

Government Orders

market driven and competitively structured with individual harvesting rights which will lead to economically viable vessels and processing units.

In closing I would like to say that we have here a classic case, a clear demonstration of the calamity caused by government intervention. For over 300 years the east coast fishery has thrived. In the last 50 years the government got too involved in managing the fishery and look at it today. What a mess.

Thirty thousand people who used to be gainfully employed and paying taxes are now dependent on a \$1.9 billion make work project. I find it ironic that throughout the whole of the 50 years of government intervention the only job security has been for the tinkering, meddling bureaucrats and politicians. Those are the ones who have been assured of a job. This program is another make work project for them.

Every time the government introduces a new program it seems to create more work for bureaucrats. If it is anything like agriculture there is one bureaucrat now for every 5.7 farmers who make a living off the land. That is unsustainable. That cannot work. We have to look at how much government we have and find ways to downsize.

This is where the Reform Party is strongly opposed to the direction the government is taking. Even in this the east coast fisheries darkest hour the bureaucrats and politicians are finding ways to employ even more bureaucrats. I am sure most people in Atlantic Canada appreciate the money, the support and the programs. I cannot help but wonder what kind of fishery we would have had if the bureaucrats and politicians had not stuck their noses in where they were not needed and let the people of Atlantic Canada run their industry, make the choices that needed to be made and not have it run from Ottawa.

What kind of fishery would we have had if we had put our faith in Atlantic Canadians, if we had depended on their ingenuity, their hard work, their creativity, their productivity and their competitive instincts? What kind of east coast fishery would we have had if we had relied on free markets, free enterprise and the entrepreneurial talent of Atlantic Canadians?

The free market and free enterprise system could not have done worse than what the government has done in this case. Reformers believe that the bureaucrats and politicians have had their chance. They have messed things up big time. I believe it is time to give easterners a chance to prove themselves. Let us use this fisheries crisis to rethink the way we have been doing business. Let us give Atlantic Canadians the freedom they need to restructure the east coast fishery the way they think it needs to be done, not the way some experts in Ottawa think it needs to be done.

Instead of more government let us demand less government. Instead of higher taxes let us demand lower taxes. Reformers would rather see the future of the east coast fishery in the hands of Atlantic Canadians than in the hands of government bureaucrats. Reformers trust Atlantic Canadians to make decisions that

are in the best interests of the fishery, their families, their communities, their provinces and Atlantic Canada. We trust those people.

Finally, if Atlantic Canadians are given this freedom they will revitalize the east coast fishery. It will be good for the entire Canadian economy.

• (1250)

Reformers look forward to working with Atlantic Canadians in the years ahead to transform all four Atlantic provinces from have not provinces to have provinces. The Reform's approach is very different from that of the Liberals with regard to this strategy.

I would like to make one more comment as I close. Meaningful work enhances the quality of life. We are telling these people through this older worker fish plant adjustment program to go. They are 50 years old, in the prime of life, and will be given a cheque every month. This is unacceptable. We cannot go along with it.

The basic philosophy of the Reform Party is very different from that of the government.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvan Bernier (Gaspé): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak at the end of this session on Bill C-30, the purpose of which is to allow workers in the fishing industry to take early retirement, at age 50. We want to say from the outset that the Bloc québécois will support this government initiative, for the following reasons.

When you come from a maritime region made up of very small communities, you see that there is no economic diversity at present. What is a 50-year old man or woman who is asked to go back to school supposed to do? Many of us realize that going back to school is very hard. The most painful thing for these workers we are discussing today is that going back to school for a period of two or three or five years, and then rejoining the labour force, is still pretty dicey. The point is not that these persons will be unable to work—I would be the first to hire them—but we must be realistic and work with the present economic conditions in the regions of Canada. The jobs are not there.

If I take my constituency as an example, the unemployment rate is 27 per cent. I have already said so, but at the end of this session I may take the liberty of sending that message again to the government side. An unemployment rate of 27 per cent, an activity rate of 42 per cent, means that four persons out of 10 who are old enough to work are looking for a job or are working. And that means there are six persons out of 10 who are not working.

In my constituency, the unemployment rate is 27 per cent. If I try to draw a parallel with the rate in Quebec, that province as a whole has an activity rate of 62 per cent; there is a 20-point spread. If, in order to compare the constituency of Gaspé with