

debate on a bill which entails expenditures in excess of \$6 billion.

We will try to explain to the people of Quebec—they are quick on the uptake—that we have had a debate on an issue which will cost \$1 billion an hour. The member for Manicouagan was on that committee. I think he spoke for about 90 seconds, yet today he is in favour of cutting off debate. I can hardly wait to see how Quebec Conservatives vote on this motion because for once the people of Quebec would like to be told how much of these billions of their tax dollars spent by the federal government they can expect to get back. That is interesting, Mr. Speaker, and I see some members nodding in agreement. Interesting indeed!

I refer you to what was said by the Minister of Energy, Mr. Jake Epp, when he appeared before the committee on June 12, 1990, not long ago, and testified as follows: “But may I say, Mr. Chairman, that obviously we would like to have more industrial benefits, for instance, in the shipyards of eastern Canada, and the industrial benefits that will flow from that. May I say I have been speaking about this issue with our colleague, Benoît Bouchard, as to what we could be doing. We have been presenting this to the consortium and that is why we have not, quite frankly, finalized all the industrial benefits. There is also, apart from the super-modules, the matter of possible ancillary shipbuilding needed for servicing”.

So, on June 12, 1990, Benoît Bouchard, the political leader for Quebec—Quebec meaning what is still left of the Conservatives that come from Quebec—said: “We don’t know what will be in it for Canada. We don’t know what will be in it for Quebec. That has not yet been negotiated. No agreement has been reached. We are still in the dark”. Today, we tabled a very modest amendment. We wanted Canadian companies to be first in line to tender for these contracts worth several billion dollars. The government’s answer is—Benoît Bouchard may come to the House to speak. He hasn’t spoken in the House for a long time. He may come here himself to tell us that no, we don’t want to say that; we don’t want to put this in the bill. Even worse, they are going to muzzle the members of the Bloc Québécois. They won’t let members speak. They won’t let the Conservative members from Quebec speak to this issue, because if the

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government gave us just two days in the House, the Bloc Québécois would probably be able to convince all Quebecers that here in Canada we are being shafted with this kind of project. Unfortunately, we will be gagged after only a few hours of debate in the House. I’ve got them right here.

Canadians who are listening know how many meaningless speeches they can hear on a single day about equally meaningless legislation, sometimes involving amounts of as little as \$2,000 or \$3,000. Here, we are talking about \$6 billion. This is all the time that was allocated to that, and few members were heard. On December 18, 1989, the minister did not even introduce the Bill himself in the House. God knows where he was. It is Parliamentary Secretary who introduced the Bill, but he was himself very brief. A mere fifteen minutes. That day, an hour was spent for the introduction of the Bill.

On February 9, 1990, there were four speakers—by the way, the minister was absent again—and two hours were spent examining the Bill. On June 7, the Bill was referred to the legislative committee and the committee—on which sat Mr. Langlois from the Quebec Conservative Party, but who did not say more than two words—met for less than two hours. Imagine, to take less than two hours to examine a \$6 billion project. That is incredible!

At that time, the Minister had said, in his testimony: “I know nothing. It is ongoing. We do not know. We have no idea”. He was unable to answer most questions, except to say that the people of Newfoundland would be happy to receive a lot of money from Canada. I am sure they would!

On June 13, 1990, the report was presented to the House. On September 26, 1990, we came back and discussed the bill for two hours. During those two hours, two members of the Bloc Québécois took the floor, two members from Quebec rose to state that only Canadian firms should bid.

Mr. Speaker, after that, the government decided to gag us. If they think they can stop us from taking the floor in this House! If they think they can stop Quebecers worthy of that name from speaking in the House of Commons, they better think again!