

*Canadian Organization Act, Atlantic Canada, 1987**[Translation]*

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of State for Small Business and Tourism and Minister of State for Indian and Northern Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I join the other Members of this House in this debate on the motion which has been made. I would like to start by saying that I listened attentively to the remarks of the Hon. Members for Cape Breton—The Sydneys and St-John's East (Mr. MacLellan and Mr. Harris) about the motion, and I imagine, Mr. Speaker, that I and the other Members of this House have an obligation to regard this debate as a historic event in the history of the Canadian Parliament, because it is the first time that anyone can remember that the Senate has done what it did with this Bill, which aims at promoting the economic well-being of Atlantic Canada.

[English]

I guess that when people look at this debate and when they look at what has caused this debate to occur they will realize how desperate the Liberal Party of Canada has become. An explanation for this action by the Senate must be found. Why is it that unelected people in the other place have, on their own, decided to transgress convention, even the powers of this House, by infringing on the privileges of every Member of this House?

What I find astonishing this morning is to see members of the Liberal Party standing up to defend yet again their little cousins in the other place for the very single reason of playing partisan politics. The Hon. Member for Cape Breton—The Sydneys (Mr. MacLellan) tried to portray the Government as playing partisan politics here. Who has been playing politics with this issue if not the Liberal Party of Canada represented by the Liberal Senators?

It is a shame to see Members of Parliament from the Liberal Party who are elected standing up to say those things. After all, their cousins in the other place are not elected. We can understand that MacEachen and his gang would try to hold on to power to frustrate the will of the elected people of Canada. What I find astonishing is to see Liberal Members of Parliament defend the other place and the actions of the Liberal Senators.

● (1220)

We should not have this debate this morning. The Senate of Canada should not have divided Bill C-103. In his remarks this morning the Hon. Member for Cape Breton—The Sydneys challenged the ruling of the Speaker. The Speaker said quite clearly that this was a money Bill, but the Hon. Member attempted to explain that it was not a money Bill. By doing what it has done the Senate was infringing the privileges of the elected people of Canada. That is what the issue is about this morning.

The Liberals attempted to justify the gestures of the Senator who leads the Liberal Party in the other place by saying that we were destroying the Industrial Development Division of

DEVCO. If it were not for the rules of the House where we have to watch the language we use there are certain terms I could use to describe that Member of Parliament. I will not, because I respect the rules of the House. I think that the smoke-screen that the Liberals are attempting to put over this issue will dissipate, just as in 1984, after 20 years of apparently dealing with regional economic development problems in Atlantic Canada, the smoke-screen has dissipated and people have seen the Grits doing everything in Atlantic Canada from Ottawa. The difference today is that it will not be done by bureaucrats in Ottawa; the Liberals want it to be done by Senators in the other place who are not elected. They know what is best for Atlantic Canada.

The same Senator seems to forget that he was here in the House of Commons for a long time. He was a very influential member of the previous Liberal Government. What has he done for Atlantic Canada? Where was he all those years? He talks of the Industrial Development Division of DEVCO as if this was a solution to the problems of Cape Breton. What has happened to Cape Breton since 1984? What has happened to Nova Scotia and to Atlantic Canada? When one looks at the number of unemployed people in Cape Breton in 1984 and compares that to today, there is a big difference. Many more people are working today in Cape Breton, not because the Government has thrown money at the problem, like the Liberals did, but because the Government in Ottawa has decided and understood that Atlantic Canadians have the stuff to do it themselves. Hence the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency would give the people of Atlantic Canada the very tools that they need to be the architects of their own economic development. That is what ACOA is all about.

In the House today we hear the Liberal Members of Parliament defending the unelected Senators who are trying to frustrate the will of Parliament. That is unacceptable and Atlantic Canadians will not forget. The only Liberal federal representative in Ottawa, the Hon. Member for Westmorland—Kent (Mr. Robichaud), applauded the Hon. Member for Cape Breton—The Sydneys when he stated that there are interim authorities and that the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency can do whatever it wants.

To justify their position on this issue today the Liberals say that, first, we are doing away with the Industrial Development Division of DEVCO, and, second, that the Senate's action does not result in any delay in ACOA bringing forward initiatives to support regional economic development because it is funded.

ACOA is operating under interim authorities that will allow the agency to put in place the action program. The Hon. Member for Cape Breton—The Sydneys was talking about an announcement made for certain companies across Atlantic Canada under the action program. That is only one program and one leg of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency.

The Member for Cape Breton—The Sydneys stated in the House on July 8 that Bill C-103 does away with the Industrial Development Division of DEVCO. He called this an affront to