

*The Economy*

sensitivity and concern among the rank and file of their own party. The NDP, on the other hand, have reaffirmed what has been a notion of mine for many years, namely that they are without doubt the most reactionary party in the House of Commons and on the national scene.

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

**Mr. Andre:** Their position is very clear. It is that everything is fine. We should not touch anything. Everything that happened before was absolutely perfect. We should not entertain any radical ideas that are going to affect the status quo.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Your smile is showing on television!

**Mr. Andre:** The Canadian economy simply cannot sustain the burden of this size of government and still provide jobs and the material well being that Canadians desire and have the right to expect. The fact of the matter is that every responsible economist or economic institution, in putting forward a prescription for the long term economic wellbeing of Canada, has as part of that prescription a reduction in the percentage of national wealth consumed by government. That is one of the reasons that we feel this subject matter is worthy of careful consideration in this House.

The second reason is that our democratic system just cannot cope with the complexity of modern government. I refer members opposite to a speech given by my former leader, the hon. member for Halifax (Mr. Stanfield), to the University of Acadia last year as part of the lecture series in which he very skilfully put forth the thesis that in fact, with our complex government of today, the cabinet cannot even control its activities, let alone the House of Commons. So we have a choice. The choice is between parliamentary democracy and more government. If we want to maintain parliamentary democracy in the system that we now have, the system that Canadians want and I am sure Canadians want to maintain parliamentary democracy—then we have no alternative but to look at ways in which we can reduce the scope and nature of government activity.

The third reason is that individual freedom and all-encompassing government are simply of opposite polarity. There is no question that governments have a vital responsibility to protect the individual from some of the nearer potentialities of life; but when governments attempt to remove all uncertainty from life, then individuality—individual freedom—must suffer.

We think a better balance can be drawn. We are not suggesting great cuts in government spending, such as great reductions in spending on social benefits. Indeed, we are not even proposing today any cuts. What we are proposing is to put in place procedures and techniques which will result in selective, refined, proper reductions in the roles and activities of the government, thereby saving the government money, reducing the size of government and, over the long haul, resulting in a more efficient, more effective and more appropriate Government of Canada.

[Mr. Andre.]

● (2032)

Indeed, in the weeks and months ahead we will undoubtedly be proposing more spending in certain areas, but we recognize that the taxpayers of Canada just cannot be burdened further with additional taxes for these new proposals, which we think are important, and we feel that the place to look for those funds is within current government spending activities. We are absolutely convinced that there is ample room to generate these funds through employment of the techniques we are talking about.

I wonder how many members of the House saw the cartoon in yesterday's *Ottawa Journal*. It depicted a number of bird watchers with binoculars. They were on a bird counting expedition. The leader of the expedition explained to one of the participants that the reason they were engaging in this seemingly meaningless task was to pre-empt the government from doing it at a cost of million and millions of dollars.

There is more than a modicum of truth in that because three years ago I encountered an old colleague from university days who, working for the Department of the Secretary of State, was in Calgary as part of a national tour. He was visiting all the major centres in Canada, and the purpose of his visit to Calgary, as to all the other major centres in Canada, was to count playgrounds. He had been given the task of touring the country and counting all playgrounds. Over the last decade, started by the Pearson administration and carried on enthusiastically by the Trudeau administration, the federal government has involved itself in a great number of new areas of responsibility which, considered individually, probably were relatively minor and perhaps not significant, but when looked at in totality, the picture is one of a government involved in almost every aspect of human life.

As I indicated earlier, we do not think wholesale across-the-board slashes are the responsible way to approach this problem, but we do believe there are many activities in which the government is currently involved but should not be involved. There are other activities which could be performed better and which could and should be put into the private sector. One of the popular vehicles which has been used by the government to involve itself more and more in the private sector has been that of the Crown corporation.

As was indicated earlier, the government does not even know how many Crown corporations there are. Last May the number was perhaps 366. There were a few others discovered. As of January of this year the number had risen to 387, 21 in seven months or about three a month. Since that report came out a couple of weeks ago, the number now is probably up to 388. How can any rational human being tell me or anyone else that these Crown corporations are performing some vital role in fulfilling public policy when it is not known how many there are? Not knowing how many there are, the government cannot be managing them properly. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that in his 1976 report the Auditor General stated, and I quote:

In the majority of crown corporations audited by the Auditor General, financial management and control is weak and ineffective. Moreover, co-ordination and