

We have been working hard reviewing spending patterns, particularly over the last two or three years. Much more remains to be done, and when more specific approaches have been developed I look forward to the co-operation of the House of Commons in dealing wisely with them in the future.

Before concluding my remarks I would like to turn for a few minutes to the broader aspects of our economic condition in Canada. I suppose one would be blind and unrealistic not to recognize that most of the world today is facing economic stress and tension. There have been incredibly dramatic shifts in real wealth between the different parts of this world.

I suppose the single, most significant example is that of energy cost increases. We are seeing the developing nations seeking their rightful share of the world's riches, becoming industrialized, competing at, for the moment, much lower wages, wage costs and other costs; and with increasing productivity. They are becoming a new factor in the competitive world. Canada has not—nor could we ever have—escaped this competition, particularly since we are such a high-volume trading nation with regard to both exports and imports.

For most of this century, particularly since World War II, Canada and its people have had an ever-onward and ever-upward gain in wealth and in material standards. That progress, although somewhat slower, continues today. Yes, we do have real problems. We share most of them with the rest of the world, but a few are particular and peculiar to this country. However, by almost every economic, social and political indicator in comparison to almost every other country in the world we are still the most favoured today and for the future.

Our unemployment rate is far too high. We worry about that, and we must respond wisely. But our employment growth rate—the other side of that coin—remains one of the highest in the world. Our over-all economic growth has slowed, but the forecast g.n.p. growth this year of 2 per cent or 3 per cent will still put us amongst the top performances in the world on that score. Our g.n.p. per capita—\$8,090 U.S. per person—exceeds that of the United States, Japan, West Germany, France, Britain or Italy. As a country, we list thirty-first in the size of our population, but we have the world's sixth largest economy. While our inflation rate is still too high, it is lower than that of most industrialized countries.

I could go on documenting our better performance. My purpose is not to obscure or to patch over our weaknesses, but to present to Canadians a better balance and therefore to justify, in my view, a more optimistic and confident picture. It seems to me that that is what is needed in this country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Andras: We need a balanced view of where we are, because I am afraid we Canadians have a great tendency toward introspection. Our media certainly seem to dwell and live on negatives. They pour the gloom upon us in a veritable flood. Our unemployment increase is on page 1 of the newspapers or on the 11 o'clock news. On the other hand, if our

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employment growth is mentioned at all, it is mentioned on page 89 or on some obscure broadcast.

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We have some particular and peculiar Canadian problems, some not shared by others, affecting our ability to overcome employment and combat inflation. We have the very serious and worrisome situation vis-à-vis Quebec, unquestionably affecting not only the economy of that province but of the whole country. We have the continuing problem of our apparent inability as a nation to reconcile any reasonable co-operation for the good of all, the relations between our labour force and management which result in serious and growing productivity and cost problems. We have a vast and diverse country with additional built-in costs in some areas, making for great variance in economic opportunity. These are some of the particular challenges we face. But if we compare our situation today with most of the rest of the world, I think probably the government of almost every other nation would gladly change places with us, even under the economic stresses and strains we think we have.

We cannot patch over our weaknesses, but let us make a constructive beginning in this House of Commons. If we do not, we will psyche ourselves into far more difficulty than the real situation warrants. We must work together on our weaknesses. Certainly, we cannot go around with three solitudes—government, business and labour—each blaming the other. We, as a government, have to accept our responsibility. I am prepared to say that we have made some errors. I think governments of this country over the last several years have allowed their expenditures to grow too rapidly and too much. We are trying to reverse that. I think it is fair to say that the provinces are trying to reverse that as well. We are trying to find some constructive ways to direct the scarce resources that even this country can generate.

I believe that labour and business have to pull up their socks. We have to do our job in a co-operative fashion. Productivity is a great worry. The cost per hour in manufacturing and some export activities is too high compared with that of our neighbours and competitors. There is no use waving a magic wand, carrying banners or creating slogans: there is only one way to change, and that is for government, labour and business to face economic reality.

Let us not psyche ourselves into depression attitudes. Let us not psyche ourselves into a situation not warranted by the facts. Let us start thinking positively. I suggest the best place to begin is right here in this House of Commons, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Mr. Speaker, the debate today is fairly wide-ranging. Even the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien) called it a mini-budget debate on several occasions. I should like to outline what I see as some of the problems with the mini-budget. In many ways it has been a reintroduction of measures brought down on March 31 by the hon. member for Rosedale (Mr. Macdonald), the former minister of finance. His was a very conservative budget and tended to follow the "trickle down" theory, as we call it: you