

*Government Organization Act, Atlantic Canada, 1987*

House, the more we hear from Members such as the Member for Bow River, and other Canadians, expressing their concerns about the comfortable pew that exists in the other place.

[Translation]

**Mr. Robichaud:** Mr. Speaker, I have a very simple question to put to the Member who has just spoken. Since this morning we have been hearing Government Members tell us that there are people in the other place, that is the Senate, who don't have to report to anyone, and who are not responsible to anyone.

How is it that the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) chose one of those persons to direct that Agency?

[English]

**Mr. Cochrane:** Mr. Speaker, I think the reason was the affinity and the closeness of that particular Senator to Atlantic Canada and the fact that a brand new agency with as little political partisanship as possible was trying to be created. We wanted to answer the false accusations that it was a political slush fund. Thus the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) appointed a gentleman who is well experienced in the affairs of Atlantic Canada. More important, he is the Minister responsible for intergovernmental affairs. One of the bylines, one of the main principles behind ACOA, is co-operation between the Government of Canada and the four Atlantic provinces, co-operation, I suggest, that was not available in the last 20 years of Liberal government rule. Members of the Liberal Government did not bother talking and asking the people of Atlantic Canada what they wanted. They did not go to the Premiers of the provinces. They just went out and said: "Here is what Ottawa thinks is best for you, now take it and like it".

I can tell Hon. Members that we did not like it. We did not advance because of it. We were held back because of it. I think of the Mitel plant in Buctouche. All of a sudden there it was, and the Premier of New Brunswick was not even consulted.

The only Government to spend money in the country to take care of that hollow election gimmick was the Government of the Province of New Brunswick. It had to upgrade the sewage system and build new access roads. That plant sits there, and the Hon. Member for Westmorland—Kent (Mr. Robichaud) knows it sits there, as a monument to the failure of the past Government's economic development policies in Atlantic Canada. Thus it was logical to appoint the Minister responsible for intergovernmental affairs to be the Minister who could talk to the Provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland, to co-ordinate programs, to co-ordinate the expenditure of federal dollars so that we could have a maximum effect, the maximum number of jobs created for Atlantic Canadians. I thank the Hon. Member for the question.

**Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to say a few words on Motion No. 34 before the House. Although I must say that I do not entirely

appreciate the wording and the structure of the motion, our Party will support it.

There is no doubt in my mind that the Senate proposal should be refused and that we have a responsibility to refuse it. It is very obvious that there is a very cynical approach to the Senate taken by Members of the Government. They stand up and shout about the bad things that the Senate does. Yet they go ahead and appoint a Senator to be the head of the organization which is supposed to be helpful to Atlantic Canada. They also have appointed a good number of their Members to the Senate. For many years our Party policy has been to abolish the Senate. The basis for our proposal to abolish the Senate has always been that it is not a democratically-elected body.

• (1550)

The Hon. Member for Cape Breton—East Richmond (Mr. Dingwall) made much of the fact that the New Democratic Party was supporting the position of the Government against the Senate. I know the Hon. Member recognizes that our opposition is based on our principles and belief in democracy and not necessarily in what we think is support of a flawed Bill which has gone through the House. Because of the majority that the Government has in the House it was able to pass it through and did not accept the rather pointed criticisms of people from the Maritimes, the New Democratic Party, and the Liberal Party about what was in the Bill and how it would affect future development in the Maritimes or in the Atlantic provinces.

We have many of the same concerns about ACOA as the Hon. Member for Cape Breton—East Richmond has, but we do not believe that the other place has the right to operate in this type of legislative or any other legislative area. Consequently, we will not back away from that principle in order to allow it to become a much greater power than it already is.

It is very significant that this particular move by the Senate is a power move. If it were allowed, the precedent thus established would give the Senate, an unelected body, the same ability to develop legislation and decide the direction of legislation as the House of Commons. In this process the Senate has taken a major step in attempting to establish itself as a legislative power. It does not have this power constitutionally. Therefore, it is important that we recognize the direction or what would have happened had the House and the Speaker not made the ruling that he made.

It is interesting to note that the Liberals did not challenge the ruling of the Speaker. The Speaker gave the House the right to reject or accept the Senate ruling, although the Speaker stated specifically that the Senate's doing so without requesting the permission of the House was an infringement on the privileges of the House.

The Speaker ruled that the splitting of the Bill is a matter of privilege, and the other place infringed on that privilege. If we want to allow the Senate to do that, the Speaker ruled that we may go ahead and do so. Consequently, if this resolution is