

Oral Questions

never institute a judicial inquiry for a circumstance under which there is not a scintilla of evidence to suggest any wrongdoing or any impropriety with respect to a contract entered into by the Government of Canada.

I think it is one of the shoddier examples of political rhetoric I have seen in my life in politics to hear what is being said by members on that side of the House about this particular matter.

[Translation]

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, Canadian politicians did not arrest the president of the company who was under suspicion for bribing the Italian government; the Italian police did.

I would therefore like to ask the minister whether she thinks that she is taking good care of Canada's finances when she does business with a company involved in a national scandal in Italy.

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I have great respect for the truth. The truth is that an individual, not the company, was charged. There is no relationship between the actions of this individual and the company. That is the truth and the hon. member must admit it.

[English]

Mr. John Brewin (Victoria): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence.

The minister has rejected a judicial review of the helicopter purchase, yet the minister herself said on April 9 in Sarnia: "We might want a review of how many we are purchasing for the navy".

Will the minister agree that we need a review not only of how many helicopters the government should be purchasing but why the government is proceeding with this purchase in the first place?

• (1440)

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member will know, the original plan for the purchase of ship-borne helicopters was to buy 45 helicopters and as a result of the changes brought about by

the end of the cold war that estimate of the number of helicopters required for ship-borne service in the Canadian navy was reduced to 35.

I believe as minister of defence that our department should continue to review these things in light of changing circumstances, although I see no indication in the short term that there should be a change in that.

I am looking forward to the work that the standing committee is going to be doing in the coming weeks looking at the helicopter purchase. Quite frankly I was very much affected by the unanimous report that the committee of which he is a member gave in November 1990 where it urged the Government of Canada to replace the ship-borne helicopters as planned with the EH-101 and to do it as soon as possible to avoid costly interim measures.

Mr. John Brewin (Victoria): Mr. Speaker, as the minister knows, the committee did not in fact specifically recommend the purchase of these particular helicopters.

Mr. Mulroney: Yes, it did.

Mr. Brewin: But that was in 1990.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Brewin: The defence committee is prepared to look afresh at this and I would suggest that the government when it is spending \$5.8 billion of the public's money should be flexible enough to review it.

I ask the minister this question. Given that the helicopters are being made by a company that is in deep financial trouble, whose president is facing charges of corruption and that one test flight has already crashed killing four people, why is the government persisting in being a participant in a project that may itself never fly?

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, because in the wisdom of the committee of which that hon. member was an active member—and I might add he had a minority report that did not dissent on this particular point—and in which that member participated fully it recommended that we proceed with this purchase. It did recommend specifically this particular helicopter and I am in the hands of the committee.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.