

Mr. Sharp: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I should like to know how long the minister intends to take. After all, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) spoke for three hours last night. I have lots of time, but there are others in the House who wish to speak.

Mr. Sharp: I was about to close my remarks. I will take half a minute.

If an election comes now, as seems fairly likely, the public will have an opportunity to judge for themselves. The Liberal Party will ask the Canadian people to reject simplistic solutions put forward by the other parties in the House and will ask the Canadian people to continue the policies which have been so successful in bringing Canada through a period of unexampled difficulty.

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I hope the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) will not take it personally if I refer to his expectations of hearing something better from the hon. member for Don Valley (Mr. Gillies). Having participated in previous debates when the hon. gentleman was minister of finance, may I say I did not expect anything better from him.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Stanfield: I do not want to spend much time on the speech of the Secretary of State for External Affairs because if he did have any credibility left, he lost it by supporting that crazy anti-profiteering bill the other day. Anyway, he has not enjoyed any credibility since he was minister of finance. The only thing he knew how to do in fighting inflation when he was minister of finance was to raise taxes. We tried to persuade him that this only added to the problem, but he would not pay any attention.

It is true I suggested voluntary guidelines. I do not know whether it is coincidental, but shortly after the hon. gentleman ceased to be minister of finance, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) found it necessary to declare what almost amounted to an emergency war against inflation. One of the first things the government did, after they had got rid of the hon. gentleman as minister of finance, was to try guidelines—the very thing he had resisted.

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): Tell us what you are going to do.

Mr. Stanfield: It is true I advocated voluntary guidelines. I did what I could to open up the mind of the minister of finance of that day, although without much success. It is true I was opposed then, as I am now, to permanent price controls. I have not changed one iota in that respect, because I think permanent controls would lead to a high degree of centralization in our economy—far too much power in the hands of incompetent people of the type of the Secretary of State for External Affairs, for example. It is true, also, that during the campaign of 1972 when it was apparent inflation was developing in certain aspects of the economy, I said, quite properly, that if I became prime minister and sensed that an inflationary psychology was spreading through the economy, I would not hesitate to resort to temporary controls. And I have

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not changed; I have not backed away from that position. I said I would resort to temporary controls to meet an emergency, and in my judgment there is an emergency facing this country when the level of inflation can be measured in two figures. I will return to this subject in a minute or so.

Today, the House and the country are witnessing a very significant event. We have a complacent and callous government.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: Far too many Canadians have had to pay far too high a price for the delay in reaching this day of reckoning. They, and many others, will continue to pay until a responsible, Progressive Conservative government takes action to restore some sense of order, stability and purpose.

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): We can take a joke.

Mr. Stanfield: There is one thing this government has behind it, and that is a very loud voice.

Mr. Nowlan: Empty vessels make the most sound.

● (1610)

Mr. Stanfield: This government has. The state of inflationary expectations in this country must be dealt with as I said they should be when I was campaigning in 1972. They should have been dealt with long since, yet this House is presented with a budget that just barely acknowledges that the problem exists, and offers nothing in the way of solution.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: I was hoping the minister would wait to hear what I had to say, but I suppose he has other things to do.

Mr. Hees: He is running away.

Mr. Stanfield: This is the same government that maintains still that it has a contingency plan that will be implemented in an emergency. Evidently inflation at a two-figure rate is not enough of an emergency for this government. I just want to say to the members of the government that this House has a contingency plan, too, for getting rid of governments.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: I believe that enough members of this House now think there is sufficient emergency to put the House's contingency plan into operation. For every minute that this two-figure inflation runs unchecked in Canada, the disparity between the have and the have-not Canadians grows greater and the dissatisfaction with our own institution grows deeper. The budget presented by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) does nothing to stop that widening disparity. It does nothing to restore confidence in the competence of the institution of parliament, as it has demonstrated itself to the people of Canada during this session. And the Prime Minister does nothing to enhance the public's perception of this chamber when