

*Government Orders*

saying that. What I did read gave me no reason to believe that there was very much in this speech for Cape Breton.

Perhaps after I have read the whole speech I will have a different point of view. If I do, at that point I will make those revised comments before this House but what I have read so far does not give me much reason for hope.

**Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk):** Mr. Speaker, I comment to the hon. minister that there is a great Liberal fight in his riding to seek the nomination. I do not understand how that could be. I guess they figure it is an easy riding to win the next time. Do not worry, there will not be anybody appointed there.

My hon. friend is from an area of the country that has really been decimated by this Conservative government and its programs over the years. He gave a wonderful speech outlining some of the problems which have occurred not just in his riding but in all of Atlantic Canada because of the policies of this government.

I did read the majority of the speech on some of the economic background statements and I really found it lacking in any sort of direction for economic renewal in Atlantic Canada.

I know the hon. member spent a lot of time looking at this issue. He spent a lot of time reading about it and studying it. He talked to people in his own riding and throughout Atlantic Canada as to what some of the solutions would be.

Could the hon. member outline for us today some of the ideas he has that will help bring about economic growth in his area?

**Mr. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso):** Mr. Speaker, we have to start working from our strengths on Cape Breton Island. That is the case in Atlantic Canada as it is across Canada.

We need some idea from the national government that its industrial policy and fiscal and monetary policies will be endeavouring to support the Canadian economy and economies in the various regions. The regions need to identify and develop their particular strengths particularly as they relate to the emerging North American and world-wide markets we face.

We have many strengths in Cape Breton. In addition to our work force we have the educational institutions. Many Cape Bretoners attend St. Francis Xavier University near Cape Breton. We have the University College of Cape Breton, the various trade schools and community colleges such as the Nova Scotia Community College at the Strait of Canso, the nautical school and other very qualified educational institutions.

We have natural resources in addition to coal and the forest industries. We have a tremendous super port in the Strait of Canso. We have a fabulous cultural richness and natural beauty across the island which is there to be developed with the support of government in partnership with the private sector in Cape Breton.

Agencies such as the industrial development division of Devco or the Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation which was another possibility that the government is trying to eliminate, as well as an agency in the Strait of Canso could promote the development of the strengths of that part of the island.

With some kind of vision we can produce a focused development effort on Cape Breton Island. We can lower the awful levels of unemployment on that island. We can better use both public and private funds than in the past toward a realistic objective that can empower the people of Cape Breton.

• (1420)

That is where we have to go. In eight years, this government has had absolutely no vision at all in dealing with Cape Breton. It has shown no real interest, aside from offering tax incentives and tax breaks and the odd program of interest buy down and assistance to small and medium sized businesses.

Without any focus, whatever efforts might have been achieved with the dollars, meagre as they were, that were made available to Atlantic Canada and to Cape Breton in particular have dissipated.

We need to focus and to work on our strengths in Cape Breton Island. We need to identify and develop those strengths with the resources, particularly the human resources we have all around us.

I want to thank the member for his very thoughtful question and for giving me the opportunity to speak positively about the future of our island.