

*Oral Questions*

development funds and assistance for those who are over the age of 50.

**An Hon. Member:** Order.

**Mr. Crosbie:** I could go on, but somebody calls out "order" in the NDP. They never want to hear the good and positive side of anything.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**ATLANTIC PROVINCES**

**Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister suggested that vocal concern about the economy of the Atlantic provinces was undermining investor confidence in the region. That is not the case. This government could not care less what happens to the people in the Atlantic region. As plants are closing down, these people are losing their paycheques, but what does the government do? It cuts unemployment insurance and regional development programs!

When will the Prime Minister go and see for himself what is happening and announce aid programs that will give these people a better future?

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, the government, as the minister indicated, has already announced a support program for workers in the Atlantic region. This is the first action we have taken, but we are talking about a \$130 million program with several components providing direct aid to workers and their families as well as to the affected communities. There are other possibilities, both nationally and internationally, that the government can consider to improve the situation of fishermen in the Atlantic region.

In the weeks to come, we will probably be announcing a number of initiatives to improve the circumstances of these fishermen.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Leader of the New Democratic Party said that the Atlantic region was in a state of crisis, which was categorically denied this morning by the Premier of New Brunswick, Mr. McKenna. I urge those deploring certain economic situations to avoid generalizing so as not to disturb investor confidence. We want to

protect investment in the Atlantic region. We don't want to cause a panic.

I would ask the Leader of the New Democratic Party to help us create more jobs in the region instead of scaring away investors.

• (1430)

[English]

**Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon):** Mr. Speaker, I suggest that there is a panic situation for the workers in fish plants, for the fishermen, for the families in the Atlantic region. There is a crisis in the Atlantic region.

I remind the Prime Minister of a letter which he received from the Premier of Nova Scotia on December 22, 1989 where the Premier of Nova Scotia said on the first line: "The Atlantic fishery is in crisis. The fishery sector here is equivalent in economic importance to the auto industry in central Canada."

I visited Newfoundland and Nova Scotia.

**Mr. Crosbie:** Four hours.

**Ms. McLaughlin:** I talked to people in the fishing industry. I spoke to those families. Those people in Atlantic Canada have ideas. They have solutions. They have hopes and dreams, but they need help. I ask the Prime Minister to show that he cares. Is he going to go to the Atlantic and talk to these people in Newfoundland and Nova Scotia? This week or next week? These people want to know when the Prime Minister will show a personal interest in their future.

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, I often go to Atlantic Canada where I had the privilege of being educated and first elected to this House. On one of my many trips there I announced the creation of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, one of the most important instruments of growth and prosperity.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Mulroney:** On another trip to Atlantic Canada I announced the awarding of the frigate contract to Saint John shipyard, the largest federal contract awarded to Atlantic Canada since Confederation. On another trip we signed the Hibernia agreement which the Liberals and the NDP had opposed for 15 years. On another trip there I signed an agreement for the clean-up of the Halifax harbour. I will be going there again and again. Every time we go to Atlantic Canada we bring something