

When we are dealing with companies going through this very difficult period we have to help them along the path to new hope by showing other examples. I say to the member for Trois-Rivières, as a former employee, as a former senior officer of Magna, that I know the former chairman went many times to help companies in Quebec with conversion. Today there would be leaders in Magna who would be happy to share their experiences with companies in the member's riding that might be having difficulty in making the conversion.

Companies that basically were successful making the conversion remember the pain. They remember the experience. By and large most of them are willing to share it. That is the type of direction we have to take.

I hope the member realizes that we cannot write grant-type cheques for any industry in trouble. We do not have the room to do so because of our tight fiscal framework, but the minister said that DIPP was being redesigned to become more of a loan situation. We will help them through it in that way, combined with other resources. I believe that is the approach we must work on over the next conversion period.

• (1225)

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Questions and comments. I recognize the hon. member for Trois-Rivières.

Some hon. members: No, no.

Some hon. members: Yes, go ahead.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Order, please. The hon. parliamentary secretary may have directed questions to other hon. members in his remarks, but having concluded his remarks, if the hon. member for Trois-Rivières wishes to ask a question or make a comment on the hon. parliamentary secretary's remarks at this time, he has the floor.

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières): Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but disagree with what my distinguished colleague just said because it contradicts the Liberal Party's own platform.

In view of the disastrous economic situation we are facing, with 11,000 high-tech jobs lost in Quebec alone over the past five years, we are being told that it concerns only the private sector. Personally, and it was also the Liberal Party's position last fall, I consider the public interest is at stake and that the state—and I could quote again from the document I read earlier—should play a leading role in promoting recovery.

What we are saying is not to spend without thinking, but rather—that is at least how I see things personally—that the minister should ask companies where jobs are continually lost because they are no longer able to obtain contracts: "Where is your conversion plan? Show us a decent plan, a plan that is well

Supply

thought out, well structured and pragmatic, a plan with a vision and we will help you."

The government's present position however is more along the lines of washing its hands of the matter, leaving it up to free market and free competition and relying on companies that have proven more innovative than others such as Magna International Inc., a Montreal business mentioned earlier. Perhaps these companies have had a keener eye, more business acumen and more vision. Perhaps not all companies are to blame, but I think that this government has the duty to question these people in the public interest, because we cannot let this go on, with engineers and skilled technicians finding themselves out of work and possibly getting ready to put their skills to the service of foreign economies. Our economy may never recover from that.

I think it is the role of government, not only that of the private sector, to manage the economy sensibly, like a reasonable man as we used to say. The Liberal Party said, and I agree: "The government obviously has a social responsibility in this matter."

[English]

Mr. Mills (Broadview—Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I guess I have not put enough emphasis on government participation for the hon. member. I was not saying that the government should walk away and not assist businesses in the process of conversion. We never have. I was suggesting that the balance should be one where we do not ignore other success stories in the conversion process.

In other words, as a government we should not think we are the only ones who have the solution. We will aid. We will support. We must bring into the discussion people who have already had success in the conversion exercise.

The member is not opposed to that. My point is that we have to start. We have to make sure that we do not create a sense of false hope. In other words we are not running away. However it must be much more of a joint venture with government giving advice, government giving some form of assistance where possible, maybe not in grants but through some loan guarantees and bringing in other experts who have achieved success. That is the point I was trying to make to the hon. member.

• (1230)

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member that this is a complex issue. That is why, as I mentioned in my statement, we must approach it as tactfully as possible, and abide by the rules. We must call upon all existing resources of businesses that have already had the foresight to proceed with conversion. These resources should be used by businesses planning to convert. As I said, when a business intends to convert with the help of the state, all