

Oral Questions

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, it is not true that when I was Minister of Justice I opposed this project.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Ms. Campbell (Vancouver Centre): I think hon. members have an enormous difficulty with candour in government. As a participant in the process of developing government expenditure restraint guidelines I asked questions about this project. I was extremely satisfied with the justification given for this project, which is why when I became Minister of National Defence I was so comfortable defending the project and so quick to attack that hon. member for criticizing it and committing himself not to spend the money.

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte): Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of National Defence.

The estimates show that funds for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency have been cut. Funds for the Western Diversification Program in the minister's own region have been cut. Funds for health and funds for social housing have been cut, yet there is \$5.8 billion for Cadillac helicopters.

I want to ask the minister whether or not she agrees. If she were to take herself and her ambitions seriously and see them soar, perhaps it is time to take herself and these helicopters back down to earth and cancel this extravagant program.

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I would point out that funds for the Department of National Defence have also been cut in these estimates. All departments have participated.

I would like to make sure that Canada has the capability in the long run—not over five years but over forty years—to patrol the area of that hon. member's constituency, to be able to patrol our fisheries and to be able to guard our coast. These helicopters, far from being Cadillac helicopters, are simply technology of the nineties. Right now, in the words of our own military, we have technology of the fifties built in the sixties.

I think Canadians deserve the technology of the nineties to serve them into the 21st century.

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte): Mr. Speaker, the only cuts in the Department of National Defence are the wages of the men and women of that department that have been frozen by this minister.

[*Translation*]

If the minister is a serious candidate for the leadership of her party, she should start paying attention to the 50,000 people who marched in the streets of Montreal and who know the country has more important priorities than spending \$5.8 billion on helicopters.

What are the minister's priorities: outrageously expensive helicopters or Canada's unemployed?

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, these helicopter contracts will create 45,000 person-years of work for Canadians, especially in industries that are important for our future and that are on the leading edge in terms of knowledge, technology, computers and so forth.

I feel it is important to support these industries. If we cancel the contracts, it will mean a loss for Canadian industry, not just a loss of search-and-rescue capability.

[*English*]

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

According to the government's estimates today it is clear that Canadians who are suffering from unemployment should be going to retraining. According to this government's priorities they should either go for retraining in spy school, judges school, helicopter pilot school or space school, because these are the priorities the government sees and they are the only growth industries that the government sees. For everybody else, it is off to the unemployment line because there is nothing in the estimates to create jobs.

• (1425)

Will the Deputy Prime Minister seriously look at creating jobs in this country, not just jobs for more judges and higher salaries for judges and more spies for Canada but jobs for people throughout this country in every region, and attack unemployment now?