

Oral Questions

● (1120)

[English]

REQUEST FOR MINISTER'S RESIGNATION

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Supply and Services recognizes what this Minister and this Government refuse to see, that indeed half the country is crying and that the regional economic development policy is in utter and total shambles, sacrificed on the altar of free trade.

Will the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion, who has presided over the financial mismanagement of DRIE, who has failed to speak out for Canada's regions, step aside and resign to allow the Minister of Supply and Services to take up the battle at the cabinet table against the Minister of Defence, the Prime Minister and all of those in Cabinet who believe that Canada's impoverished regions, its high unemployment, are a fact of life which ought to be ignored and hidden?

[Translation]

Hon. Michel Côté (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we are trying to achieve. According to our consultations, all the studies and reports are unanimous. Regional development should be initiated in the regions, and that is exactly the philosophy behind the Atlantic initiative which is getting a budget of one billion dollars, while nothing had been done by the previous government for twenty years.

[English]

Mr. Tobin: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Regional and Industrial Expansion stands like a naked newt in this House. The Prime Minister's Office has left him with nothing but a chauffeur and limousine with which to hide his embarrassment.

DEPARTMENT'S EXPENDITURES

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe): I ask the Minister, who now has Price Waterhouse, internal auditors and the Auditor General, all trying to track down \$100 million of unaccountable expenditures, when he will do the honourable thing for the regions and for his Department and, for God's sake, man, go, resign?

Hon. Michel Côté (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion): Mr. Speaker, I am not surprised at the amount of deficit this Government had to deal with when we took over in 1984. Members opposite do not even know what the hell is going on at DRIE, Mr. Speaker. They don't even know!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Côté (Langelier): We have to deal with earlier commitments which date from 1975. We have to deal with almost \$1 billion in commitments made prior to the time we came into power. We have to deal with that. My colleagues should know that these commitments have to be dealt with. Second, we have

initiated both internal and external reports and we are going to get answers from that very shortly.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Côté (Langelier): As well, the Auditor General will step in and we will find out exactly what happened there.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

EXPENDITURES—EFFECT ON REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Len Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Associate Minister of National Defence. The fact that the Minister of Supply and Services and the Minister of National Defence cannot agree on the national interests of the country is deplorable. It was a Liberal Government which purchased 2,761 military trucks with regional development in mind, 81,000 small arms, 300 light armoured vehicles, new frigates for the navy, updated several other ships—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Hopkins: —and purchased 138 CF-18 aircraft, and many other items, all with regional development in mind and in effect.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hopkins: When is the Government going to get its act together and have Ministers agree that, beyond a doubt, national defence and regional development go hand in hand, and both are in the national interests of Canada? If the two Ministers cannot agree, one or both should resign.

Hon. Paul Dick (Associate Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, if the Hon. Member had been following the process in the purchasing of military equipment, he would find that the process has not changed from the days of the other Government, except we are buying more equipment for the Armed Forces than it did.

Mr. Hopkins: Mr. Speaker, that is a farce. They used our programs.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR POLICY

Mr. Len Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): I have a question for the Deputy Prime Minister. What an utter shame and spectacle to see the two Ministers of National Defence flying around the country, talking about regional advantages of the White Paper on Defence while the Minister of Supply and Services—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Hopkins: —who is responsible—