

Government Organization Act, Atlantic Canada, 1987

Canadian fish plants. It simply makes good sense for us to do that, and that will continue to be our objective.

Mr. Manly: On a brief supplementary, I would like to know what the Government is going to do about this latest affront to Canadian sovereignty, this assault upon Canada's right to manage its own fish stocks? Even if that area is disputed, we still have rights there. Are we going to allow the French to act with impunity, arresting a Canadian fishing vessel operating in Canadian waters?

Mr. Binns: Mr. Speaker, I do not have the benefit of the note which was just passed to the Hon. Member with respect to this issue. However, I can assure the House that the Government of Canada will do everything possible to ensure that Canadian fishing interests are maintained. We have been heavily involved in negotiations with the French. There have been ongoing activities. There have now been arrests on both sides, apparently. We will, as we have in the past, continue to stick up for the interests of Canadian fishermen.

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for recognizing me again. I did not realize that I would be allowed a supplementary question. I thought we might be finished at five o'clock. I think the Hon. Member for Cardigan (Mr. Binns) somewhat misunderstood the question I asked him the first time, although I appreciate the answer he gave to me. What I was trying to get at, and I am certainly not downplaying the idea that wharfs are important to a fishing area because I want the Hon. Member to realize that I represent a riding which has the largest fresh water fishery in the world, that is, Wheatley, Ontario. I would like the Hon. Member to realize that, as well as the fact that fishing is important to my riding.

I was trying to get the Hon. Member to explain the difference between the idea of this program, developed by this Government, as compared to the ideas in the past of regional development and diversity under previous Governments, which did not seem to be working. That is the question I was asking him. Could he do that for me?

Mr. Binns: Mr. Speaker, I think the difference is clearly that what we had in the past was a national program that was applied regionally. For instance, one could get the same benefits in Prince Edward Island as one could in Ontario, except that it might be in a different tier or different level of support. One might get 25 per cent support in Ontario and 35 per cent support in Prince Edward Island or another area of Atlantic Canada which is depressed. This is not a national program. This is an Atlantic program set up under a new agency which is independent. It has a president located in the region and it has its head office in the region. It can spend millions of dollars without ever consulting with Ottawa.

The \$1.05 billion which the corporation will spend will be spent regionally, based on ideas that are developed in the communities and in the provinces. We think it will serve the best interests of Atlantic Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The time for questions and comments has now terminated. Debate.

Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan—Malahat—The Islands): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak briefly in the debate on Bill C-103 which establishes the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. As my colleague, the Hon. Member for St. John's East (Mr. Harris), indicated, while we support this Bill as one measure that will be helpful, there are a number of concerns we have both in terms of the way in which the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency is structured and set up as well as the fact that it does not really go far enough in dealing with the very serious problems of Atlantic Canada.

Our concerns fall into three main categories. First, there is no goal in this legislation to reduce regional disparity. It is not mandated to move toward certain goals as the Government moved, for example, to institute the six and five program of a number of years ago to cut back wages, and as the Government has moved to do other things by setting goals. It does not have a mandate in Bill C-103 to reduce regional disparity. It is a vague hope.

Second, there is no insurance of equity or fairness among the different provinces. There is no insurance within individual provinces that the regions that most need help in development will be getting the assistance. Finally, there is no real commitment of significant new money. There is \$200 million per year over five years. That is for all of the Atlantic region. It simply does not begin to address the very serious regional economic disparity which has existed and which groups such as the Economic Council of Canada and OECD have singled out as being of critical importance for Canada to attack.

We have to ask the question whether the \$1.05 billion over the next five years is actually new money. According to the Minister for International Trade (Mr. Crosbie) when he appeared before the committee in St. John's on March 7, 1988, there are no actual ACOA projects as yet. Yet we hear over and over again that the \$1.05 billion is actually new money. If it is new money, when is it going to become available for program funding?

The Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) has often referred to the Economic Council of Canada as an authoritative agency which supports his free trade initiative with the United States. It is interesting that in its latest annual report it indicates that programs administered by the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency are "likely to be the targets of U.S. countervailing action". Atlantic Canada knows that that U.S. countervailing action is all about because it has had its groundfish attacked by countervail. In fact, in the U.S. action against Atlantic groundfish, over 50 federal and provincial programs were cited by the ITC as constituting unfair subsidies to the Atlantic fishery.

Here we have another program that we are putting in place which the Government hopes will do something to reduce regional disparity. It does not have goals but it does have the