

Government Orders

This government lacks any priority when it relates to fishery matters, not because the gentleman from Baie Comeau has a hate on for fisheries. That is not the issue. His lack of action on fisheries is incidental to the total issue. The total issue has to do with his deliberately spelled out agenda as it relates to rural Canada. Fisheries, fishermen and fish plant workers happened to have created the sin of living, of being born and raised and having found their employment in rural Canada, rather than downtown Montreal, Vancouver or Toronto.

I do not get my jollies going after those cities. I love those cities. I was in Toronto yesterday on a very special mission, a mission which I may say was successful, thanks to a lot of people. The mission is known as North York, and the gentleman from Etobicoke—Lakeshore, despite his attempts at denial, will know that it was a fairly successful mission, depending upon the point of view, of course. But I digress again.

Toronto is a great city. Vancouver is a great city. Winnipeg, of course.

Mr. Edwards: Edmonton.

Mr. Simmons: If the member says Edmonton is a great city, I absolutely agree with him.

An hon. member: What about Prince George?

Mr. Simmons: The member is pushing his luck back here now.

Some hon. member: Hear, hear.

Mr. Simmons: Madam Speaker, it is not that we in rural Canada hate the big cities. If that is what turns you on and you like big cities, that is all right, but this government must have an obligation to the cities as well. These obligations to urban centres should never be treated as a trade-off against rural centres. It should never be an either/or situation. A government worthy of its name, a government worth its salt, as we say back home, has to recognize that there is to be a balance in terms of its treatment of all parts of this country.

That is why I have great difficulty. The fishermen and the plant workers also have difficulty understanding that they have to bear the brunt, whether it is in matters relating to fisheries, post office closings, rail closings, transport downgradings, taking the guy or the girl off the

tower in St. John's after 12 o'clock at night. The member cannot agree with that. That is unconscionable. They would not do it in Toronto. These things are happening to rural Canada in the name of restraint, but no such restraint is taking place with respect to opera houses in Toronto or space centres in Montreal.

• (1610)

I am not saying we are against opera houses or space centres. I am saying if some pain has to be inflicted, in the name of common sense and the name of fairness, do it equally across the board. Do not say to us that it all has to be done in St. John's, Burin, Port aux Basques and those places but none has to be done in Toronto where the opera houses go ahead or Montreal where the space centres go ahead, restraint or no restraint. Do not tell me that somebody over there does not hate rural Canada when I see the evidence of it every single day, whether I am talking about the fishery, rural post offices or unemployment insurance gutting. It does not matter what I talk about. If it is rural Canada the code over there is the same. Rural Canada, cut the guts out of it. Urban Canada, that is a different matter.

I hope when one of the members on the other side representing the administration rises and gives the administration's view of reality on this issue, they will take up the issue that I have raised and explain to me if there is another reason why rural Canada is getting the axe at every single turn. I understand restraint. I understand we do not have unlimited amounts of money.

What I do not understand and will refuse to understand, as long as I represent the people of rural Canada in this House, as I have the pleasure of doing, as long as I represent people who live in 158 communities, almost all of them fishing communities along 2,000 miles of coast line in western and southwestern Newfoundland, as long as I represent those people, I will not either by my silence or by my words say: "It is all right, Mr. Prime Minister, to close rural post offices and ask people to drive great distances. It is all right to try to take blood out of a turnip in terms of what you are doing to fisheries spending. It is all right to do that as long as you keep the opera houses going in the Torontos of this world". It has got to be fair.