

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): And the government would not be in office.

Mr. Stanfield: We are talking in terms of billions of dollars. Think of the pressure put on the individual working Canadian by rising prices, unemployment insurance payments and taxes of all sorts. When the government puts a control program before the Canadian people, asking them to accept certain restraints with regard to remuneration, wages and salaries, I have to ask whether the government is prepared to commit itself not to take more of the people's incomes through such period of restraint.

● (1520)

We see the weasel statement in the white paper in which the government says it recognizes the importance of having its expenditures follow the same trend as the gross national product—a statement that does not mean anything at all. When the Canadian people are being asked to adopt a program of restraint for a period of perhaps three, four or more years, they are entitled to some pretty firm statements from the government as to how restrained it is prepared to be in putting its hands into their pockets to take away even more of their restricted earnings. You have to think of the sacrifice being asked of the individual arising out of the policy the government has announced. How can so much be asked, on the one hand, and so little answered on the other?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: That is no recipe for stimulating co-operation and support for the program. It is a recipe for inciting resistance, exactly the opposite of what is required. The only example of any substantial or significant effort by the government to impose restraint is in connection with the health care program, where the government has decided, unilaterally, to place a ceiling on its expenditures, passing the buck to the provinces rather than making any real effort to achieve control within the program. It is a unilateral solution being imposed upon the provinces.

On the matter of creating public perception that restraint is a sincere intention of the government, the going will be very tough. Anyone with a vivid memory of Liberal television advertising during the 1974 election campaign might be inclined to say that the ghosts of all those gassed chickens have come home to roost.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) now tosses out phrases like "living beyond our means" as he lectures, threatens and exhorts his way around the country. That is interesting. It is most interesting that he neglects to mention that before his administration took office, Canadians generally relied on the federal government to tell them what were their means. The Prime Minister talks about people demanding services from government, and in the same breath he talks about leadership. In 1974 he made \$4 billion to \$5 billion worth of promises, all the while talking about leadership. In 1972 he talked about goodies and candy.

His government has changed the whole nature of responsibility in administering the means of Canadians. It

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has betrayed the essence of federal economic leadership; it has almost made the word itself meaningless. What the government is doing now is not providing leadership; it is purely and simply a case of reaction in desperation. Whether the desperation was more keenly felt about the nation's economy, or about some vote that might take place at a Liberal convention, I do not know.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: That is an example of how little stock I am prepared to put in the sincerity of their actions. What are these means within which we should be prepared to live? The government will not even tell the House and the country the current state of the country's deficit. I say it will not tell us because I am not prepared to believe that it cannot tell us. When I was involved in provincial government I had nowhere near the sophisticated apparatus available to me that this government has, but I always had a ballpark fix on what the years' financial results were going to be. Therefore, no one opposite can pretend they do not know the latest forecast of the budget deficit.

How is anyone going to trust a government which, in today's circumstances, will not tell us how far it is extended beyond its own means but says, "You must learn to live within your means", when its means are only provided through our means in the first place? There are reports that the deficit for the current fiscal year will be \$7 billion or more. We cannot get any response from the minister. There are also reports, which seem to be well founded, that the deficit for the next fiscal year will be substantially larger than that.

People living in New York city at least know what they are up against. At this moment, Canadians are not even being given a clue. They are threatened by the government. They are told to live within their means or court being subjected to a further terrible economic thumb-screw. They are told this by a government which takes their tax money today and says it will give an accounting later, a government that asks them to adopt a program today and says they will tell the story later. This attitude, in itself, makes a farce of the Prime Minister's admonitions about changing attitudes. The Prime Minister gives the impression that it really does not matter much to him whether he has a government in a permissive society or an authoritarian society. Whatever became of the just society seems to be just an academic question today.

This perception has to be changed and it will only be changed by changing the reality of the situation. The government has finally admitted that the problem of inflationary expectations in Canada is self-feeding. It has finally abandoned the myth that our problem is largely international and, therefore, beyond our control. Having taken that giant step into reality, after two years of denying the evidence and the indicators, it has to go all the way if it wants to be believed. The truth extended only up to a point just will not do. The whole truth, and nothing but the truth, must be added as requirements for credibility. These people have said so many things which have devalued the currency of their credibility that they cannot afford to be less than frank today. There certainly must be no restraint on the truth.