

**Mr. Clark:** Just as it once required, in this country and elsewhere, an act of imagination to recognize that government did too little, so is a new act of imagination required today to break conventional thinkings and recognize that government can try to do too much. Now, as then, the standard is not the size of government or even the cost of government; the standard has to be the effectiveness of government.

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

**Mr. Clark:** The Government of Canada today, while it is unquestionably costly and unquestionably big, is just not effective in doing the jobs that Canadians expect it to do.

● (1542)

What we need is a fundamental change in our approach to the role and accountability of government. We will be kidding ourselves and the country if we pretend that another so-called "restraint program" will do. Every President of the Treasury Board during the past decade has risen at least once in this House to announce a new era of austerity in the government. And yet the size and cost of government grow and grow without effective control.

The problem runs much deeper than any tinkering with the federal books. The system itself is out of control, and what we must change are the attitudes upon which the government operates. For example, we must end the prevailing view that advancement in the public service depends on growth and spending. We must reverse a system where it is considered some kind of a disgrace for public servants to allow funds to lapse at the end of the fiscal year. The public service must know that advancement and recognition can come from saving money and ending unnecessary programs.

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

**Mr. Clark:** That new direction, that new spirit, has to come from the political level. Public servants did not create the present atmosphere; they are only working within the rules of the game laid down by their political masters. Indeed, it is a matter of encouragement to me that nowhere does concern about the present system run higher than among public servants themselves, who see the waste first hand and have to carry the can for political decisions that they did not make.

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

**Mr. Clark:** The government is bringing in a Comptroller General, bringing him in reluctantly, and in a way that invites the question as to whether this will be an office with real powers, or just paper powers. But even if the Comptroller General has the means and the will to be effective, that appointment is simply spitting in the wind unless it is backed up by a fundamental change in attitude, not just about control of government, but about the size and effectiveness of government.

This parliament cannot wash its hands of its responsibilities simply by appointing a new official who will not even report to

### *The Economy*

us. We are here to control government. That is one of the basic things that parliament is about.

We will betray our responsibility to the people of Canada unless we have the courage and the determination to act ourselves to make government less expensive and more effective.

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

**Mr. Clark:** I want, today, to spell out some of the ways we can do that, and my colleagues will elaborate on these proposals later in this debate. First, we need to introduce the idea of the "sunset law" into Canadian practice.

In the natural world, the sun rises and the sun sets. If you come, as I do, from the foothills of Alberta, you know that the setting of the sun is often more dramatic and inspiring than its rising. But governments violate nature. Virtually every month the sun rises on new government activities or agencies—governments get into things far more easily than they get out of them—and we need a system that will allow the sun to set on government activities after their day is done.

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

**Mr. Clark:** Why should FIRA go on forever? Why should the Halifax Disaster Relief Agency have endured so long after the disaster? Why should other agencies escape the kind of life and death scrutiny which would allow MP's to discuss not just their funding but their future?

We will be describing a mechanism which will require certain Crown agencies and activities to come back to parliament at regular intervals and justify their need to continue to exist. If they can justify that need, they will carry on, perhaps in amended form. If they cannot, they will end, and that money will be available for the individuals and governments to do things that do need to be done. That is the kind of decision that parliament is supposed to make.

Because of a perversion of the rules that take power away from parliament, we can only ask questions, not stop programs. Canadians send us here for more than that, and we owe it to our country to let the people's representatives stop the waste of the people's money.

In another field we must stop the practice of government creating more and more regulations, which parliament cannot control, and with which private Canadians cannot cope.

[*Translation*]

The government is now compiling all existing regulations. These regulations cover 12,000 computer print-out sheets, and when they are printed and bound, they make up 15 volumes of 800 pages each, which is much more than the Revised Statutes of Canada. A few years ago, a survey by the *Financial Post* concluded that, in Canada, businessmen spend 35 per cent of their time conforming to government regulations. In the United States, it is estimated that government regulations cost the American economy from \$50 to \$60 billion a year. If we suppose that there are on the average as many regulations in Canada, which is a reasonable assumption, Mr. Speaker, the