

Government Orders

helping the people of central Europe build their economies. I look forward to its passage today and to the creation of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development next April.

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, this bill which is before us comes from an initiative which was originally put before the international community by François Mitterrand, the President of France.

It is a suggestion that is one of a number of important responses that we need to make to the dramatic and very welcome developments which have occurred in eastern Europe. We can see across eastern Europe a whole spread of democratic revolutions taking place which we expect will put into place in the future a series of societies and economies that much better serve the people of those countries than was true under the previous communist regimes.

This bill has Canada join in a small way in the process of trying to assist the transition of those economies from essentially Stalinist bureaucracies, in most cases, to economies in which it will be possible for privately-owned enterprises and state-owned enterprises to play an important role in interaction in the marketplace in meeting the needs of people in those economies.

We were particularly pleased to hear some of the witnesses who spoke to us in the legislative committee. They made the point very strongly that we are dealing with a difficult transition in eastern Europe which requires as much support as possible from the people of North America, the rest of Europe, and Japan. The establishment of this bank will be a step which will make that transition somewhat easier.

It is for that reason that we support this legislation and we hope very much that the bank will be a positive addition to the capital resources and the managerial resources of eastern Europe as it moves toward a more prosperous and, above all, a more democratic future for its people.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lapierre: Questions and comments.

The Acting Speaker (M. Paproski): The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): The hon. member mentioned the desire for democracy expressed in Eastern Europe. I would say that with it came, above all, a desire for national identity. There were countries that wanted to free themselves from the yoke of the U.S.S.R. Within the U.S.S.R. we see republics that wish to express the fact that they are a nation. I am thinking specifically of Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia. If these countries decide to become independent, and considering the bill before the House, would the hon. member recognize the desire for independence of these three republics, for instance? Does he recognize the right of these three republics to self-determination? And should Canada, on this basis, help countries like the Baltic countries in their development? I would appreciate the hon. member's comments.

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, obviously, I cannot answer for the Government of Canada. Personally, however, I think it is important to realize that a lot of changes are taking place in all European countries, and for instance, in the U.S.S.R., there are republics that entered into a federation about 60 or 70 years ago. The question is whether this federation will continue. I have no answer to that. I cannot predict whether the federation will be maintained. If there are changes that result in the dissolution of the U.S.S.R., I think it will be important for us as a country to help those countries, even if we are not happy with the dissolution itself.

Personally, I think that if the result is a movement towards independence by one or two or three of these republics, I think that is their right. And I hope—and I think this is important—that the bank will analyse the situation and conclude that it has a duty to help these new independent republics.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions and comments. The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

Mr. Duceppe: You also said that a very bureaucratic and centralized system within the Soviet federation had led to disastrous consequences, both for democracy and for the economy. I would like to know whether you see