

*Adjournment Debate*

that has been done by the Conservative Government in Ottawa and by the Conservative Government in Nova Scotia has been merely in the area of media news releases. Nothing concrete or specific has been done for that area of Canada by the Tory provincial Government or the Tory federal Government. There are things which they could have done and still could do in terms of relocating and allocating moneys, perhaps for automotive companies, whether it be Hyundai or other foreign manufacturers. There is no concern for the workers in that region of the country. It is the same old story—the theory of trickle down economics practised by the Conservative Government in Ottawa. The thrust of the thesis is very clear, that hopefully at some point in time when the wealthier regions of the country create even more wealth and more jobs, somehow, by some miracle, it will seep down into the less fortunate areas.

My Party and I believe that there is a major national role to be played by the national Government. I suggest to the Parliamentary Secretary that those workers should not be given a plane ticket or free fare on VIA Rail to leave those regions. These workers are highly qualified individuals with families, mortgages and commitments to those communities. By its very actions as a Government, it is suggesting that those well-trained individuals should leave. The Government is exporting competent individuals out of our region of the country. In the long run that does not make good economic sense for those individuals in Atlantic Canada. Nor does it make good economic sense for Canada as a nation as we know it.

It can be argued effectively that the Conservative Government of the Prime Minister is breaching the Canadian Constitution which talks about, in real terms, equal opportunity for all Canadians. Why can the Government not provide the needed jobs for those displaced workers at the heavy water plants? What is so different about that area of Canada? If the Government can afford to provide \$1.3 billion to the multinational oil companies and if it can provide billions of dollars to the Canadian Commercial Bank, why can it not deliver on a promise made by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources on two specific occasions to the people of Nova Scotia?

● (1835)

The Premier of Nova Scotia ought to resign from office. He has said absolutely nothing with regard to the welfare of those workers. The Premier of the province has acquiesced to this conduct by the Conservative Government. I would ask the Parliamentary Secretary to rise today to make an unequivocal commitment that there will be jobs in place by the end of the year to compensate for the substantial loss of employment in Glace Bay and the surrounding communities, as well as the Town of Port Hawkesbury which has also been delivered a serious economic blow. That is the role the national Government ought to play with regard to economic development in the less prosperous areas of the country.

**Mr. Geoff Scott (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Communications):** Mr. Speaker, in reply to the Hon. Member

for Cape Breton-East Richmond (Mr. Dingwall), the federal Government has clearly stated its position on the closures of these plants on many occasions before various audiences. Indeed, the record shows that we debated this issue with the Hon. Member in the House as recently as June 18. Since then, our position has not changed.

The Hon. Member has been the sitting Member for Cape Breton-East Richmond for a number of years. He has been well aware of the problems related to AECL's heavy water plants on Cape Breton and how governments have long searched for an appropriate solution to these problems. Federal Governments have provided much support to this industry which has been historically plagued with problems linked to international marketing. The Government took decisive action in announcing the closure of these plants. It faced the hard fact that there existed a very major over-capacity in Canada's heavy water industry and that there were no immediate solutions to the marketing difficulties.

Under these circumstances, the Government could not longer justify continuing operations at the plants. It could not, in good conscience, keep these plants open at a cost to taxpayers of \$100 million per year when there was not market for the heavy water being produced. We firmly believe that such action would have been irresponsible and it would have been unfair both to the Canadian taxpayer and to heavywater plant workers. Workers have known that these closures were inevitable and that the indefinite perpetuation of operations would only have delayed the time when these plants could be replaced with viable long-term industrial activity on Cape Breton.

When the federal Government announced these closures in the May 1985 federal Budget, it was made quite clear that it had not abandoned the people of Cape Breton. As outlined in the Budget, workers have been provided with generous severance benefits, retraining and relocation assistance and financial and career counselling together with measures designed to facilitate re-employment. In addition, the impact on the affected communities' property tax revenues will be offset for a specific period. The Budget also introduced a special tax credit instituted to enhance private-sector investment and productive employment on Cape Breton. This will result in no federal income tax being payable by investors for 10 to 15 years.

Announcements made by the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion (Mr. Stevens) have significantly offset unemployment triggered by the plant closures. The Minister has stated that \$1.5 million in federal funding has been designated to rebuild a burned-out fish plant; \$4.1 million has been committed for improvements to the Point Tupper pulp and paper mill and \$16 million has been earmarked for a new coal mine tunnel.

In addition, the Minister responsible for DRIE appointed an advisory committee on economic development measures for Cape Breton Island which is scheduled to submit its first report this fall. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Miss Carney) has repeatedly indicated that she is ready to assist in bringing economic renewal to Cape Breton through reliable, sound employment creation.