

*Supply*

I would now like to quote the second paragraph on page 3 of their press release: "The Liberal Party believes—and we are reliably informed that this is the cause of the hesitation of the government—, believes that the mandate of the state is to take initiatives that are in line with the evolution of the international scene and that create jobs for Canadians. A plan must be adopted to encourage our military equipment industries to turn away from that type of production and export. We commend the sub-committee of the House of Commons on arms exports which adopted our view in its report of September 1992 and made useful recommendations that were in good part inspired by liberal ideas".

Being consistent, the Liberal Party underlines this fact in its red book, which led many Canadians to support them especially in Ontario and in the Maritimes. The red book, on page 55, reads as follows:

The defence industries today employ directly and indirectly over 100,000 Canadians. The end of the Cold War puts at risks tens of thousands of high-tech jobs. A Liberal government will introduce a defence conversion program to help industries in transition from high-tech military production to high-tech civilian production.

Specifically, a Liberal government will expand the mandate of the Defence Industry Productivity Program (DIPP) to assist in a conversion and diversification.

• (1200)

That is what the Liberal Party says.

DIPP is the primary grant and loan program designed to influence the development of a defence industrial base in Canada. Administered by Industry, Science and Technology, it aims at developing defence technology and strengthening Canadian and North American defence industries.

So, the Liberal Party was already agreeing to fund the defence conversion using the DIPP budget.

Oddly enough, we have not heard a single word about that since the red book has been released, neither in the Speech from the Throne nor in the Budget Speech.

The Bloc position is more or less the same. I will explain it briefly. It aims at creating, in three steps, a conversion fund flowing from the industrial diversification fund. The fund would mainly consolidate and complement the assistance coming from existing programs in order to provide military facilities and businesses with adequate and long term support in their conversion and diversification process. It would also bring about consultative committees on conversion at local and regional levels, when the scope of conversion and diversification activities would warrant them. It would help in establishing an independent committee that would review the various existing programs that could be helpful and to put forward amendments and other improvements that could be required. That committee will propose a framework to ensure coordination between the different levels of government in order to avoid overlappings.

Besides, Mr. Speaker, I can remind you of the position taken by the Bloc that was largely inspired by the position taken during the campaign in the debate on the cancellation of the helicopters contract. The Bloc Québécois supported the position of the Liberals, who sensed that power was within their grasp, and said that the contract should be cancelled provided that, let us not forget that, the money earmarked for this contract and the know-how needed to build the helicopters was transferred to a civilian project which would benefit a lot of people. The Bloc had clearly indicated that a high speed train linking Quebec City, Trois-Rivières and Windsor met both criteria.

Unfortunately, the government acted upon only one of those two recommendations, and cancelled the helicopter deal. Since then, Canadians and Quebecers have been left hanging, without any compensation whatsoever.

Therefore, DIPP should be modified so that, instead of promoting defence production as it does now, it helps military industries to convert to civilian production.

One must realize that, in Quebec, there is a solid consensus among all the stakeholders in this vast project, including the Quebec government which has expressed its impatience several times already through its Minister of Industry, Trade and Technology, Mr. Gérald Tremblay. No matter how federalist and Liberal he is, he did not mince his words and said, on April 11 last:

In its red book, the federal government promised to make available to DIPP, significant sums of money for converting defence industries to commercial production. We are presently negotiating with the federal government. We want to know how much money will be made available, when and for which company.

These are the very words spoken by the Quebec Minister of Industry, Trade and Technology.

The Conseil du patronat du Québec, which—you will admit, Mr. Speaker—is not necessarily a natural ally of the Bloc Québécois, is another stakeholder. A few months ago, precisely in September 1993, it held a symposium entitled "Rendez-vous économique 1993", and came up with two main recommendations pertinent to our present debate. Recommendation 31 said that the federal government should provide adequate financial support for the conversion of industries dependent on military contracts.

• (1205)

This financial help would last as long as it takes to adapt, convert and diversify defence industries.

The implementation of conversion and diversification activities would be planned by conversion committees, made up of representatives from industry and labour in the affected communities and representatives from the Government of Quebec. This is the position of the Conseil du patronat which, in its first