

Government Organization Act, Atlantic Canada, 1987

division. What stupidity, what idiotic public policy by a Government which is taking jobs from one poor region and giving them to another poor region of the province.

The industrial development division of the Cape Breton Development Corporation has had its share of failures too. There is no question about that and I would be the first to admit it, Mr. Speaker. Over time, however, it has been successful on many accounts. Perhaps what is not talked about often, to which reference ought to be made now, is the industrial development of DEVCO. It includes the development of individuals and the over-all community.

To individuals who are not familiar with regional economic development and to those individuals who live in the major urban centres of our country who cannot appreciate this kind of development, not for lack of desire or caring but because of lack of exposure, it is fundamental to changing an economy and changing a community. It is a vision not easily attained but nevertheless a vision to improve, to assist and to facilitate individuals in the community at large. What do we have in Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation? A mere mishmash of programs administered from an agency whose President will also be the President of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, who lives in Halifax, whose head office is in Moncton, but who is supposed to do work in Cape Breton. I have seen some pretty good ballet dancers and some pretty good running backs. That goes a long way. I think that is very telling.

• (1630)

In my view, the intent to create the Crown corporation spells the end of the Cape Breton Development Corporation. The Government is not committed to future coal development in Cape Breton, as evidenced by its action to date. Every miner who works within the coal division of that corporation will concur that there is not a commitment there.

There is now in Cape Breton a coal mine called the Donkin coal mine which is ready to start up. Yet the Government of Canada will provide money for a new coal mine in Pictou County which will be operating in competition with that of the Cape Breton Development Corporation. If that does not spell out very clearly what the intent of this particular Bill is, I do not know what else does.

It is very obvious to me that there is a plan, and the plan is not to assist and to facilitate research and development of the coal division. It is to wind it down. The best way to do that is to separate the two: put the coal division on one side, and Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation on the other side.

If that is done, we will lose on two counts. We will lose our coal industry, which has been the backbone of eastern Nova Scotia for decades, and we will lose, on the industrial development side, because the knowledge that has been acquired, the sense of confidence and stability, the *esprit de corps*, the aims and the objectives and the decisions being made there and not somewhere else will be lost. Those things are pretty fundamental to developing regional economic development policies. For

Hon. Members opposite to say that all is well with the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency is for them to say something that is not correct.

The industrial development division of the Cape Breton Development Corporation has a developmental role in ensuring that Cape Bretoners have the education, the technical and managerial skills and the entrepreneurial ability to carry through the economic plans they set for themselves. That is very well stated, and it was submitted by senior members of the Cape Breton Development Corporation.

That is not to suggest in any way that the present industrial development division of DEVCO does not have a way to go in terms of improvement. However, to change it for the mere sake of changing it does not make good policy sense. We only change things because common sense demands that we change them.

I say now, as I have said in my constituency, that we are fundamentally altering a Crown corporation which has served us well for a good number of years, a Crown corporation which has accumulated the information, the knowledge and the know-how to do things in that particular environment. To change it at this time for a convenient label, Enterprise Cape Breton Development Corporation, will not meet the test of good public policy.

I hope that the Government of Canada will reconsider the serious mistake it is making. There are a number of individuals on the Island of Cape Breton, and even in the galleries—

Mr. Beatty: There's not a dry eye in the House.

Mr. Dingwall: I thank the Hon. Minister. These individuals would agree that this change will mean the end of our coal mining and the way we operate other businesses on the Island of Cape Breton.

This new agency does not have, nor is it likely to have, the empathy and the understanding that is needed to foster the attainment of regional economic development objectives. I would hope that the Government, notwithstanding its huge majority, would rethink this issue, not on the basis of partisan politics but on the basis of what is right for a people who live in a region of Canada and have contributed greatly to this country in various ways. They ought to be given the same opportunities that are given to other Canadians.

I am afraid, and I say this with regret, that the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, containing these particular provisions, will lessen opportunities for the people of my region.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Debate.

Mr. Pat Binns (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise to participate in this debate. The reason for that is quite simple. As a Member from Atlantic Canada, I was one of those on the government side who was anxious to see our