

Oral Questions

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, how does the Reform House leader explain his party's attempt to filibuster an agreement worked out over a period of 21 years in a democratic fashion by the people of Yukon? He cannot explain that because they were wrong in their filibuster.

• (1430)

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster): Mr. Speaker, a few hours to go through nine inches of material that is marked confidential and not to be discussed is not adequate time.

I would like to quote from the Liberal red book under the fictitious chapter entitled "Governing with Integrity". "This erosion of confidence in government seems to have many causes, including an arrogant style of political leadership. The people are irritated with governments that do not consult them or that disregard their views, or that try to conduct key parts of public business behind closed doors".

The government campaigned on restoring honesty and integrity to Parliament. Can the government House leader explain where is his government's integrity after the unprecedented action last night of imposing closure and time allocation on no less than four pieces of legislation—

The Speaker: It is true we are getting toward the end but I would hope that questions would be a little more compact as I hope will be the answers as well.

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, the people across the country and in the Yukon who are watching will want to know that these bills did not suddenly come up yesterday. They were available publicly days, if not weeks, before yesterday. The Yukon bills were studied for over 20 hours in committee.

Instead of bringing up these specious questions, the Reform Party House leader should apologize to the people in the House, across Canada, and in the Yukon for abusing the opportunities that they have to debate in the House.

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[Translation]

CONVERSION OF DEFENCE INDUSTRY

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve): Mr. Speaker, last week, Quebec's largest defence companies, clearly dissatisfied with Ottawa's policies, announced that they would

get together to press the federal government to change its approach in order to facilitate defence conversion.

Does the minister responsible for Quebec's economic development not see in this action a full repudiation of the federal government's policy by Quebec's defence companies and what does he intend to do now to fulfil his party's election promises regarding defence conversion?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, the minister responsible for this issue, the Minister of Science and Technology, has always said very clearly that the transition to the private sector, which will happen given all the changes in military activities around the world, will be very complex. We are confident that any consultation in Quebec that may help us find solutions will certainly be taken into full consideration.

It will not be easy either in Canada or in other places where the same kind of activity is taking place, but we are very interested in seeing what kind of solutions this group can offer us.

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to hear that the Minister of Finance has political identity problems, but I still have a question for him. Given that the spokesman for this new association, Claude Daigneault of SNC Lavallin, announced that 6,500 manufacturing jobs will be lost in the defence industry, can the Minister of FORDQ undertake to do all he can to ensure the conversion of these manufacturing jobs, which are crucial to the Quebec economy?

[English]

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity in the last few months, as late as this week in Montreal, of meeting with representatives of SNC Lavalin.

The effort being made to convert from military production activities into the private and civilian sector is a phenomenon that we are all faced with in free countries around the world.

It is not going to be easy in Quebec. It is not going to be easy in Canada. We are looking forward to recommendations from members of the House, like my hon. colleague, to tell us exactly what they think can be done.

• (1435)

Whether it is SNC Lavalin or the consortium to which the hon. member was just referring, when they come forward with solutions to this very complex problem, obviously the Government of Canada and provincial governments across the country will look forward to trying to implement those solutions where they are feasible.