

*Government Orders*

alternative economic future to which the residents can aspire.

In another very important sector of our economy, namely the fishery, we have recently discovered that fish stocks in the zones adjacent to the island are in serious decline. Scientists of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans came out a few weeks ago saying that in order to prevent a total collapse of those fish stocks there would have to be serious cuts in the quota. Already that has caused unemployment in fish plants around Cape Breton Island. There is every reason to expect that in the new year there will be major job losses in the fishing industry which is another very important sector for our local economy.

In the forestry industry which so far has remained a fairly solid pillar of the island economy the long-term prospects on a global basis are at most cloudy. The mill which sustains more than 2,000 workers either directly or indirectly is one of the most efficient and well managed corporations in the pulp and paper industry. However, in the last two or three years it has faced very difficult times because of the downturn in that industry. It also faces more long-term challenges because of the new environmental trends which go against some of the advantages the mill has enjoyed by its location on Cape Breton Island.

While we have many assets that can be developed, our economy remains dependent on industries whose futures remain troubled. We have needed and relied in the past, to develop the economic strengths on Cape Breton Island, on agencies that had the island economy at heart and had the future growth of the island's economy as their main preoccupation.

What was created in the 1960s under a Liberal government was the Cape Breton Development Corporation. It had as one arm the responsibility of managing the coal mines in industrial Cape Breton and as the other arm the industrial development division which had as its mandate the responsibility of promoting a more diverse economic development across Cape Breton Island. That division, working in tandem with the main arm of Devco over nearly 20 years, did a lot to strengthen the economic base of various parts of the island until the government, when it introduced ACOA, chose to sever the industrial development division and to create the Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation as a separate entity quite apart from the rest of Devco.

I was not in the House at that time, but I know that members representing us in the House of Commons and in the Senate were vigorously opposed to that part of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency enabling legislation. They saw the writing on the wall in terms of the long-term intent of this government which was to end the mandate of the industrial development division in two stages. The first stage was to separate it from Devco and the second stage, as we saw in the budget earlier this year and in this legislation, was to shut down Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation completely.

With the exception of the Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation which is a branch office of ACOA working out of Halifax with a very limited mandate and with a very indirect preoccupation with the future of Cape Breton Island, this will leave no agency unique to Cape Breton, unique to that part of Canada, in place with the support of federal funds to work toward the development of a long-term viable industry to sustain the future of Cape Breton. This is at a time when the pillars of our economy—the coal industry, the steel industry, the forest industry, the pulp and paper industry, the fisheries industry and the tourist industry—are facing a future which is cloudy at best and perhaps in a long-term decline.

We in Cape Breton wonder what this government has in mind in terms of a vision, in terms of a commitment to our future in Cape Breton, when it would terminate the only agency that is in place with a mandate and a commitment to foster the economic development of Cape Breton Island.

Our situation in comparison to the rest of Canada is bad and is getting worse. The disparity on Cape Breton Island is increasing and our young people who are looking for work are finding no opportunities there. They are forced to leave. Our best resource, namely our young, educated labour force, is obliged to find work elsewhere because of lack of opportunity and lack of vision on the part of this government. That diminishes the capacity of Cape Breton to attract viable, forward looking, future oriented industries.

That is happening because we have no agency with a mandate to deal with the search for solutions on Cape Breton Island. The mandates of the Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation and Enterprise Cape Breton, two almost Bobbsey Twins in the programs offered by the government, have been confused and distracted. They have been preoccupied with nit-picking and with small