

Those messages were preceded by some difficult decisions resulting in reductions across the board to many programs across Canada which in the past have served the country well.

My colleague the Minister of Industry John Manley continues to give great emphasis to his responsibility of science and technology. On the question of defence procurement, I will have to get back to the honourable senator with an answer.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

RESTRUCTURING OF CANADIAN ARMED FORCES RESERVE— REQUEST FOR TERMS OF REFERENCE OF COMMISSION

Hon. J. Michael Forrestall: Honourable senators may recall that on January 27 of this year, the Minister of National Defence announced the formation of a special commission to review the restructuring of the Canadian military reserve. Given that the commission will begin its work on April 1, will the Leader of the Government in this chamber indicate when Canadians can expect an announcement regarding the terms of reference, and indeed, the composition of the committee?

Hon. Joyce Fairbairn (Leader of the Government): I will be pleased to seek that information for honourable senators. I know this is an important commission for the reserves in this country. I believe that this commission will undertake its work in an open and full manner and will be served by excellent members. I will provide that information to my friend as soon as I can.

Senator Forrestall: Honourable senators, I have a brief supplementary question. Given that there is only one week before the commission is due to commence, would the Leader of the Government be able to receive an answer by early next week? Could she at least make an effort to do so? Canadians are curious about who will sit on the commission and its terms of reference.

Senator Fairbairn: Honourable senators, I would be pleased to do that. It is also a matter of some interest to me as an honorary lieutenant colonel of a regiment.

TRANSPORT

RAILWAYS WORK STOPPAGE—LONGER TERM ARRANGEMENTS FOR DISPUTE SETTLEMENTS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Leonard J. Gustafson: Honourable senators, my question is directed to the Honourable Leader of the Government in the Senate. The question is in regard to the rail strike. The cost to Canadian people and the various sectors of Canadian industry — such as agriculture, where it is affecting the movement of grains and fertilizers, and the automobile industry — is in the billions of dollars.

As I understand Bill C-77, it seems to me that it is a short-term solution to an immediate problem, which I support in that sense. However, has the government given any consideration or any thought to a long-term solution?

This seems to be happening year after year. It happened during our administration, usually right in peak season, and it costs this country billions of dollars. There must be a better way to

negotiate and give consideration to labour at the same time. Has the government given any consideration to a long-term solution to deal with a problem which continues to cripple this country?

Hon. Joyce Fairbairn (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, as a result of the longshoremen's strike last year in the Port of Vancouver, studies were initiated by my colleague the former Minister of Labour Lloyd Axworthy, in an effort to come up with longer term ways and means provisions in the process of updating the Canada Labour Code. Nothing has been done to Part I of the Labour Code now for 20 years.

A considerable investigation was conducted in recent months, and I am certain that the new Minister of Labour will be wanting to push ahead on that matter and possibly on new initiatives in the months to come. Also, Mrs. Robillard has moved to set up a special commission of inquiry on the most recent labour dispute, which we addressed in this house a week ago.

Certainly, one of the reasons for Mrs. Robillard putting together a special commission of inquiry is to look at these issues in the long term to see how we can deal with them in a way that will not offend the fundamental values of the collective bargaining system in this country. It is an effort to make some of the provisions more relevant.

The Prime Minister himself expressed, yesterday in the House of Commons, the same frustration Senator Gustafson has expressed today. I believe that is also a concern of the new Minister of Labour.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS IN FORMER YUGOSLAVIA— DEMISE OF CANADIAN AIRBORNE REGIMENT

Hon. John Sylvain: Honourable senators, could the Leader of the Government in the Senate tell us what effect the dismantling of the Airborne Regiment will have on present and future tours of operations of our Armed Forces in the former Yugoslavia?

• (1430)

Hon. Joyce Fairbairn (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I will need to ask that specific question of my colleague the Minister of National Defence.

As Senator Sylvain knows, the review of the positioning of our forces in the former Yugoslavia in the future is ongoing and will take place following another parliamentary debate in the weeks ahead.

Honourable senators, there are always concerns about the uncertainty and danger in that part of the world. Nonetheless, the government is pleased with the decision of the Croatian leader to permit a UN presence to remain in that country.

I cannot answer the specific question with respect to the Airborne Regiment vis-à-vis those missions, but our military personnel in this country are preparing for duty in that area on the rotation system. They will perform with the skill, competence and compassion that has made them one of the most valued forces in the former Yugoslavia.