

ACOA in a strategic position to influence the size and content of such agreements, allow the federal Government greatly to improve its capacity to shape these key influences on regional development in the national interest.

By exercising its mandate, ACOA has developed, in consultation with other federal Departments, a set of priority themes which will guide the application of the funds within the allotment, and these priorities focus on the keys to development which are entrepreneurship, technology, trade, human resource development, and the environment. These priority themes will be used to measure the various programs put forward by federal Departments or provinces and play an important role in setting the federal agenda.

I understand that my time is about to expire. Perhaps I can simply conclude by saying that this is the first time that Atlantic Canadians have within their region an agency with a broad mandate for action and co-ordination, whose whole focus is specifically the needs and opportunities of Atlantic Canada. The success of the agency will lie in its ability to have influence beyond the boundaries of its own programs.

No regional development program can, by itself, compare with the over-all impact of broad federal government action. ACOA must be effective in influencing these broad federal policies so that they enhance the development opportunities of the region. ACOA has the tools to do this and has taken the first moves toward this success. Sustained effort and support from all Atlantic Canadians including my hon. friends opposite will ensure that the job gets done.

Mr. Tobin: Mr. Speaker, let me say first that I have a great deal of compassion for the Minister who has just spoken. It is an awesome burden for a Member from Atlantic Canada, a Member from the riding of Central Nova, to be forced to stand in his place to defend the Government's record over the last number of years.

For Atlantic Canadians, nothing could more painfully illustrate the difficulties and the problems we have than comparing the speech made by the Hon. Member for Gander—Grand Falls (Mr. Baker) with the speech made by the Hon. Member for Central Nova (Mr. MacKay). The Hon. Member for Gander—Grand Falls spoke from his heart and with passion. The Hon. Member for

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Central Nova spoke from a text. The Hon. Member for Gander—Grand Falls was the voice of the people of Atlantic Canada in the House of Commons. The Hon. Member for Central Nova was merely the voice of official Ottawa, the apologist of the Government of Canada.

The Minister wonders why we on this side of the House are cynical about the speech we just heard about the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency while we are talking about a crisis in our region.

We had assurances from the Government during the election campaign that UIC would never be touched. The Government announced right after the election that it was getting out of the UIC business and saving itself billions. We had assurances from the Government during the election campaign that ACOA would never be cut. The Budget came in and ACOA was slashed. We had assurances last summer that Hibernia was going ahead and that the legal contract would be signed by March 1989. I see on the calendar in front of me that it is now May 29 and there is still no legal contract on Hibernia and no indication, other than indications that it has gone into the quicksand of failed Tory promises, that Hibernia will go ahead. There is a healthy degree of cynicism acquired based on the experience of Atlantic Canadians and Members on this side about the value and worth of the commitments given from those on that side of the House.

The Hon. Member for Central Nova has the terrible burden as an Atlantic Canadian of defending the Government's record. He does it with all the passion of a telex machine, spouting out the words prepared by the bureaucrats in the officialdom of Ottawa. He said that he did not hear any constructive suggestions from the Hon. Member for Gander—Grand Falls. The Hon. Member for Gander—Grand Falls made, as his primary argument with respect to the crisis in the fishery, the suggestion that the Government has to disallow the quotas that have been given to foreign countries fishing in Canadian waters, catching Canadian fish at a time when Canadian fishermen are being told to haul up their boats and stay home. He is saying that it is time to stand up for the 100,000 people of Atlantic Canada who depend upon the fishery, and he is saying that surely this is a legitimate time to say that if we cannot provide fish for our own fishermen and fish plant workers, it is the time to say no