process of controlling and cutting government expenditures is a continuous one and no single set of actions such as these we have taken is sufficient. All of us, the public, the members of parliament, ministers, and public servants, must reduce our demands on the public treasury. Good programs will have to be deferred, reduced or eliminated. Things that need doing will not be done. We must accept that fact if expenditures are to be controlled. The reductions I have announced tonight are not the end of a process; they are merely part of a continuing process of restraint.

In February I will be tabling the main estimates, and at that time I will tell you the growth in total expenditures for 1976-77 which we will be expecting. I cannot say what it will be at this time but I can assure you that it will reflect the government's strong commitment to restraint.

In conclusion I would like to thank all the ministers and the officials in every department who have spent many hours and much time trying to make their points.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Chrétien: For six years, one month and three days I have been in departments where I was serving a public which needed some service, and I tell you, as I stand in my place, that I am not a very happy man now but I know that I am doing what I have to do to make sure that this country will grow more prosperous. Many of the programs which we have to stop at this time will be reintroduced in the future—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Chrétien:—because we believe on both sides that a responsible government will be able to make this country grow and flourish, not only for ourselves but also for the generations to come.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. gentlemen opposite, as well as my own colleagues, for the very warm reception they have accorded me here this evening.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[Mr. Chrétien.]

Mr. Stanfield: But I have to say to you, Sir, that Canadians are now witnessing the price that has to be paid for a government which has been slow to learn, slow to act, but quick to spend, particularly on its own trappings and its own aggrandizement.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (2030)

Mr. Stanfield: The same Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) who sits across the aisle here this evening went around this country making \$4 billion to \$5 billion worth of campaign promises last year while he sold this country a bill of goods on leadership.

An hon. Member: Smile away, Pierre.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Stanfield: I do not want my hon. friends opposite to tire themselves out this early in the evening because we are just getting started. I think it might be good for them to listen to the truth for a few minutes.

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): You wouldn't know the difference.

An hon. Member: Who is the Leader of the Opposition?

Mr. Stanfield: I do not blame my hon. friends opposite for trying to distract attention from the performance of the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Chrétien), but if they want to make it difficult for me to speak tonight, I am sure Mr. Speaker will co-operate with me.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Stanfield: After all, I have lived with my hon. friends for a good many years in this House.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Perhaps some of the hon. members behind the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) who are shouting most vigorously at the moment should realize that they also can mar an attempt to make a contribution—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The fact of the matter is, however, that the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Chrétien), despite one or two incidents of intervention, did have a good, respectful attention, and I think the same ought to be given to all members of the opposition who have the opportunity to speak.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: It has to be said that it is becoming more apparent each day that the government is not a government of leadership in terms of the Canadian economy. It has been alternately dragging of foot and heavy of hand. It has not led, it has only reacted, and we have a reaction here this evening of some sorts. It has certainly not led by