

Government Orders

● (1345)

I would ask that the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans take swift action to ensure that experienced observers are at sea in the Scotia-Fundy, observers who are employed by a contractor who has received the contract by following the rules, the rules that everyone else was required to play by.

I am concerned for not only the Scotia-Fundy observers, the fundamental element in the observer program, experienced observers who have been tossed aside because they happen to belong to a small, independent union, but also for the observer program itself, which is Canada's first line of defence against foreign overfishing and probably the cheapest and most accurate source of abundant, scientific data available.

I would recommend the minister strengthen enforcement and enhance coverage levels to effectively conserve fish stocks so we may never need another TAGS program. In speaking to second reading of this bill, I noted that we on this side of the House envision an east coast fishery that is viable, self-sufficient and sustainable.

We believe that the fishery can and should be a cornerstone of a more diversified economy in Atlantic Canada. We are confident that Atlantic Canadians can compete in a world economy. The government would have Atlantic Canadians living dependent on government handouts in a constant state of instability.

It is a desire of reform members to encourage the implementation of a comprehensive program of change which would see the people of Atlantic Canada not only working but working in an environment that is both profitable and satisfying.

I wish that we had seen the last of this type of program, the type of program we are debating today. Unfortunately I fear for the worst. I think we all want to see a more prosperous Atlantic Canada. If the government would introduce a comprehensive bill which would deal with the restructuring of the economy of Atlantic Canada rather than the band-aid solution it has provided to date, we would all do better.

Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin): Madam Speaker, I would like to talk about the government's response to one of the most important challenges facing the Canadian government at the present time. I am referring specifically to the unemployment crisis in eastern Canada.

Bill C-30 is an attempt to deal with this crisis. In every respect this piece of legislation falls terribly short of this goal. At the present time there are 192,000 unemployed in the four eastern provinces.

Provincial unemployment rates range from 13 per cent to 21 per cent. Obviously measures should be introduced to ensure the long term viability of the most economically depressed regions of Canada. The question remains why does the government continue to pursue this course of action?

It was mismanagement of fishery resources by past governments which resulted in the economic crisis that Atlantic Canadians are paying for today. Many of the people affected by this crisis have worked at plants for their entire careers. They were capable enough to hold these jobs.

Now, thanks to government short sightedness and poor management, they have seen their source of income all but disappear. However, the solution proposed by Bill C-30 is in my opinion just as short sighted and poorly managed. This program proposes to reduce the technical level of unemployment in Atlantic Canada, not by strengthening the economy or promoting job creation but by encouraging people to drop out of the workforce.

Is this the government's agenda for reducing unemployment? The Reform Party would prefer to see a vigorous plan for the revitalization of Atlantic Canada. Perhaps this is what we should be debating here today. An interesting aspect of this program is the way in which it will be administered.

The government plans to purchase annuities for each of the affected individuals. As most members present will know, an annuity is created when you invest in an asset which will provide you with a future stream of earnings. In this case the government asset will be in the form of a bond.

● (1350)

Like most Canadians the Reform Party prefers to consider the individual as the asset. An individual invests in himself through training, whether it be formal schooling, on the job training or years of experience. The return comes in the form of a stream of pay cheques from a job, not government handouts. In addition, when we invest in ourselves we gain a sense of achievement and self-worth. We gain it from earning the money that we receive and converting our effort into tangible goods and services for ourselves and for our families.

This program provides neither a sense of achievement nor the satisfaction of accomplishment for those it is supposed to help. The long term impact of this decision is to create a cycle of dependency for the very recipients it is supposed to help. The workers being targeted by this program are in a period of their lives when planning for their retirement is most crucial. The recipients are to be between the ages of 50 and 65. At this age the children of many of these parents are leaving home, relieving