

The Economy

cost for the Canadian economy is at least \$5 or \$6 billion a year.

[English]

We need to review the need for nearly 400 federal Crown corporations, and review that calmly, sanely and without ideology. The idea of the Crown corporation is an essential and valuable part of Canadian life and history. We have needed Crown corporations in the past. We need some of them now. I think it is safe to predict we may well need to create new Crown corporations in the future. But the fact that some Crown corporations are necessary does not mean that all are, and the fact that a specific Crown corporation was necessary at one point in time does not mean that Crown corporation is necessary forever.

To my mind, the simple standard is that government intervention should come as a last resort, when other ways will not work, and not as a first resort, as it was with Petro-Can, where the motive is only to get the government into something where it should not be.

It is absurd to have more Crown corporations than you can count. It is often wasteful to spend public money on things where private money is available. It is possible, as other jurisdictions have shown, to divest of unnecessary Crown corporations in ways that will let more Canadian citizens develop an equity interest in our country.

Finally, we need new, more flexible budget planning techniques to discourage unnecessary growth in the budgets of government departments.

There is no question that we can control government spending, no question that we can reduce waste, improve effectiveness, and put government in a position again where it is capable of taking the initiatives that government must take. It is absurd, in a country like Canada with more than one million people out of work, that the government cannot take the economic initiatives that are necessary because it has wasted so much money in the past that it has a deficit that strangles its ability to act. That is unforgivable.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: There is nothing revolutionary about what has been proposed today. Sunset Laws are in effect in several states in the United States. That country already has underway a major review of the impact of regulations. The state of Israel has put at least 90 of its state-owned agencies up for sale. Tomorrow is the final day for the submission of tenders to the Progressive Conservative government of Manitoba for the purchase of Cybershare Limited, a data processing company purchased by the former government of that province. These things can be done if there is a government prepared to do them.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: They must be done because Canadians are not going to accept leadership from a government or from a parliament that is unable to control its own excesses. That is

[Mr. Clark.]

not just a question of investment, important as investment is, and unlikely as it is that investment will come to a country that continues to build deficits and refuses to eliminate waste. The deeper question concerns the confidence ordinary Canadians have in a government which they see is costing more and more and doing less and less that makes sense to them.

Our union is under assault from several sources. One of them is the idea of separatism. Another is the reality of cynicism. People do not believe governments. People do not take parliament seriously. That we have brought upon ourselves.

In the months and years to come we must demonstrate to the people of Canada that our institutions can work, that our governments can serve real needs, that there is leadership here that is tough enough to recognize and reform our own weaknesses before prescribing for others.

Today, I have brought before the House of Commons a resolution which will allow us as a parliament to do the work that parliament was created to do, to get control of government and to make government effective again in Canada. The operative part of this motion is the request that we immediately establish a select committee to cut away at waste in government. I earnestly hope that other parties in this House will follow our example and agree to this proposal in the interest of Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1552)

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Clark) closed his speech by asking all members in other parties to support his motion. He did so having argued that there are innumerable Crown corporations which ought to be eliminated, and having given us just two illustrations of what he had in mind. I suggest he did not give more examples because he has not done the work which is called for, and cannot prove the case he has tried to make. The proposal put forward by the Leader of the Opposition, if put into effect, would mean a return to the depressed economy of the thirties.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Orlikow: The motion states:

That in the opinion of this House it is essential to the economic well-being and good government of Canada that action be taken to reduce the scope and rationalize the role of government activity in Canadian society by reducing the share of the national wealth currently consumed by government . . .

The Leader of the Official Opposition wants the people of Canada to forget the depression years of the thirties when the private sector of our society collapsed and when governments were completely immobilized. It was not until the Second World War, when we realized we had to produce the necessities of war, that we put people back to work. The earlier depression was the result of government inaction, especially at a time when the private sector was not functioning.