

Supply

deals with national problems and encourages Canadians of all regions to put their expertise and intelligence to work. Then we will go out and look at what we have to do in each specific area.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): Questions and comments.

Mr. Benjamin: Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the Hon. Member. He made some critical remarks about the NDP task force or group which spent several days in the Atlantic provinces. I was wondering if he would now concede that this is an exercise all political Parties have taken for a number of years.

Mr. Nystrom: Except for Liberals.

Mr. Benjamin: His own Party had task forces travelling around the country and reporting back—

Mr. Rodriguez: Ad nauseam.

Mr. Benjamin: —with motions in this House or in speeches. Some of this we supported him on, Mr. Speaker. Would he not recognize that that is a legitimate exercise for any and all political Parties to carry out?

● (1450)

We found out some interesting things during our task force tour in the Atlantic provinces. We are only reporting back what the people in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Newfoundland told us. That resulted in today's motion. I hope the hon. gentleman will decide that he is glad we did this. No one has ever objected to any political Party doing what is their duty, which is finding out what is going on in each region of the country, what the people are saying and bringing it back to Parliament to deal with. What is he complaining about?

Mr. Cochrane: Mr. Speaker, I think I discerned a question in that dialogue. There is certainly nothing wrong with Members coming to Atlantic Canada. In fact, we encourage them to come to our part of the country. I can certainly understand the necessity of the New Democratic Party reaching out to Atlantic Canada because they obviously could not put forth the policies which would encourage Atlantic Canadians to provide a seat for one of them in this forum.

I can assure Members that we in this Party are bringing back the message from Atlantic Canada. We are working in our constituencies. We are getting information and coming back to our caucus and ensuring that the message from Atlantic Canada is heard. As a result we are able to bring forward policies that will help that particular part of the country.

Mr. Benjamin: Is the Hon. Member not complaining about our reporting back what the people in Atlantic Canada told us? I presume he is not complaining about our reporting to the House of Commons what those people told us.

Mr. Cochrane: Mr. Speaker, I am not complaining about them bringing it back. I guess I am complaining about the

piecemeal manner in which we develop a national mosaic to deal with the problems in the country. If every time you go to one part of the country you bring back a motion to deal with that specific part, you lose sight of national policies and problems. We need a healthy national economy in order to take full advantage of that in Atlantic Canada.

Mr. Tobin: Mr. Speaker, may I congratulate the Member for Moncton (Mr. Cochrane) on the evangelical zeal with which he brings his views to bear on the recent visit by members of the New Democratic Party to Atlantic Canada. I, for one, think that New Democratic Party tourism dollars are as good as any other tourism dollars. I hope they had some nice meals and enjoyed the great comradery, warmth and generosity of spirit of Atlantic Canadians. I do not know what the Member is panicked about.

The Member has some kind of religious conviction. He has received some kind of absolution since he came to Ottawa only three or four months ago. He has shown us the degree to which he has matured politically, perhaps hoping to catch a glint in the Prime Minister's eye for the front bench when the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Coates) or someone else is shuffled out. He is telling us that he will only endorse policies for Atlantic Canada that are national policies. That makes him a big, grown-up, mature Member of Parliament on the mainland in Ottawa. That makes him a centralist, Mr. Speaker.

There are issues in this country which are unique to British Columbia. There are issues that are unique to western Canada such as the Crow rate and the cost of moving grain. In Quebec the language policy is a unique issue because of the recognition of the two great languages of this country. There are certain conditions which are unique to northern Ontario and national policy has been developed to reflect them. Do not apologize for what makes your region different. Do not apologize for asking for special policy to be developed in a national forum to fit the regional need.

I would advise the Member to talk to one of the most successful politicians from Atlantic Canada, the Member for Carleton-Charlotte (Mr. McCain). That Hon. Member has fought every day for all of the years he has been here for the particular regional interests of Atlantic Canada. That is what has made him successful. Stop apologizing. We have special needs and interests which are as important as those of any other region in the country. They are legitimate interests that must be recognized.

Is the Member saying that he accepts as legitimate the dramatic increase of 20 per cent to 30 per cent in freight rates which has been imposed on Atlantic Canada by CN, given that in P.E.I., Nova Scotia and Newfoundland it is, in many cases, the only way to move goods and people around? Is the Member telling us that he accepts a slash of \$200 million from the regional development fund? Does he accept the notion of his Minister, who is sitting opposite and listening, that there will never again be policies in this country designed for industrial development to bring jobs to the least advantaged areas of the country? Does he accept that we will no longer