

Oral Questions

Mr. Broadbent: You will get your chance, Mr. Minister.

My question is for the Minister. The Government could not find among 24 Conservatives who were elected from Atlantic Canada one person apparently capable enough to be a Minister, and disgracefully appointed a Senator to account for this important work.

The Government has allocated \$200 million per year for this important work, and according to the press release it is to cover procurement, training and skills development, technology infrastructure, local investment promotion and, finally, job creation. Will the Minister tell us, out of these many things that have to be done with this \$200 million, precisely how much will go for job creation and particularly how much will go to Newfoundland where, under the Conservatives, unemployment has risen 2 per cent in the past year?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I know that Winston will not be as offended as the Leader of the NDP. Winston used to be a member of the NDP. No wonder the hon. gentleman is so sensitive on his behalf.

The question is why was Senator Murray appointed to look after the agency. One reason is that the Government of Newfoundland recommended in a brief to the Government of Canada that the Minister responsible for federal-provincial relations should look after this agency and Senator Murray is the Minister responsible for federal-provincial affairs. In addition, the Prime Minister did not want to appoint a Minister having line department responsibilities which might interfere with him giving this agency most of his time and attention. Those are the reasons.

The agency will not have to finance procurement. The hon. gentleman knows that if he has read the statement. The principal function of the agency is the design and delivery of programs for small and medium-sized businesses and industries within the region. In addition, the agency is responsible for bringing regional perspective to the design of national economic and social programs that affect Atlantic Canada. That is what it will do.

For the first time there will be a regional input into national programs for Atlantic Canada, and the four Atlantic Premiers have reacted positively, and strongly in favour of this. The hon. gentleman sings from his own song sheet as usual.

UNEMPLOYMENT LEVELS IN NEWFOUNDLAND

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, I prefaced my last question by saying that people in Atlantic Canada are happy with the decentralization program but they want something other than a few cents per citizen to create badly needed jobs. That is the issue. They want money, real money.

Since the Government has cut about \$4 billion out of the Atlantic regions, specifically from regional development programs, will he tell us how much of the \$200 million will go

specifically into job creation? Since unemployment in Newfoundland has risen by 2 per cent in the past year, when will the Government move to bring down the unemployment level? That is the issue.

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I do not know where the hon. gentleman gets his figures. The unemployment rate in Newfoundland in September, 1984, was 23.8 per cent. It has gone down to 20.1 per cent. Total unemployment has fallen by 9,000 in the last two and a half years. These are strides. In 1980-84 unemployment rose by 27,000 under the Liberals. I could go on and on but I will not.

● (1440)

Spending in Atlantic Canada on programs to overcome regional disparity will be about \$258 million this year. We are going to just about double that. The \$200 million going to this agency will be used for economic development, job creation, and long-term improvements to business and industry in Atlantic Canada. The other programs will continue to be financed by their present sources. That should reassure the hon. gentleman who is worried about what is going to happen to his candidate in St. John's East, not about what happens to the people of Atlantic Canada.

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CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

ALLOWANCES PAID PERSONNEL SERVING IN EUROPE

Mr. Len Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Mr. Speaker, in my years in this House I have never seen such disrespect for Parliament as we are witnessing here today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some Hon. Members: Sit down then!

Mr. Hopkins: On Friday the Government brought in a 15-year program for defence spending in this country amounting to \$183 billion. We have got two Ministers. Neither one of them is here to answer questions. That is an insult to Parliament.

I will pose my question to the Acting Minister of National Defence who promised a 6 per cent real spending in the last election campaign across this country and all the Government has come up with is 2 per cent. The Minister is aware that the Canadian military and civilian personnel in Canadian Forces Europe receive a cost of living exchange rate allowance to protect their income and purchasing power while serving abroad. Bank of Canada records show that the Canadian dollar has lost considerable value against the Deutschmark in the last year, reaching an all-time low on May 4.

Some Hon. Members: Debate!