

Supply

I also want to give a great deal of credit to the hon. member for South West Nova and to compliment her on the comments she made concerning the Cornwallis base. It is a tremendously important facility in Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada.

When we see new institutions being funded and reorganization in the Armed Forces taking place when we have this excellent facility in Nova Scotia, the thought, even the very germ of an idea that we would let this facility go is absolutely galling and ridiculous. It is a marvellous facility not only in the technological expertise that exists there but also in the infrastructure which is so costly today. It has an excellent infrastructure and is in a marvellous location with very competent personnel. The thought that we would let this go is unthinkable. I certainly hope the government will listen to the words and reasons put forward by the hon. member for South West Nova. It is well worth listening to. It is a benefit to her constituents and to the country as a whole.

• (1630)

Frankly, the situation in Atlantic Canada is very bad at the present time. I think the government is trying not to notice this. How government members can possibly not notice it, how they can possibly come into the House and not be completely and utterly embarrassed by their treatment of Atlantic Canada is very perplexing to me.

In my constituency on Cape Breton Island we have a devastating economic problem. The meaningful programs we expect from government are not forthcoming. There does not seem to be a recognition of what is going on in Atlantic Canada and certainly on Cape Breton Island.

The community has no understanding whatsoever as to why the federal government has abandoned its role in Atlantic Canada.

We have the situation in the fisheries. We have asked the government time after time to please tell us what will be done as compensation for those who are going to be losing their livelihood.

In Newfoundland there are thousands of communities depending exclusively on the fishery. On Cape Breton Island there are communities which are completely

dependent on the fishery. These communities will suffer irreparable harm if the fishery is closed. What is the government doing? It is causing tremendous anguish.

In Nova Scotia and Cape Breton we had an excellent tourist industry. It has been hurt by the GST and by higher taxes on gasoline. We depend mainly on Americans visiting our region and frankly, the GST and the gasoline tax are disincentives to come to our region.

It may be said that applications to obtain a GST rebate can be made. People just do not go through that process. They are not prepared to go through that hassle. They will stay at home. They will go as far as Maine, Vermont or New Hampshire and decide that is as far as they will go. We will lose the assistance we could have had from their visits.

This is so fundamental. It seems that everything in Atlantic Canada right now is tainted as far as the economy is concerned. Something has happened pretty well on all fronts to cause questions in every industry and every form of livelihood. This is a mystery to us all as to how this could have been allowed to happen to the extent that it has.

This is a great country, even though we have our economic difficulties at the present time. There seems to be different levels of Canadians. There is a gulf between the more prosperous regions of the country and the less prosperous, between the rich and the poor, and that gulf seems to be widening. This was not the way it was supposed to be. This was not Canada as most of us thought of it. This was not the idea that we ever imagined would be of such prominence in our country as it is today. This cannot really be allowed to continue because if it is we are going to ruin the spirit of the country as we know it.

Certainly in Atlantic Canada there is the feeling because the four provinces together only have a total of 32 seats that politically, government believes Atlantic Canada is expendable. The government asks: "Why worry about the fishery? Why worry about the tourist industry? Why worry about agriculture in Atlantic Canada? Why worry about the forest industry? Why worry about the communities that are suffering such difficulty? Because we can win an election and not have to worry about Atlantic Canada".