

Income Tax

on the need for concepts such as restraint and decline in government spending, and for such concepts to be taken seriously by the government.

On the first point, the government's unwillingness to assume leadership and its growing credibility gap, I think that is self-evident. It has become virtually impossible to have confidence in anything the government does, or really to believe in anything it says it is going to do. I think we are into an era of new speaking, double-thinking and gobbledygook to an extent never before seen in the national political affairs of this country. Let us just take a moment to consider some recent examples.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) campaigned during the recent election, of which my friends opposite are very proud, on the slogan "leadership is the issue, inflation is the problem". Speaking on January 31, I think in Montreal, the Prime Minister was still pursuing the importance of leadership when he said:

You asked us to take leadership—

I do not know whether anybody asked him. I thought he was asking for the right to take leadership. In any event, the Prime Minister said:

You asked us to take leadership, and leadership we are taking.

The rest of his speech on that occasion was very interesting. It was a catalogue of clear and present blue ruin spreading over the country. The curious logic of that speech seemed to be that the government wanted to lead at sometime in the future, after all the ruin had passed. The Prime Minister blamed the unrest in our society on Watergate, on the press, and on a weak opposition.

An hon. Member: And on the weather.

Mr. Stanfield: I don't know whether he was talking about the weather that night, but pretty soon—

An hon. Member: He was under the weather.

● (1520)

Mr. Stanfield: But pretty soon he will be blaming the jobless for unemployment because, after all, if they had jobs they would not be unemployed, and if prices were not so high inflation would not be such a problem.

In Montreal the Prime Minister said the following about the press:

They too don't have solutions.

I do not know whether "they too" referred to us or to the government, but at any rate that is what he said. He said:

They can write an editorial one day giving a solution and they contradict it the week after—nobody remembers. They don't have to be consistent.

So one has the impression that the Prime Minister does not suffer inconsistency gladly. But on closer examination it becomes very clear that it is only somebody else's inconsistency, real or presumed, which nettles the right hon. gentleman, because if inconsistency in general caused him to suffer he would by now be wracked by unendurable pain as the result of his own record and the record of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner).

I will not ask the House to suffer through a detailed resumé of the minister's entire record of reversibility. Just

[Mr. Stanfield.]

consider, for example, very briefly how in the campaign of 1972 the tax cut we were proposing was going to bankrupt and ruin the country, how the modest increase in old pensions we were proposing to provide for some adjustment for the cost of living was going to ruin the country also, and as for indexing in income taxes, the country would never survive that. Within a matter of a very few months the Minister of Finance was introducing all those measures in the House himself, and boasting about how timely they were and what wonderful advances they represented.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): We did it in a way that worked.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Stanfield: It worked politically. I do not want to be offensive to my hon. friend, but let me say simply that that is the only test they apply, whether it will work politically.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: If they think it will work politically, they will say anything. The Prime Minister, during the campaign, with the endorsement of the Minister of Finance, said the Conservatives do not even have the patience to wait a few more weeks until they, the Liberals, can demonstrate clearly that they have inflation under control and that they will wrestle it down to the ground. Think of all the fun they made during the campaign about our emphasis upon the need for a shared attack on inflation. How long was it after the campaign was over that the Minister of Finance, I think he was out in Vancouver, spoke about the need to establish a consensus? They were not even waiting for the Year of the Hare to make this kind of adjustment!

The inconsistencies of the minister, of the Prime Minister and the government surely surpass any examples in the press which the Prime Minister may have had selectively drawn to his attention, and it should be noted as well—and this is the important point—that nobody elects the press, nobody elects an editor of a newspaper on the basis of any editorial to do anything about conditions in the country except to talk or write about them. But, I must admit, the people of Canada did elect this government.

Precious little is being done today by the government, or is even appearing to be done, and people in Canada are realizing that they were sold a bill of goods. I say to you that in three or four years' time people may have forgotten the breach of faith of the government. I am not talking about the next election, but I do say that if the Prime Minister wants to be concerned about disillusionment, if he wants to be concerned about social disorder, it is this realization by the Canadian people that the government of Canada today is isolated, complacent and arrogant—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: —it is this realization more than Watergate, or the opposition, or the press, more than anything else, that is causing unease in the country. The Prime Minister and the government are living in some other universe if they are unable to see that.