

Government Organization Act, Atlantic Canada, 1987

identifying entrepreneurial spirit and encouraging the entrepreneurial development process in every community in western Canada. Again, it should play a lead role in developing a world class market information system to focus our entrepreneurial energy into the areas of highest opportunity.

So there is the concern that, again, we have this centralist tendency. Neither the Western Diversification Office nor the Atlantic Opportunities Agency is really fighting against this and working to get development and opportunity into small communities where it is most needed.

There is nothing in this Bill that has changed the meaning of the statement made by Senator Lowell Murray last June in which he said that final decisions will be made by him with respect to ACOA's decisions, in spite of a great number of witnesses who appeared before the committee examining Bill C-103 who expressed concern over the need for regional responsibility for the agency.

It is worth-while pointing out that there is no mandate in setting up the agency to ensure that a certain number of women are represented on the advisory board. There is no mandate to ensure that academia, labour and small business are represented. Rather, they are people who have been picked by the Ministers involved. That means that they will tend to be responsible to the Ministers rather than to their communities.

● (1720)

Perhaps at this point a few remarks on the role of women might be helpful. Between 1972 and 1983, the number of women entrepreneurs increased nationally by 140 per cent. The number of male entrepreneurs increased by only 10.7 per cent. There is a great growth in the number of women who are getting into business. A study prepared for the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women predicted that 65 per cent of the new businesses started in Canada would be created by women. Here I am quoting from the Newfoundland and Labrador Advisory Council on the Status of Women which stated, "Women are responsible for starting two-thirds of new businesses and they succeed in keeping businesses going 47 per cent of the time compared with 25 per cent in male owned business, and new businesses are responsible for creating 70 per cent of new jobs".

Here we have a situation where the new jobs are being created by small businesses, and the great percentage of those small businesses which start and succeed are started by women. Yet there is an agency which is attempting to create opportunities in Atlantic Canada, and its advisory board is not mandated to have a certain number of women.

The Royal Commission on Employment in Newfoundland recommended that the federal Government should "appoint approximately the same percentage of females as males". There is a need to use a whole range of support and promotion strategies to encourage women actively to undertake enterprise initiatives.

According to the Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Advisory Council there should be a means by which ACOA can make affirmative action policies a component of its terms of reference. In other words, it should not be simply left to the good intentions of the different Ministers from Atlantic Canada to pick people who might be women who represent labour, or people who may be small business people. They should have a right to be represented on this advisory board, if it is to be truly representative.

In looking at the function of the board, there have been recommendations that the board should have much more say in how the funds will actually be distributed. Again the Minister for International Trade the Minister from Newfoundland, feels that this not desirable. When appearing before the committee he said, "How could we do that and have ACOA's budget spent by an independent board? We would have no control at the political level; the Ministers would have no control over where the money is being spent; Atlantic Ministers would have no input or influence over it". That is what it is all about, Mr. Speaker. It is over political control. The Minister, the Hon. Member for St. John's West, wants political control. He is not willing to trust a representative board that could be established that would represent a broad cross-section of people from Atlantic Canada to make decisions that would be in the best interests of the entire region. He wants to have that political control centralized in his hands.

That suggests to me, and I am sure it suggests to the people of Atlantic Canada, that the Minister sees the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency as an agency that will give a great opportunity to that Minister and to other cabinet Ministers to have control over patronage. They see this as an opportunity agency for patronage. That is one of our concerns. The manner in which this is structured does not put it all at arm's length from being used as a means of rewarding friends and punishing those who are not so friendly to the Government.

The Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency needs a mandate targeted to reduce economic disparity. We need an advisory board that will be independent and at arm's length from the Minister, and not dependent upon the Minister's appointment, one that would be truly representative and would have some power.

I urge the Government to look at some of the recommendations made by the New Democratic Party over the last two years when we studied the whole question of the need for development in Canada. These suggestions were made with respect to Canada as a whole, but they certainly apply very concretely to Atlantic Canada.

First, there is a need for upgrading municipal infrastructure. In co-operation with the municipalities across Canada we have suggested a \$1.2 billion annual investment toward upgrading municipal infrastructure. We would like to see a \$200 million single industry community diversification fund that is in line with the type of recommendations that were referred to earlier.