

*The Address—Mr. Stevens*

and if we are to be a part of an increasingly competitive world market.

Not only must we have more research and, particularly, development—as well as acquire and build on technologies from abroad—we must also focus on accelerating the diffusion of these powerful new processes. I believe the way to encourage this is through better information exchange, technology transfer and demonstration. This is an area in which I see our regional offices taking a much more aggressive stance, in particular, with reference to our small and medium-sized businesses. Too often the day-to-day pressures of maintaining current production, meeting payrolls, and completing government forms diverts the management of small businesses from the task of investigating new and better ways of operating.

By becoming centres of information on new developments, the regional offices can provide a much needed interface between the Canadian research community whether at the university, private or governmental level, or in searching out on the international markets research-driven technologies which can assist Canadians to remain competitive. This supportive role of government Departments and agencies is one that all Canadian entrepreneurs will welcome. For too long they have been harassed by the paper burden, the duplication and the demands of big government, especially the type of big government that preceded this Government. All of those measures are in support of the central theme of this Government, which is to get government out of the business community's hair and let it get on with the task of undertaking new initiatives and providing new jobs for Canadians.

● (1130)

On October 30, we announced the new management and new mandate for the Canada Development Investment Corporation. The new management has been charged with the responsibility of privatizing the assets of CDIC as quickly as possible and consistent with the concern for value of the Canadian taxpayer's dollar. Sound management of the portfolio as well as protection of the workers' interests has been included in our direction. Many people have suggested that our desire to privatize the CDIC member companies was hastily conceived. I have been in this House since 1972 and have witnessed the growth of Crown corporations. At the time they were brought under the federal umbrella, it was generally said that it would only be for a limited duration and that they would be owned by the federal Government in the strict anticipation that they would be put back into the private sector. I find it almost beyond belief when those self same people today ask why we are moving so hastily with respect to the possibility of privatizing some Crown corporations, the same Crown corporations which they themselves have consistently maintained they intended to put back into the private sector.

On November 5 I announced the new management and new mandate for Fishery Products International, the Newfoundland fisheries conglomerate which is owned jointly by the federal Government, the Province of Newfoundland and the

Bank of Nova Scotia. The intention is to make that firm, which is vital to the economy of Newfoundland, economically viable through sound business management and eventually to return it once again to private enterprise. Returning these assets to the private sector is not only better for the firms and their workers in the long run, but I would suggest the action serves as a further signal to the business community that the Government places ultimate reliance on the private sector as the source of economic growth.

Further announcements can be expected regarding the approach of Government to the general subject of assistance and support for small and medium-sized enterprises. We intend to review the various support instruments which are available at the federal level to help small business, including the Federal Business Development Bank. We are well aware of the role played by small business in economic growth, particularly in the context of regional development, and of the fact that small and medium-sized businesses are by far the largest creators of new jobs in Canada. We will, therefore, take steps to ensure that federal support gives priority and is appropriate to the needs of this sector.

Another area of my portfolio in which I am taking action is in regard to the need to increase non-Canadian investment in Canada. In the near future there will be legislation which will provide long overdue changes to the Foreign Investment Review Agency. It is our intention to transform FIRA into a positive agency for the encouragement of Canadian and non-Canadian investment so that investors throughout the world will get the message that Canada welcomes them and is willing to assist in their endeavours. The changes to FIRA will emphasize small business and will encourage partnership between Canadian and non-Canadian interests. No more will we hear the lament of investors who say that they tried but could not invest in Canada.

At the same time, we are convinced that by breaking down the barriers to international investment in Canada, we can once again convince Canadians to invest in their own country. As a Government, we are too painfully aware that Canadians are reluctant to invest in Canadian enterprises in spite of the fact that their level of savings is twice that of our American neighbours. A better investment climate will encourage Canadians to reverse this trend and once again invest in their own country, whether through direct investment or through joint venture with non-Canadian firms.

These changes, some of which will be immediate and some gradual, reflect the role of government *vis-à-vis* industry which underlines the Speech from the Throne. The role of government is not to take over but to support. The role of government is, first of all, to ensure an appropriate investment climate and then to act as a catalyst. The role of government is to intervene only where the achievement of national objectives is beyond the resources of the private sector.

It is difficult to forecast the future, but many of the studies which have measured the impact of the economic policies of the Government are truly optimistic. The policies put forth by the new Government are expected to increase employment