

After having said such things, it is unacceptable to abandon the defence industries that cry out for government assistance. The government is turning a deaf ear to their pleas.

Finally, the then opposition critic for Industry, Trade and Commerce admitted realistically that unless we develop a defence conversion policy for the 1990s, we could lose tens of thousands of jobs. If the present Liberal government is aware of all that, why does it not take action? They said so, they seem to have all the relevant information, they are aware that we will lose jobs, that we are already losing some—11,000 have been lost already—and it is escalating, but they take no action. During the last campaign, the key words for the Liberal Party to get elected were jobs, jobs, jobs. The government should make an effort in that area, they should give more assistance by making funds available to help defence industries make a conversion they are only too willing to make.

[English]

**Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast):** Mr. Speaker, these are comments of a general nature. The hon. member may wish to comment and he may not.

It seems to me when we stand in this House and challenge the government, there is also an obligation upon us to provide some constructive alternatives as to how government approaches the matters of the day, the problems and issues facing all of us.

In the hon. member's statements for example he mentioned that the military industry is an industry of the past. That may be true but an alternative, and one perhaps the government should look at soon, is to redefine the role of the military in Canada.

Rather than challenging and saying the government is not doing anything, it would be far better to say it is time that government looked at some alternatives for using our military personnel. It should look at how our defence industry can be changed to meet the new environment in the global considerations facing us today. There was not a single constructive alternative for Canada that I heard in the hon. member's presentation, not a single one.

The hon. member is asking questions about conversion, but what about the root problems that face Canada today: high taxation, a huge debt, an unstable dollar, an insecure economic community, high unemployment. There was not a single thing I heard that was a constructive alternative to addressing those issues and those are the root problems facing Canada today.

We can talk about committees in this House that dither around in deciding that maybe they will do this today, maybe they will do that. Maybe it will be the defence committee that will look at the issue today or maybe it will be trade and industry. However it is our obligation and responsibility as members of this House to start looking at some of those root problems. We must start

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providing the government with some constructive alternatives rather than standing and complaining about a particular position Quebec is dealing with. Unemployment in Quebec is every bit as much an issue for all of Canada.

I would like the hon. member to respond to those comments if he so wishes. I would be interested to hear what the hon. member has to say.

[Translation]

**Mr. Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member who asked this question could read everything the Liberal Party said when it was in the opposition.

• (1300)

All the alternatives are there. In my remarks, I blamed the government for its inaction. I did not criticize it for not doing the impossible. There are indeed ways to ease the conversion of our defence industries. The Bloc Québécois suggested the establishment of an assistance fund. Incidentally, the Liberal Party agreed that such a fund should be set up to help the conversion of defence industries. Labour unions, the CNTU and the FTQ, and the Quebec Liberal government are waiting for some action on the part of the federal government, but I am sorry to say that nothing is forthcoming.

In my riding, there is a plant that manufactures shells and gunpowder. Purchases by the Canadian army represented 70 per cent of its order book, but the Canadian army is buying less and less. That firm decided to convert its operations to cleaning up contaminated soil. It has professional engineers, architects, and chemists. A whole group of qualified employees work on that project, but they need government support. They do not necessarily need money, maybe just technical help, but they do need it. Yet, the government turns a deaf ear to their requests. True enough, we have a \$500 billion debt, and we should not let it increase unduly. But we are letting unemployment rise. In the manufacturing industry, we lost 11,000 jobs in the last four years.

The government spends \$1 billion without flinching to create 45,000 jobs, supposedly, through its infrastructure program. We are not asking the government to spend \$1 billion on restructuring defence industries, but only to offer some kind of help to the people in those plants. Waiting for the plants to close and creating more unemployment is not going to help the economy either.

We already have much too much unemployment, so this government should make it its duty to help the workers whose job is at risk before they lose it. As I was saying earlier, what good is it for the government, with its infrastructure program, to create jobs, on the one hand, if it does not help the defence