

Government Orders

try to alleviate the real triple-headed monster, regional disparity.

In effect, what the government has done is bring in one of the most regressive fiscal regimes in the history of this country. It has done this at a time when linguistic and racial tensions have increased in this country. Now it has added a new one called regional tension.

If any members doubt the passion with which I speak, they should go to a community in Atlantic Canada that has been shut down because of this government's neglect of regional economic policy. The only department that was seen to be an agency to promote a policy within the central government structure of regional development has been dismantled by Bill C-3. There will not be a department responsible to cabinet for regional development in Atlantic Canada. It will be done through agencies.

In the last 18 months, the government has allowed \$1.221 billion in regional development agreements to lapse in Atlantic Canada. The more we cried in this House and the more we asked the minister responsible for ACOA to give us figures, the more he tried to get into five-year or seven-year averages. The buck stops at the desk of those individuals in Atlantic Canada who feel the bite of this government's economic policies. The fact is, of \$1.221 billion in economic development agreements, this government has only put up \$274 million to renew them. You do not have to know how to add and subtract very well to know that is \$1 billion short.

The Deputy Prime Minister said on a number of occasions that he was so committed to a national passenger rail transportation system in this country that his government was going to do it right. They were going to modernize and update the system so that we would have a modern, efficient national transportation system. The now Minister of Transport gets up and says: "We had to kill it to save it". That is basically what he said. He said: "The corpse looks fine. We have saved the corpse. It looks wonderful". But they killed the dream of a national rail transportation system from coast to coast.

The new Minister of Transport is laughing. Well, Mr. Minister, if you could go to Nova Scotia and see what people think about your economic and transportation policies, on Cape Breton Island and all through mainland Nova Scotia where you have cut the train, maybe you would be smiling somewhere else right now. You

would not be smiling in this Chamber, because you have lost the faith of the people in those respects. Not just here, but in northern Ontario and western Canada as well.

We have also seen a government that talked about how concerned it was about social programs. These are the masters of doublespeak. These are the great pretenders on the national stage.

They came in with a bill that in effect attacked our seniors' pensions. In that bill they did not say "claw back" because they do not like to call a thing for what it is. We said: "You are going to claw back those seniors' pensions". They said: "No, no, we are not".

There is a thing called Consumer Price Index, minus 3. It means that as inflation goes up, it is not fully indexed to inflation. The seniors now know, six months after that is passed, exactly what it is going to mean to them now, in 10, 15, and 20 years time.

They were so concerned about redistributing wealth in this country that they cut Established Programs Financing, EPF, a fundamental tenet of economic policy in this country, whereby this country thought it was fair, just and necessary to keep this country together, to ensure that there were programs of national standards in health and in post-secondary education.

In Nova Scotia in the next few years, according to the government's own documents, we are going to lose \$80 million. That is in a province of less than a million people. I do not know if they think the salt air grows loonies on trees down there or what. But I can tell you right now that because of this government's cut-backs and the transferring of economic responsibility for its deficit, they have now caused the budget surpluses of the provinces of Nova Scotia and P.E.I. to be turned into budget deficits. In turn that has been passed on to the poorest municipalities in this country, the municipalities in Atlantic Canada.

On equalization, I am told that in January an official from the office of the Minister of Finance met with officials of the Ministers of Finance of Atlantic Canada. He said: "There is going to be a minor modification to equalization. Do not worry about it". When the Minister of Finance of P.E.I. was preparing his final budget document before he presented it to the public in Prince Edward Island, they called from the office of the Minister of Finance and said: "That little adjustment is