

Government Orders

which would provide the basic necessities which other communities in the country have come to realize.

ACOA cannot fund it. It does not have any money. It has to go to cabinet. It is not tied into any federal-provincial agreement. It does not have it.

What did it do in Prince Edward Island? It took away VIA Rail. It took away the tracks. What kind of compensation did it give to the people of Prince Edward Island? Not a nickel.

It took away the tracks in Newfoundland. It provided some compensation, but not nearly enough in view of the fact that the province of Newfoundland is a picturesque province. It is almost as nice as Cape Breton. It is in second place. I know you would want to agree with that. It too needs the basic necessities of infrastructure in order that it has the proper transportation routes to move its products to market and that individuals have mobility within the communities. When I read that ACOA is only going to report every fifth year the hidden agenda becomes very obvious, that is that the success rate of ACOA has not been what the ministers have alluded to in the past. It is not likely to achieve that kind of success because there is no political will on the front benches to see it through.

• (1050)

An hon. member: There is nobody on the front benches.

Mr. Dingwall: Precisely. My colleague from Toronto says there is nobody—I did not make reference to it, Mr. Speaker—on the front benches. I agree with him. They may be here, but they are not all there as I am sure the hon. member would want to agree.

ACOA could provide assistance to those of us in the Atlantic region. It could provide assistance to small business. It could interface with other agencies. However there is no political will. You cannot make something happen if you do not have the political will to do it. The minister for ACOA fought tooth and nail for many weeks to get a fisheries aid package for fishermen in Newfoundland. Fishermen said: "Too little, too late". That is what they said. The farmers in western Canada said that too.

I know the Secretary of State who is, being the reasonable gentleman that he is, on the wrong side of the House. We will allow that for the time being and change that very soon in 1992, and relieve him of his pain and suffering. The fact of the matter is that the minister who also occupies the portfolio of Minister of Fisheries and Oceans was told very clearly by union representatives: "Too little, too late".

It goes on and on in the fisheries. Let us talk about the steel industry for a moment. There are 600 individuals in industrial Cape Breton who are presently on unemployment insurance due to run out very soon. As a result they will have to go on welfare to provide some dignity and some semblance of respect for their families and themselves.

The Government of Canada and the Minister of Employment and Immigration have not been of any assistance in this regard. However in fairness to the federal government—and I want to be fair as I always am—it is the provincial government, Tweedledee, and the federal government, Tweedledum, who have not shown the initiative to put forward a package which would be of some assistance to those steel workers displaced at Sydney Steel. It is they who have fallen down. As my colleague from Cape Breton—The Sydneys has said time and time again, the Government of Nova Scotia is acting in concert with the federal government to deny Canadians in his constituency and throughout industrial Cape Breton the economic opportunity to provide for their families.

What is even more ridiculous is that the feds are going to pay anyway. They are going to pay anyway. Why? Because the feds contribute 50 per cent of the welfare costs. We are going to pay them the other way so why can the government not be somewhat creative, somewhat innovative and provide a work program. Many programs are needed in industrial Cape Breton, picturesque as it is.

An hon. member: Oh, oh.

Mr. Dingwall: I did not hear what the hon. member said, but I want to tell him that if he has suggestions to make on how we can do that I invite him to the steelworkers' union hall. I invite him to lead the charge for the Prime Minister and the hon. member for Etobicoke Centre and others. I will introduce him and he can announce to all the steel workers, all the people of industrial Cape Breton what a wonderful program and idea that he has to provide an economic opportunity for those individuals who have been displaced. I will give