

Government Orders

insignificant projects with no long-term economic vision for the island.

As a result the government has frittered away eight years of opportunity to do something to create a future for Cape Breton Island. After eight years the situation economically has never been more bleak. The people of Cape Breton have never been more discouraged by the absence of any real opportunity. In our main industries the future is downward and there is no apparent alternative out there for them. The government is taking away the resources needed to find a future opportunity.

That is what is at issue with this legislation. That is what is at issue with the decision by the government. It was anticipated a long time ago by our opposition in the House and by our opposition in the Senate that it was to close, to terminate, to end Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation.

• (1410)

As a passing note, the speech by the Minister of Finance on Wednesday, although I was not here and did not have a chance to study it thoroughly, does not appear to have offered any hope to Cape Breton. If anything, it has given Cape Breton more reason to distrust the motives of this government, to expect nothing from this government as far as understanding the local island economy, understanding the broader Atlantic Canada economy and understanding the need to work with the leadership in that area to find long-term viable sources of employment in Cape Breton.

If this government were serious, it would address itself directly to the some 27,000 people who are either unemployed or out of the labour force in Cape Breton at this time and would need to be employed in order for Cape Breton to be brought up to a level even broadly equal to the rest of the country in terms of its average level of employment and participation in the labour force. This government has absolutely no idea of how to do that.

This is the reason why the people of Cape Breton have lost any kind of hope in this federal government and why they want at the earliest opportunity an election to be called so that they and the rest of this country can throw this government out. Then we could have a government

which is fresh and which is less tired, fatigued and bankrupt of ideas in place to start dealing with real solutions for the people of Cape Breton and the rest of Canada. The government has demonstrably shown in its *Economic and Fiscal Statement* earlier this week and in this legislation that it is totally incapable of doing that.

For that reason I concur with my colleague from Mount Royal that this legislation, including the component on the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, should not be returned for six months or, in other words, should be hoisted for hopefully an indefinite period of time. In the meantime perhaps we could have an election to set the slate anew.

Hon. Doug Lewis (Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my hon. friend's speech and I have two questions.

First, he is calling for an election. I would ask for the benefit of the House whether or not he intends to seek a nomination or an appointment in his riding. I will explain for the hon. member. A nomination meeting is an open democratic contest. An appointment from the Leader of the Official Opposition is where there might be a contest and he wants to avoid one.

Second, I would like to ask this question. The hon. member admitted he was not here for the finance minister's speech, admitted that he had not read the speech, and then went on to suggest in a number of allegations that the speech did nothing for Cape Breton. On what does he found his criticism?

Mr. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso): The first question the minister asked had nothing to do with my remarks. It is quite irrelevant to the subject I was dealing with. I do intend to seek the nomination in Cape Breton Highlands—Canso at the appropriate time, to run again and to be elected again to this House as part of a Liberal government under our leader, the hon. member from Shawinigan.

As for the second part of the minister's question, I was on a parliamentary committee outside Ottawa on Wednesday when the minister gave his speech.

I have read summaries of the speech and portions of the economic address. I admitted that I had not as yet read the whole speech and I qualified my remarks by