

Supply

business plan, which has first to be approved by the government of Quebec as principal stockholder.

Why does his party insist on raising this issue today, when the hon. member and his colleagues know the government has the matter well in hand, is working on it, advancing it? The hon. member and his colleagues know full well that we are looking into the problem of industrial technology transfer for the benefit of employers in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada.

Mr. Dubé: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member, whom I know well given that he chairs the parliamentary committee on Human Resources, of which I am a member myself, for his question. What is the cause of my concern? Simply the facts. We heard that a business plan was tabled recently. I was not only concerned, I was also disappointed to hear the Minister of Transport mention just recently that he was waiting for a business plan. He even said so in a letter to the City of Lévis, the City Council of Lévis.

Last August, a few weeks before the election was called, MIL Davie officials presented this famous business plan to the present chief of staff of the present Prime Minister, who was a candidate in Quebec City, and to all the Liberal candidates in the Quebec City region. Considering that the Prime Minister's chief of staff already knew about this business plan then, one cannot come and claim eight or ten months later never having heard of this plan.

Like many other people of Lévis who took part in the election campaign and all the workers, I can remember the Prime Minister visiting Lévis days before the election and saying he agreed with the business plan. The fact of the matter is that this plan he had been shown minutes earlier provided for two transition contracts, that is to say the Magdalen Islands ferry and the smart ship, as well as for some infrastructure assistance. All this has been known since last August.

Now, the government was elected a few months ago. It is understandable that it would take until January to settle in, but I will remind the hon. member that, when I rose in my place on January 18 to inquire about the ferry to the minister, his answer was: "Soon". Later we learned that for him, "soon" means two months. If I am not mistaken, two months from January 18, that would bring us to March 18. We are now in May. Two months may not seem like a very long time, but for workers losing their jobs a hundred at a time every week—there were 3,000 of them this time last year, but at this rate there may soon be only 400 or 500 of them remaining; that is 2,500 jobs lost, and it will be 2,800 by the time December comes around—to hear the government answer it is looking into the matter is becoming unacceptable. Hundreds of workers are waiting for an answer.

• (1550)

That kind of situation worries me. That is the reason why I wanted, as the member for Lévis, to take part in this debate on the conversion of military industries to civilian production. I rise not only for my own riding, but also because for the whole Quebec City region the MIL Davie shipyard accounts for a total payroll of \$150 million. If you count all indirect jobs created by sub-contracting, it represents for the 10 ridings of the Quebec City region an economic activity of \$600 million.

As you know, that type of venture yields secondary benefits. Therefore it is extremely important. Besides, that issue has been recognized by the Conseil du patronat and by all economic organizations of Quebec as a top priority. The present Liberal government knew that when they were in opposition and during the election campaign. And they still know it today. We are now in the month of May 1994 and no answer has come yet.

Meanwhile, the rumour has it that the contract might be given by tender and that there would be other shipyards, in the region of the hon. member by the way. And there is the smart ship—a concept that belongs to and was developed by the MIL Davie. At the beginning, that original idea was presented in a business plan in private but today it is becoming more and more public. But as months go by nothing happens.

I am not the only one to be worried. The Minister of Industry and Commerce of Quebec, Mr. Tremblay—I guess I can call him by his title since he is not here—is also getting impatient. A few weeks ago, a coalition of all federal and provincial political parties, including the Quebec City members of the federal Liberal Party, supported the position of the MIL Davie. Despite that, there was no answer. This situation is indecent.

I am once more urging the government—and it may be the last time—to respond at last and to stop penalizing the region of Quebec City because it has not voted for the Liberal Party. If that is the reason, it is dangerous. I have warned the government that there will soon be, in a few weeks, in a few months, a provincial election that could have major consequences for the future of this country.

[English]

Mr. Barry Campbell (St. Paul's): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this debate. Let me reinforce the comments made earlier today by the Minister of Industry with reference to defence conversion.

The plan recognized that the time had come to help defence industries make the transition from high tech military production to high tech civilian production.