

The Economy

underlined, "... that action be taken to reduce the scope . . . of government activity in Canadian society . . ."

Mr. Clark: How reactionary, Stanley!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Just a moment, my young friend—

An hon. Member: Whipper snapper.

Mr. Clark: CCF philosophy.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Like quite a few members of this House, but not all of them, I remember the days when the scope of government in Canadian society was a lot less than it is today. I remember those days well.

Mr. Paproski: One hundred years ago.

An hon. Member: Show some respect.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Yes, years ago. I experienced what we had in those days in terms of poverty, lack of health care, insecurity. I could tell the story of it in my own family. I could tell countless stories of what it was like to live in that kind of society by recounting what happened to families in the churches in which I had the privilege of being the minister. Mr. Speaker, I do not want to go back to those days.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I do not want a society—

Mr. Clark: That is known as a red herring.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Never mind that language, I am talking about reality. I am talking about the perspective of history. I know what it was like when there was less government concern. I know that today things are better for the people of this country in terms of health, housing, security, minimum wage and other labour laws, farm marketing, culture, highways and travel, and all the rest of it. It has all come about because the Canadian people have taken action in these areas through the medium of government activity. To turn all of that back is unthinkable.

I have to say, as I stand here tonight, that I have no confidence in the government across the way.

Mr. Nowlan: You hypocrite!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): But, Mr. Speaker, I would be denying everything that I have fought for throughout my life if I supported the philosophy that is contained in this motion—

An hon. Member: Read the motion.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): —which says take the government out of Canadian society, spend less money, Mr. Speaker—

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: Show some respect.

An hon. Member: Socialist misrepresentation.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Seldom have I been honoured by as much heckling as I am getting now. It tells me just one thing. It tells me that what I am saying is true. It tells me I have got to the heart of this motion. It tells me that the Tories do not like to be told that what they want is as reactionary and old fashioned as it could be.

● (2142)

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Perhaps the hon. member is happy with the attention he is receiving, but the Chair has very much difficulty in hearing what he is saying.

Mr. Kempling: He isn't saying anything anyway.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I agree with the emphasis put on the point which has been made from time to time today that governments should not be allowed to get out of hand, that we should do something about waste, that we should be concerned about a government which has all kinds of money for a lot of nonsensical projects and does not have money for veterans, pensioners and so on. But as for the fundamental philosophy of whether we are going to go back to the greed, the caprice and the cruelty of a free market economy or whether the people are going to act through their government to create the kind of society they want, I take my stand for the latter.

I said something about having a recollection of what it was like in the days before there was the scope of government activity which exists today, and I reassert my contention that we solved many of those problems because government got into the battle. Difficult as those problems some of us faced when we were late teenagers or in our twenties were, and difficult as it seemed in the 1930's to counter that situation, far greater problems face us today, such as the whole problem of what we are going to do about energy, the whole problem of a world with finite resources and the whole problem of what we are going to do about an industrial strategy. If these things are left to a political philosophy which says that governments should stay out of the picture, those problems will not be solved at all. We need a much more sensible, vigorous and aggressive government than we have today; but to suggest that we do not need government at all or that the government should cut back is a grossly irresponsible position to take, and as far as this motion is concerned, we cannot support it.

I welcome the sensible things which have been said, but I cannot understand why this House is being asked to vote for such a reactionary motion which does nothing but turn the clock back. Why do the Tories want to become the next government if they do not want to govern and if they do not want to give some leadership?