

Supply

We devised the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, and just to show the people—

Mrs. Maheu: You cut it by 20 per cent.

Mr. Valcourt: The Hon. Member says ACOA has been cut. She does not know what she is talking about. ACOA has not been cut. There was a commitment by the Government to spend \$1 billion in Atlantic Canada over a five-year period. That was a five-year plan and this has gone on for two and a half years. The Government sees that this is a good program which is doing great things for Atlantic Canada, and we have extended the life of this agency by another five years at least with a commitment of spending in Atlantic Canada \$425 million a year on average in the next four years.

Ms. Clancy: That is a 20 per cent cut.

Mr. Valcourt: No, only a Liberal could say that. Five years ago, it was \$282 million a year. Only a Grit can, with a straight face, say that \$425 million is less than \$282 million. Only the Liberals can do that.

Back home, the people understand. We are spending more than the Grits ever dreamed of spending in Atlantic Canada, but that is not what matters. It is not the amount of money that matters, what matters is that if we in Atlantic Canada are to get out of the mess that these people have inflicted on Atlantic Canada for 20 years, we will have to change attitudes. I was listening to those people talking about the UI reform changes. All the members from Newfoundland are grandstanding. I invite the Liberals, especially the Member who is from Newfoundland to read this.

• (1530)

Mr. Rompkey: That is Labrador.

Mr. Valcourt: He should read *Building on our Strengths*. It talks about Labrador. It is the result of a royal commission in Newfoundland. I recommend it to the Liberal Party of Canada, especially Atlantic Canada Members. You will note that the report makes a lot of recommendations that are exactly in line with what the Minister of Employment and Immigration is attempting to do to help Atlantic Canada.

The Member before me spoke again about income supplement dependency—keep us, feed us, we are poor, we are weak. That was the theme of their campaign. Unfortunately there is a culture supported by the Liber-

als who are dependent, and we are going to change that. Those people are capable of meeting the challenges in the future but not the way the Liberals do it.

They criticize the Government because there are no more fish in the sea. If the Liberal Party has a recipe to put fish in the sea, sell it. You might even be able to pay off the debt of the Liberal Party of Canada. We want that recipe. If the Liberals know how to put fish in the water, tell us. We need that solution. Those great Grits will come up and fill the sea with fish.

I have listened intently to Members opposite. I just hope that people in Atlantic Canada do also. For example, they are criticizing UI reform. I am a product of Atlantic Canada. What I see in my riding and in my province are children growing up—they are now 10, 12, 14 years old—and the only work ethic that these kids have had as an example in their entire life is mom and dad working 10 weeks out of a year. This is what the Liberals left us.

We want to make profound changes in the way we develop as a region of Canada. We can do it. We have resources. They are not all renewable. We know that, but we have resources. The best resource we have is people. When we created the agency, we said that it should be located in Atlantic Canada and staffed as much as possible with people from that region so they could work with the local communities to build a better future. The Liberals, for purely political partisan reasons, voted against the agency in the House. They voted against the very instrument they have been complaining about for weeks. We are funding this agency more than in the previous four years. Yet they voted against it.

We will hear today a lot of rhetoric by Members opposite. But I trust Atlantic Canadians will just look at what is taking place, all the tools that we have put in place. Those prophets of doom and gloom on the other side should listen to the business people in Atlantic Canada.

Ms. Clancy: We are.

Mr. Valcourt: I have met several business leaders. I have found very few against free trade. The hon. Member was babbling her mouth against it all across Halifax.

Ms. Clancy: And I got elected.