

Supply

realize that in Atlantic Canada this Government is putting forward the kinds of resources that are unprecedented to help that part of Canada. Mr. Speaker, Liberals have a strange unique perspective in politics.

An Hon. Member: So I noticed.

Mr. MacKay: It is no good unless they do it. My hon. friend from Nickel Belt says yes, so do Tories. So do New Democrats. I can tell him that I certainly admire some of the unique perspectives that he brings to his work.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacKay: I think that this kind of motion takes a certain amount of poetic licence with the facts, when they say that we have initiated policies to devastate Atlantic Canada. When this comes from a Party that voted against ACOA, it has to be looked at with a certain amount of cynicism.

• (1150)

The Liberal opposition voted against having a unique and very useful agency located in Atlantic Canada to do something constructive and make decisions. After ACOA became a success, the Opposition said "Oh, my, you are spending the money too fast. You are spending too much money". Then, when we try to modify the program and certain policies a bit, what did we hear then? "Oh, this is terrible, you are cutting back". The Opposition really does not know what it wants.

The one thing the Opposition very clearly wants is power. Liberals understand that. Power to Liberals is like sex to puritans. They pretend to loathe it, but they lust after it and they are very, very uneasy with the exercise of it by anyone but themselves.

When it comes to looking objectively at economic development policy, I think it is worthwhile to refer briefly to an excerpt from a book by Professor Donald Savoie, who wrote a very excellent treatise on economic development. I was interested in it because, like some of my colleagues here in the House, I have been following the various transmogrifications of recent development

policy for many years. One of the things that DREE was very, very keen on doing was promoting growth centres.

Mr. Tobin: You called it DRIE.

Mr. MacKay: DREE then became DRIE and under the Liberals it became DRIFT.

This is what Professor Savoie said:

But we also learned from social scientists not only in Canada but abroad as well, that the growth-pole concept was only one of a series of "fashions and fads" that was seized upon 'only to be abandoned—when it turned out that it was not a unique or complete solution—

The growth pole gave way to the "comprehensive" GDA approach, which in turn gave way to the equally comprehensive ERDA approach. Putting aside the issue of political viability, ERDAs thus far have offered little that is new in terms of regional development programs.

Now, social scientists insist that perhaps never in the history of economic thought has so much government activity taken place and so much money been invested in the foundation of so confused a concept as the growth pole became in the late 1960s and early 1970s. I put that on the record to show that there is no unique or necessarily proper solution for regional economic development. It is something that is evolving.

Ms. Clancy: This one certainly isn't.

Mr. MacKay: My colleague from Halifax says this one certainly isn't. I think she would concede that ACOA has done a great deal in Atlantic Canada.

Some Hon. Members: No.

Mr. MacKay: Let us look at the record then.

In 1984, when this Government came to power, the unemployment rate was over 15 per cent. Today, that rate is below 12 per cent. In 1984, there were 805,000 people employed in Atlantic Canada. Today there are almost 100,000 more. In 1984, capital investment in Atlantic Canada totalled \$6.1 billion. This year it will amount to \$8.6 billion. In 1984, there were 10,800 housing starts. This year there will be approximately 13,000 housing starts. I will go on, if I may, for a couple more. I know my colleagues opposite want to hear this because they are interested.