

Oral Questions

Mr. Keeper: Mr. Speaker, my question is this. The Minister said in the House that the plan which was presented yesterday answers the needs of Canadians at an affordable cost. Having put his stamp of approval on this plan, how can Canadians have any confidence that the review is going to be meaningful and have any impact on policy made by the Government?

Hon. Michel Côté (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion): Mr. Speaker, all Canadians know that they were consulted when the Marchment Commission was created. The Commission travelled all over the country, visiting 14 cities. It made 29 recommendations, and we are in the process of putting in place 28 of those recommendations. This is full consultation with Canadians, Sir.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Keeper: What about the committee?

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SUPPLY AND SERVICES

CF-18 FIGHTER AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE CONTRACT—BRISTOL CONSORTIUM'S BID

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the President of the Treasury Board. I have here a document which was prepared by the Bristol Aerospace consortium as part of its bid. It states that technology transfer will form a significant part of the task, and the current familiarity with many of the CF-18 systems will minimize the time and cost of the transfer. Why did the Minister say yesterday that there was no such documentation when it is clearly there? Why is he so ignorant of the proposals put forward by Bristol on the crucial issue of technology transfer? Does this not now give superiority to that particular proposal and, therefore, should not the recommendation be reconsidered?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I have reviewed all the information once again, after many times. There was no written offer of any type of free technology from that consortium. The amounts quoted by both firms, and evaluated by the 75 officials of the evaluation team—

Mr. Orlikow: And they blew that.

Mr. de Cotret: —showed the difference. They included that. Giving one consortium the go ahead rather than another means no additional money for the taxpayers of Canada. By that I mean no additional cost. I am satisfied by the answers I have given so far that the process was carried out adequately.

MINISTER'S POSITION

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise Minister that there are a lot of Canadians who are not satisfied with those answers. I want to

challenge the Minister about saying in this House that there would be no extra cost when neither he nor his Government has finished negotiating with the various companies that hold the rights to the technology that must be used in the maintenance plant. You have not even finished negotiating, so you do not know what the cost will be. Therefore, there will be an extra cost. How do you answer that?

An Hon. Member: Order. How long have you been in the House?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. An experienced Member of Parliament will know that if he continues to use the second person pronoun, perhaps the Chair will proceed to another Member and the Minister will not answer at all. I am sure that the Hon. Member would not repeat the incorrect use of the word "you" when the question is being asked.

The Hon. Minister, please.

Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, through you I would like to inform my hon. colleague opposite that the whole preamble to his question is totally spurious. The Government is negotiating for that transfer of technology. Whether any one of the three consortia received the successful bid, the cost would have been the same. That negotiation is being undertaken by the Government with McDonnell Douglas and the cost would have been carried through to the winning bidder. That was clearly put out in the submissions that were received from the evaluation team.

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NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

ROBOTICS RESEARCH

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—Walkerville): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of State for Science and Technology. The vision system developed in connection with Canadarm is one of the few scientific accomplishments to have been commemorated in a stamp issue. What is the logic behind the cuts to the NRC that leads to the demise of this most outstanding program, not only in basic research, but a program which, among other things has benefited robotics in industry?

Hon. Frank Oberle (Minister of State for Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, as I have said repeatedly in the House, it is the intention of the Government to conduct an examination into the so-called cuts that the Hon. Member mentioned to ensure that no injury is done to public safety, to health, or to announced government priorities. The space program is such a priority. I will be in a position within the next few days to make an announcement or statement in the House on the method that will be used to conduct this examination.