

Government Orders

[Translation]

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard): Mr. Speaker, I should like to deal with the amendment moved by the hon. member for Richelieu and calling for the contracts to be awarded to Canadian firms.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I should like to establish the fact that for the past six years, Quebec Liberal members have tried to convince of that the Tory government to which the hon. member for Richelieu belonged up to a few months ago.

At that time, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member was in agreement with the government. When we consider the policy of this Tory government concerning the naval shipyards in this country, we realize that it has destroyed almost all of them.

What one should do is look at what is being done in this area throughout the world. All the countries of the world which have shipyards are providing them with subsidies to help them compete on international markets.

How many times have we urged the Minister of Industry, Science and Technology, whose parliamentary secretary at the time was the hon. member for Rosemont, to provide Marine Industries with subsidies to help them compete on international markets.

This afternoon, or rather tonight, Mr. Speaker, they moved a motion which would appear quite normal, calling on the government to protect Canadian firms. Yet, Mr. Speaker, they overlooked the fact that Canada must abide by international agreements.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lapierre: Come on!

Mr. Gagliano: If these independent members from Quebec would only listen, perhaps they could learn something. They are trying to make gains in Quebec, so that they can claim they are the only true Quebec representatives. Yet, Mr. Speaker, they forget that some major Quebec engineering firms compete on international markets.

If the House adopted such a motion, these Quebec firms could no longer compete on international markets and would be treated accordingly. While trying to make political gains, they could cause serious prejudice to some major Quebec corporations which, like Lavalin, are awarded contracts on international markets.

• (1845)

I cannot see siding with the Quebec-based high-tech firms in this debate as beneficial for the independent members from Quebec. They are only looking for an excuse to say: "We are the real champions of Quebec." But they are penalizing Quebec firms trying to tender on the international markets. Were they really sincere, they would want to help Quebec and to help the shipbuilding industry in Quebec. They should ask this Conservative government to give grants to naval industries so that—

M. Plamondon: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. I want to point out that it is assigning me motives to state that, were I sincere—to question my sincerity. There is no place for that word in this noble House. I request that the hon. member withdraw his statement.

M. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard): Mr. Speaker, what I meant was that, if he had been aware of the situation, he would have, as we have for six years now, been calling for grants for that industry. It is done everywhere in the world. Grants are handed out to groups in the naval industry so that they can tender.

To support the MIL Group, which I believe should land very important contracts given the importance of that industry for the province, the Quebec and federal governments should precisely get together and offer grants to make such groups competitive. The Japanese, the Koreans, the Italians, the French and the others who tender in that industry all get grants from their governments. And that is the positive thing to do: To find a way so that our industries can compete on the world markets since shipbuilding has access to world markets.

But if we want indeed to gain political points in the short run, my colleague may present a motion to the effect that contracts be given to Canadian companies. Naturally, he has give the impression that is standing up for Canadians and Quebecers but, in the long run, it is the Quebec engineering firms that will pay the price for those political points.

Mr. Nic Leblanc (Longueuil): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on the amendment of my colleague from the riding of Richelieu. It is the first opportunity I have of rising in the House since I quit the Progressive