

*Canadian Organization Act, Atlantic Canada, 1987*

in by the Government of Canada for, in his deliberations, the Minister of the day provided but three or four brief, succinct sentences with regard to Part II of the Bill known as the Enterprise Corporation Act. We have two separate and distinct elements.

Listening to the Minister who preceded me was somewhat reminiscent of watching and listening to the Keystone Kops. Rarely did he talk about the substantive aspects, rarely did he admit what is taking place here, and purposely and intentionally he has attempted, without success, I might add, to brandish the Opposition for wishing to split this Bill as somehow being against motherhood, apple pie, et cetera. I guess the difference between this Party and the other Party at that end of the Chamber is that its Members talk a pretty good game when it comes to assisting and enhancing the economic opportunities in Cape Breton. But when it is put on the line, you get another answer.

I am disappointed, really disappointed, in my colleagues to the left who, for I would believe political gain in their own parts of the world, have not seen fit to support the splitting of this legislation knowing full well as they do that if it were split we in this Party would support it, they would support it and the Government would support it. That does not mean that each and every scintilla of a sentence would be accepted. It does not mean that at all. But I am disappointed for other reasons.

The New Democrats have talked about heart and about sensitivities toward regional economic development. When I hear a colleague from my region, from Atlantic Canada, from Newfoundland, cast aspersions, if you will—and he is free to do that in his choice of words—and say to the people of Canada that no success was ever uncovered with regard to previous regional economic development policy, let me say how shameful, how utterly untrue and how utterly unfair that is. There is no question that my colleagues on the government side as well as in the New Democratic Party would jump to their feet and say, yes, there may have been some successes, but not nearly enough, with which I would concur. But to try to sustain over a period of time that the economic policies of former Governments were not successful in the rebirthing, if you will, or the enlightening of the economy in the Halifax area is utterly untruthful. It is utterly untruthful concerning parts of the city that he represents. Some of those policies worked in Charlottetown and Fredericton. But it goes much beyond the New Democratic Party; it goes to the heart of economic development.

The Cape Breton Development Corporation with its Coal Mining Division and its Industrial Development Division has had some success and some failures. When one tries to address regional inequality, there is no quick fix. There is no panacea. Over its history DEVCO has been able to provide financial assistance to business and to non-profit institutions. It has, however, done more, Mr. Speaker. It has been the leader of a people, because in trying to change the behavioural patterns which comprise an economy, DEVCO has also served the

community in lifting its standards. Now the Government comes along and is supported by Members opposite, and particularly the Hon. Member for Cape Breton Highlands—Canso (Mr. O'Neil) who will have to answer in this Chamber as well as elsewhere as to why he would concur with such a decision. The question is this. Will the Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation have the same independence and the same status as the Cape Breton Development Corporation, of which the Industrial Development Division is an integral part?

We heard some pretty unbelievable two-sided arguments from the previous speaker, the Minister of State for Small Businesses and Tourism, as to why he believes it will be the same. I asked this Minister, this fountain of knowledge, this individual who thinks that he has each and all of the answers to regional inequality, why does his own appointed President of the Cape Breton Development Corporation disagree with him? Why does his own appointed Executive Vice-president of the corporation disagree with him? Why, Mr. Speaker? Because of the very fact that it will not have the same independence as the Cape Breton Development Corporation. By a single definition, the Deputy Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency is also made the head of Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation which, accordingly, becomes a subordinate part of a regular government Department or, in the words of the Minister, and I quote, "a member of the ACOA family". That is quite different from the present legislation of the Industrial Development Division which comes under DEVCO.

The Vice-President of the Industrial Development Division of DEVCO was asked by Senator Graham before the Finance Committee:

So once you have your money approved for the ensuing year, the entire authority as to how that money is spent is up to the Board of Directors?

Mr. Brown, appointed by and reaffirmed by this Government, answered the question by saying, "Yes". You cannot answer in the affirmative when you talk about the Cape Breton Enterprise Corporation. You cannot say that because it becomes an integral part of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, thereby reporting to the Deputy Minister. His head office is in Moncton, he resides in Halifax, and has operations in Cape Breton.

• (1250)

Another aspect of this issue concerns what was said by the Chairman and Acting President of DEVCO, Dr. Theresa MacNeil, appointed by the Government. She said the strength and reputation the corporation acquired in the past 20 years arose in the main from its independent status, its autonomous legal base, which provided the necessary flexibility in dealing with changing circumstances and new situations. She was asked in committee if she had concerns that Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation would not have the same kind of independence that Devco at present enjoys and has enjoyed for the last 20 years. Her answer was, yes, she had concerns.