

Government Orders

ing industry towards more competitive military and civilian goods. Government can and must show leadership in shaping change. It was still Mr. Chrétien talking.

He then concluded by saying, "Canadians are entitled to a government that is prepared to lead, a government that has new ideas and new strategies and which helps them adapt to changing times. Our policy on defence conversion is a clear example of how a Liberal government will respond to the needs of Canadians in the 1990s".

When we look at, listen to and read what the Liberals were saying when they were the Official Opposition as opposed to what they are not doing now that they are in power, it is clear that they have two languages: one for the left side of their mouths and another for the right side.

The Bloc Québécois's policy on conversion takes into account the importance of the armament industry and its structural impact on the economy. The Bloc Québécois proposed during the last election campaign and fervently hopes that the federal government will take steps to facilitate the defence industry conversion process. Such a program is necessary and must be implemented as soon as possible.

The Bloc Québécois doubts that the Liberal government will pursue a wide-ranging conversion policy. The EH-101 helicopter episode is revealing in this regard and clearly shows that the Liberal government does not intend to pursue a comprehensive strategy on this. It was a perfect opportunity for this government to show its true intentions in this area, but it preferred to single out the helicopter program, without a conversion program in return.

Then how can we launch such a program? Professors Bélanger, Fournier and Desbiens, of the defence industry conversion research group at the Université du Québec in Montreal, did some research and came to the conclusion that a very large number of defence workers live in Montreal, a region where they conducted a more in-depth study on the effects of non-conversion.

The Montreal region is the main defence industry centre in Quebec. More than 500 defence companies are located there and the total value of goods and equipment delivered amounts to a little over \$2.1 billion. The region alone generates 63 per cent of defence economic activity in Quebec and accounts for 26 per cent of the Canadian market. The employment picture shows what is happening.

My time has expired, even though I would have liked to go on. I will continue at the next opportunity. I would just like to say that, on this whole issue of industry conversion, many jobs are at stake and there is an urgent need to intervene.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Order! It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier—Public Works; the hon. member for Louis—Hébert—Quebec City Airport; the hon. member for MacKenzie—Grain Transportation.

Are there questions or comments?

• (1700)

[English]

Mr. Fred Mifflin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to what the hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry had to say. He actually said a lot that I agree with. He gave us some good figures on conversion.

This is a legitimate question, it is not posturing but I am not precisely sure whether he meant that the defence review should look at conversion or whether he felt we had precluded conversion from being considered. I can assure him that is not the case. Nothing is being left out of the review. Nothing is sacred and nothing is to be left untouched with respect to considerations.

Also, I gather more from the tone than the statement of what the hon. member said about the decision on the EH-101 helicopters, and of course I am making an oblique reference to the decision of the government to cancel the project, but my understanding was that his party was in favour of cancelling the project as well.

If the hon. member could clarify these two points I would be delighted.

[Translation]

Mr. Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to answer the question raised by my colleague. Of course, the Bloc Québécois agreed 100 per cent with the cancellation of the helicopter contract, except that it was only half done. Not only should they have cancelled the helicopter contract but they also should have recovered the money that was to be invested in it and put it in an industrial conversion fund. I blame the government for not doing that part of the job. It was only half done.

This second part could have redirected all the money to be saved on the manufacture and purchase of the helicopters—over \$5 billion. If this \$5 or \$6 billion had been invested in converting military companies, we could have stopped the hemorrhage that is going on right now.