

do less. "Do not intervene. Do not help. Do not assist. Do not provide a context in which research and development can get done." And pigs will fly! Every day they are urging me not to intervene, not to seek better regulation of industry to try and tackle the acid rain problem. Oh, yes, each day on the other side of the House they are asking us to do less in tackling water quality problems in Canada. Yes, in theory, in rhetoric, in that kind of overblown, windbag style. However, when it comes down to specifics—because more of them over there are practical and understand the wants of their constituents—they want Government to be involved and to help.

Mr. Thacker: Tell us about the debt and the interest to service the debt.

Mr. Roberts: Their rhetoric simply does not match the realities of this country. The sad fact, Mr. Speaker, is that they do not understand the realities of this country. "Socialization" means "render fit for society". Yes, we believe that the Canadian economy should be fit for this society, that it should serve this society. That is why we have always had in this country a positive involvement of Government in the Canadian economy. It is not because there is some, to quote the words of the Hon. Members opposite, "ideological thrust". Does that not sound sinister, Mr. Speaker? It is not because of some ideological thrust. It is not because of ragbag rhetoric. It is because of the practical realities of this country.

There has always been Government involvement in the economy of this country. It is at the heart of the history of our country. Government has been involved from its beginning in the creation of canals, in the creation of railways, in marketing, in air transportation, and in countless programs. Not because of some abstract, windblown, ideological conception, but because given the size of this country, and given the size of its population, there has had to be a constructive and positive role for Government in assisting economic growth and assisting the private sector to do what it can in the creation of growth in this country. The Government must be involved and it must help if Canadian society is to thrive.

• (1150)

That is what Hon. Members opposite do not understand. They think that what we have done, as Liberal Governments, is because of some sort of—how did they put it?—some sort of "back door" approach? This was not done by the back door; it was done because of elections. Why we have been able to do these things as a Government is that the people of Canada wanted us to do them. I suppose it might be possible, somehow, to do them by the back door. It might be possible somehow to be sneaky, to fool the people once and a while and to take power that way. However, would it be possible for 45 of the last 50 years? It was not because we did it by the back door, but, rather, because we responded to the reality of the country in a way which Canadians could understand and did not simply try to serve up to them empty, posturing rhetoric.

The tragedy of the motion is that Canadians deserve much better from the Conservative Party. They deserve to have an

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Opposition which is prepared to define alternative policies which relate to the reality of this country so that Canadians have an effective choice.

The tragedy is that the Conservative Party has turned its back on its own heritage. Its one great Prime Minister understood the reality of country. Sir John A. Macdonald understood that reality. If he were back here now, he would stand in the pillory condemned by the Hon. Member for Vegreville for the kind of approach that he took with regard to that terrible railroad, that awful railroad, the intervention of Government into society to create that railroad, that terrible intervention, that kind of centralization. If Sir John A. Macdonald were back in the House today to hear the motion, he would have crossed the floor to this side, if he would not have crossed it long ago.

Mr. Gray: He was a Liberal Conservative.

Mr. Roberts: What this country needs is not the kind of vacuous piffle which this motion represents. What it needs is a Conservative Party which remembers the heritage it once had, and remembers the kind of approach that once made it a relevant Party to the problems of this country.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mazankowski: I would like to ask a question of the Minister who just concluded his remarks. He essentially ignored the issue of the economic thrust as contained in the motion and sought to divert his comments in an attempt to focus on the various social programs, the old age pension, Unemployment Insurance, and things of that nature which, as Members of a compassionate Party, we have always supported.

Mr. Fisher: Careful now.

Mr. Mazankowski: The fact of the matter is that there has been an increasing wave of Government intervention in the Canadian economy, as witnessed by the NEP, as witnessed by the economic development thrust into the 1980s, as Government policy. This is acknowledged by increasing numbers of Canadians. Does the Minister really ignore the fact that as of today, some 60 per cent of Canadians throughout the country believe that the federal Government's influence on their daily lives is too great?

He also refers to the fact that the Liberals have been in power for the last 40-odd years. What is very disconcerting about the present trend is that over the last 15 years there has been a major escalation of Government intervention, and particularly in the last two years. Sixty per cent of the Canadian people believe that that intervention is too great.

Mr. Roberts: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the question because it enables me to return to a part of my speech which I had not had the time to deliver. I will answer the Hon. Member in two ways. First, if he would take an objective look, which is easy to do by looking over the past record from Statistics Canada, he will find that federal participation in the Canadian economy has not increased significantly, as a proportion of the Gross National Product, since the Second World War. Clearly, as I