

Government Orders

In conclusion, I would suggest that you keep your red book introduction for the next campaign, if there is one, to the effect that voters no longer trust politicians because, with behaviour such as this, they will continue to distrust them.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I can give the hon. member for Hillsborough about 30 seconds if he thinks he can give an answer in that time.

Mr. Proud: Madam Speaker, this committee was struck by the House. The committee is in place, the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs to study the policy. It is a joint committee of both Houses.

The idea that we are going to spend more money on it is ridiculous. We are given a budget to go forward as a committee and that is what we are going to do. We are going to determine the future defence policy of the country for some time to come.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Laurent Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry): Madam Speaker, today the government, in a somewhat hasty move, has introduced a motion calling for the establishment of a joint committee which would duplicate the work of the Standing Committee on National Defence. I do not want to expand on the substance of the motion at this time since several of my colleagues have argued against it and stressed that there is no justification whatsoever for setting up a joint committee which would cover the same ground as the Standing Committee on National Defence, increase costs and delay the implementation of a defence program. Therefore, not suprisingly, I join with my Bloc Québécois colleagues in denouncing the striking of this joint committee, as proposed by the government in its motion.

• (1650)

Instead, I would rather spend my time focusing on the issue of industrial conversion. As we know, defence industries employ a considerable number of people and since the end of the cold war, these factories are getting fewer and fewer orders. They have already begun laying off workers. Therefore, steps must be taken quickly to convert military factories for civilian purposes.

What I do not understand is that the Liberal Party of Canada appears to be saying two different things. When it formed the Official Opposition, it said one thing, but now that it is in power, it seems to be singing an entirely different tune. To confirm my suspicions, I would like to read to you a short excerpt from a March 26, 1993 press release prepared for immediate publication by the office of the then Leader of the Opposition. Therefore the current Prime Minister was Leader of the Official Opposition at the time. He was in Quebec City where he announced to reporters a policy to convert the defence industry for civilian purposes. That announcement appeared on the following day's papers. Three opposition members were also

making a similar announcement here in Ottawa at the same time and virtually all of the media in Canada covered the story.

Right now, the Liberal government has all the data it had back when it was in opposition. Why authorize another joint super-committee to conduct further studies and analyses and undertake more trips when we already have a committee, the Standing Committee on National Defence, to do the job? It makes no sense!

I would like to read part of the statement issued by the then Leader of the Opposition at the press conference held on March 26, 1993. "Today, Liberal leader Jean Chrétien, speaking in Quebec City, and three Liberal MPs, speaking in Ottawa, unveiled the defence conversion policy that would be adopted by a Liberal government to bring our high-tech military industry into the post cold war era, while creating at the same time new economic development opportunities".

Here are the highlights of the announcement made in Quebec City by Mr. Chrétien and in Ottawa by Mr. Axworthy, the External Affairs critic, by Mr. Bill Rompkey, the Defence critic and by Mr. Jim Peterson, the Industry critic.

They proposed to expand the mandate of Industry, Science and Technology Canada's \$200 million Defence Industry Productivity Program, known as DIPP, from developing defence technology to helping the industry convert and diversify into areas such as environmental technologies and high-tech peace-keeping technologies. They also proposed the establishment of an Economic Conversion Commission, with the participation of industry and labour, to facilitate and coordinate the process of conversion in the 100,000-job defence industry. Quite a few people work in the defence sector, 100,000 to be exact.

The Liberals urged the opposition and suggested to the Conservatives, then in office, to develop joint conversion arrangements with the United States, the market for 80 per cent of Canada's defence exports. Under the Clinton administration, the United States have embarked on a major defence conversion effort, thus reducing demand for Canadian-built defence products.

"The cold war is over, and Canada must adapt to a changing world", said Mr. Chrétien at that press conference. He went on to say that "the Tory government has no defence conversion policy and has been content to let the market dictate diversification".

• (1655)

Mr. Chrétien noted at that press conference that he had been calling for government action on defence conversion since March 1990. The Liberal leader called the international arms trade, which has shrunk by 25 per cent in the last few years, an industry of the past. He said, "We need to invest in the economic winners—and the job creators—of tomorrow". He wanted to invest and suggested to the then Conservative government to invest \$5.8 billion in helicopters. He said that it was a cold war policy and that it was no way to develop Canada's high-tech potential. The Liberals believed instead in gearing this shrink-