

### Oral Questions

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should consider establishing spending limits and strict rules of disclosure listing all campaign contributions by source and amount for all Canadian political party leadership races.

I hope the powers that be in the Tory party will remember that in Canada political parties are partly supported by public money through the income tax system. Therefore the Tories are morally obligated to impose spending limits on their leadership candidates.

At our leadership convention the New Democrats voluntarily set candidate spending limits of \$150,000. Moreover, we did not issue tax receipts for contributions to the leadership candidates' campaigns. The winner, the hon. member for Yukon, spent \$129,000 to become leader of a national party.

By all means the Tories should avoid the hideous example set by the Liberals for their 1990 leadership race where candidates were allowed to spend \$1.7 million subsidized by the taxpayer.

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## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

### MAIN ESTIMATES

**Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of National Defence.

Last July when the EH-101 military helicopter program was announced we were told that the total cost was to be \$4.4 billion. Today in the estimates we have learned that the total cost will be \$5.8 billion or \$1.4 billion more than before.

Why is the government persisting in implementing this impossibly expensive program that is not a priority for Canadians at all?

**Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to know whether in fact \$4.5 billion is okay with the hon. Leader of the Opposition. Is he against it completely? Are we talking numbers here or are we talking philosophy?

The hon. Leader of the Opposition will know that in fact the cost of this procurement purchase is \$4.5 billion, but it is a program that goes over 13 years. Unfortunately the requirements of public accounting require the Government of Canada, as he knows as a former President of

the Treasury Board, to make a budgetary allowance for possible inflation.

If there is no inflation over the period of the project and if there are no significant shifts in currency fluctuations, in fact the final cost will come in at \$4.5 billion. But the accounting requirements of the Government of Canada require us to make allowance for possible inflation so that we do not wind up having overruns in the cost of these projects and get into the kind of fiscal pickle the hon. member and his government got us into without good accounting requirements.

[Translation]

**Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, when the program was announced last July, this additional cost of \$1.4 billion was not mentioned. When the contracts were signed in October, it was not mentioned. Two weeks ago, when Liberal members received a government briefing, it was not mentioned.

Why were Canadians not told the whole truth? Why does the government persist in this absolutely unnecessary spending when there are so many problems in Canada?

**Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, it is not an unnecessary expense; it is very important for our Canadian forces. The reason we have the estimates is to show Canadians what our projects actually cost.

We have to make allowance for possible fluctuation in interest rates. We cannot predict exactly where interest rates will be in the future, but we must make those allowances to protect Canadians against unforeseen expenditures. That is the purpose of this process of tabling the Main Estimates in the House of Commons.

• (1420)

[English]

**Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister why, when she was Minister of Justice, she opposed the program and today she defends the program.

Canadians do not want this program. The Americans have decided not to go into this expensive system, this Cadillac system we do not need now that the cold war is over. The minister, who I hope would like to have a new approach to politics, should realize that we are not in the cold war any more and we need that money for Canadian problems right away.