

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

● (1620)

**Mr. Clark:** I should say that is particularly so on economic matters, because any honest, objective review of events in this House during the period of his leadership of this party indicates that he has been the singlemost creative source of economic policy in this chamber. Whether the matter has been indexing which was derided and then adopted by the government opposite, or whether it was an incomes policy which was reviled and then adopted by hon. members opposite, the hon. member for Halifax has set the pace, has indicated the foresight and courage that would have made him an outstanding leader of the country and made him an outstanding leader of this party and leader of the opposition.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Clark:** Have to say, not to overstate the case, that this is a deeply disappointing budget, not just because it fails to give the leadership that Canada now requires on economic matters, but also it is a budget that is so much less than many of us have expected from the new Minister of Finance. I particularly regret that the minister is absent at the moment because I want to say one or two good things about him that he might not have expected.

**An hon. Member:** He may come in.

**An hon. Member:** That will bring him in.

**Mr. Clark:** I think most of us who have had dealings with the Minister of Finance in his previous incarnations have disagreed with him often, but we have always recognized and respected him as a combative partisan in a place that requires combative partisans. We recognize him as a competent and fairly tough minister who is generally willing to rise to challenges. We often disagree with the challenges he saw or how he responded, but he was generally willing to rise to them. That is what has been doubly disappointing about his performance here. He faced a great opportunity to bring economic leadership to the country, to respond to the challenge of drift which is, unfortunately, characteristic of this government for most of its mandate. He did not respond to that challenge.

I have noted his self-assessment outside this chamber; that he would prefer to be called unimaginative rather than foolhardy. I can assure him and his colleagues that daring is not an adjective that leaped to our minds on budget night when we heard him read the words that had been prepared for him. If this minister said anything encouraging about this budget, it is that he will seriously consider bringing in another budget before too long.

Of course, there were some good proposals in the budget—good, but minor. Measures to encourage energy conservation—although they will not have the impact that was suggested by the minister who spoke before me—higher income deductions for day care costs, some revision of the unemployment insurance program, and a reintegration of UIC operations with federal Manpower services. These are all measures which our party has advocated for some time and which we support in principle.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### *The Budget—Mr. Clark*

**Mr. Clark:** I should like to emphasize that a budget in Canada at any time, but particularly at this time, should do much more than just tinker with taxes. It should be a document which gives direction to the country. There is an obligation, particularly now, to give Canadians economic leadership.

[Translation]

At that stage, the country was entitled to expect a budget which would have spelled out policies. The last budget dated back to eleven months ago. At that time, the former Minister of Finance had resigned and turned his back on his party, presumably following a major disagreement on economic policies. Furthermore, the government which had won the last election by fighting controls turned around and put forth a control program which was imposed without consultation with its economic partners and whose basic rules were altered at least three times. Later, the Prime Minister caused great concern by referring to "a new economic society" and kept it alive by denying Canadians the opportunity to participate in the making of the post control policies which were secretly entrusted to a technocratic elite controlled by the Prime Minister.

Those three events: the minister's resignation, the policy reversal on controls and the apparent discard by the Prime Minister of the essential elements of the Canadian economic system, all of these created a climate of anxiety in this country. Therefore, the government had the obligation to dispel this anxiety by indicating in the budget the direction it plans to give the Canadian economy but that obligation was ignored like so many others.

[English]

**Mr. Speaker,** there are ominous aspects to that budget because it is a budget that is more dangerous than simply not doing what it should in setting directions that it should set. It has raised some very real questions about government policy, as indicated in the budget, plans for the other partners in the Canadian economy.

Changes have been introduced, again, to the Anti-Inflation Board. This is not the first time that major changes have been introduced to the terms of reference and the powers of that board in a way which has created uncertainty and added to administrative difficulty. The changes themselves would be serious enough, but the point I want to make is that this frequent tinkering with this very powerful mechanism indicates that this government has no understanding that the business community of Canada can accept tough rules. There is no problem with tough rules; the problems of the business community in Canada occur when the rules keep changing, when there is no certainty.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Clark:** It would be one thing if it were rare that the government would consciously create uncertainty in the economic climate of Canada, but unfortunately this has become a pattern. It was a pattern with the northern land regulations which were brought down not long ago after six years of delay, and it has clearly been the pattern with the competition policy. It is a pattern that goes back through the life of this government and indicates a fundamental failure to understand the necessity for a climate of