

Adjournment Debate

that have been talked about by that ministry, as well as those announced concerning cutting of equipment.

I am particularly concerned about the cutting of the numbers of the Armed Forces. These cuts apparently are going to go ahead at a time when we still do not have any clear defence policy, nor do we know what roles are going to be expected of our Canadian forces in the years to come. We know that the government is using the calmer period in Europe and the end of the cold war as a reason for downsizing the Canadian forces. However, the truth of the matter is that during past years we were told that we did not have enough military personnel to perform our roles and that we were always short-handed. Now that there is less responsibility in Europe, why not leave the forces as they are so that we will have enough personnel to do the job in the years to come.

We do not have a large armed force, but I want to put it on the record that when this government came to power it promised many things that would be done for the Canadian forces, among which was an increase in numbers to 90,000, to 100,000. That never did happen. In the election campaign of 1984 in a speech in Newcastle, New Brunswick, the Prime Minister stated he was going to increase the number of forces to 90,000. That promise was never kept.

There has always been a discussion in this House about equipment. The present government, which has been in power for more than six and a half years, has not come to grips with this and much of the equipment that it talks about today was either ordered or on stream or produced prior to its coming to office.

For example, the long-range patrol aircraft were already in the air before this government came to office. The CF-18 fighter aircraft contract was well down the road and was completed shortly after this government came to office, but many of the planes had already arrived at Canadian air force bases long before. It talked at great length about tanks but none have been produced since coming to power. The north warning system modernization program to replace the old DEW line was 90 per cent completed before it came to power.

In this regard equipment processes were ongoing, but this government has not kept up with re-equipping the forces. Now that the cold war is off, we still are going to

need equipment regardless of the size of the force. I want to emphasize that the Canadian forces have done such a fantastic job in peacekeeping and in fracasés such as the Persian Gulf war. I would point out that the ships used in the Persian Gulf were built many years ago by the previous Liberal administration. The government has not brought its new ships on stream—as a matter of fact they are over a year behind schedule. Why not leave the forces personnel intact and centre our policy around that. Tell us what the policies are going to be before deciding what will be cut in the Canadian forces. That is the rational way.

• (1750)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Charles A. Langlois (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to offer a few comments and to respond to the speech by the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mr. Speaker, today's fiscal and geostrategic realities have a major impact on defence, and that is why the Department of National Defence has embarked on a detailed study of the defence policy formulated in 1987.

The Minister of National Defence and the Associate Minister consider this review essential to Canada's defence operations. Both ministers are in favour of formulating a new policy that will provide for a plan that is realistic, effective and appropriate to the needs of the Canadian Forces.

Since a decision in this respect has yet to be submitted to cabinet, I am sure the hon. member will appreciate it is somewhat premature at this time to talk about closing Specific military bases. Furthermore, I may remind the hon. member that a review can affect any part of the defence program.

Mr. Speaker, the principles that govern Canada's defence policy have remaining virtually unchanged in recent years. We remain firmly committed to the principle of common defence and security; arms control and disarmament; and the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Although the review started some time ago, the fact remains that as far as defence is concerned, this government has made more important decisions and has been