HOUSE OF COMMONS DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday March 12, 1991

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

[*Translation*]

PRIVILEGE

STANDING COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I wish to give notice of a question of privilege, and I would like to take a few minutes, not very long, to explain my point.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Government Operations is not meeting because there is no chairperson. The former chairperson resigned September 9, 1990. The committee has not met since. The committee—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry, but I have to interrupt for a minute. What was the date of the resignation?

Mr. Gauthier: September 9, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you.

[*English*]

Mr. Gauthier: The committee does exist because it was struck some months ago by this House, but it has not met because there is no chairperson to preside over the deliberations. In fact, it is a hoax to pretend that the committee exists when it cannot study the material which is referred to it by this House.

When the House referred vote 1c of the Supplementary Estimates for the Privy Council on February 28, some 11 days ago, to the Standing Committee on Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Government Operations, the estimate in question represented $17.9 million and touched on the Spicer Commission's work. The House technically ordered the committee to scrutinize the expenditure of public money and asked members of that committee to report to it by March 21 this month, in a few days.

Anything, Mr. Speaker, in my view, that would impede the examination of those estimates is unparliamentary and would put members of the House in an untenable situation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, the privileges of all members will be breached, because they will be unable to perform their duties as elected representatives, and one of those important duties is the traditional one of examining the Estimates, to subject government spending to careful scrutiny, on behalf of our constituents, the Canadian people.

[*English*]

Further, this committee is not sitting because of a flaw—and that is my point of privilege— in our Standing Orders.

Standing Order 106(1) obliges the Clerk of the House to convene an organizational meeting of each standing committee mentioned in the report of the Striking Committee, per se, within 10 sitting days after that committee has reported and the report has been adopted. However, there is no provision in our Standing Orders at this time for electing a new chairperson when a vacancy exists.

As a result, the House must fall back on an old tradition which put the responsibility of convening a committee organization meeting in the hands of the government Whip. This is a tradition that we had prior to the McGrath reform.

Mr. Speaker, I refer you to Beauchesne—

[*Translation*]

Fifth Edition, at citation 579:

> (2) Organization meetings have always been called upon the instruction of the Chief Government Whip when the House refers—

I repeat, "when the House refers":

—or is about to refer matters to the committee.

• (1110)

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker, the decision to convene that meeting must be taken by the Whip when the House has made the decision to defer the estimates to a committee or the appropriate committees. That has not been done.

The decision now is not in the hands of the clerk, an impartial person, but in the hands of the Whip, a partisan who has, in my view, responsibilities to his caucus and who acts in an intelligent manner. I am not saying he has done this in trying to hold up the work of the House, I am just saying it is far from being an impartial decision when the government Whip is responsible for convening a committee because our standing orders, which were reformed, which were revamped some years ago, were not able to cope with the situation where a chairperson has resigned.

The Whip, of course, is carrying out the orders of the House leader or the Prime Minister by refusing to convene the Standing Committee on Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Government Operations to permit the election of a chairperson.

I know the arguments he is going to give me about the 49th report of the striking committee not having been tabled. I know all those arguments. All I am saying is that we have a serious flaw in our Standing Orders. This will create an unparliamentary situation, a question of privilege for all members because we are impeded in our work here as members of Parliament in our obligations to the people of Canada, our electors, to look and to scrutinize the expenditures of the government.

It is my contention that the Spicer Commission, whose spending of public money has been much maligned recently, should be given a chance to present its case in public, before a committee, to re-establish possibly its credibility. If this House does not proceed now with having that person or the chairman of that commission before the committee of the House before the time has expired on March 21, we would be playing a hoax on Canadians. We would be playing a hoax on ourselves.

The House of Commons Standing Committee on Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Government Operations is the appropriate forum for this to go on. Unless action is taken in the next nine days—well, 10 days maybe—before March 21 when the parliamentary estimates are deemed to have been reported back to the House, no public scrutiny by Parliament will have been made of the commission's budget.

The future of the country in my view, is much too important to allow some people to score fast political points at its expense. I am not aiming this at anybody in this House. I am just saying it is untenable at this time to have a royal commission which is looking at the future of our country, not being able to defend itself in front of the public in Canada, in front of this House, as to how it spends public money.

There is a serious flaw in the rules which allow the government to frustrate and deny appropriate and democratic parliamentary processes such as scrutiny of expenditures of public funds. You, Sir, cannot remain indifferent. You cannot remain neutral. There are two avenues you could use. You could say that in view of the flaw in our Standing Orders this whole matter could be deferred to the committee. It has been charged with looking at our Standing Orders. It could look at the Standing Orders and possibly come in with a quick recommendation. That would take time, Mr. Speaker.

The other alternative, which I prefer, is to use your good offices to tell the clerk of the committee that in view of the fact that we do not have a procedure at hand that is acceptable to modern parliamentary procedures, that he, the clerk, will convene a meeting of the Standing Committee on Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Government Operations today, for a meeting to be held tomorrow, to give the commission a chance to defend itself before the House of Commons.

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I want an opportunity to present a couple of arguments in this particular discussion. In fact, I want to make three points, but I want to begin by saying this.

I am shocked that the hon. member rises in his place in this House today to make this point because, either one of two things have happened; the Liberal Party has chosen to circumvent the legitimate negotiation process that has been going on between House leaders of this House or, there is a complete lack of discussion among

members in their party as to what the process has been, continues to be and will be later today and tomorrow.

I would like to begin by making three points. First, as the hon. member has indicated in his remarks, we do in fact have a striking committee report before this House of Commons.

Mr. Speaker, you know that the government could have, under the rules of this House, moved concurrence in that report, and had that report adopted. The implications of that would have meant a dramatic change to our committee's system and its process. We chose, as a government, not to use our majority to do that, but rather to let the House and the House leadership have discussions so that we could come to an agreement whereby all members of this House would feel that the committee process was a baby of their own creation rather than one forced upon them by the government. That is why we have not used our legitimate powers, our majority, to force the striking committee report through this House.

The second point I want to make is this. As you know, and all members of this House know, the House leadership and the members of this House are presently discussing a wide variety of rule changes. Included in those rule changes are a fairly extensive list of changes to the committee process. These changes have been shared with the House leader of the Official Opposition, with the House leader of the New Democratic Party and with other members who are involved in the negotiation process. It has not been a secret. It has been widely discussed. There have even been press articles on some of the details.

These negotiations have been going because we, on this side of the House, fundamentally believe that committees are a creature of the whole House. They are not creatures solely of the government and that is why we have worked so hard to make sure that that rule change process, as it relates to committees and other issues, has a fair hearing, a fair discussion and an opportunity for consensus building.

The third point I want to speak to is this, and it relates specifically to the point that my hon. friend raises in the House, relating to the committee on consumer and corporate affairs. I have had discussions with members of the opposition on this issue on probably three occasions. I will not go into detail about the discussions because I do not want to betray any confidences about what was discussed in those meetings.

However, I do want to indicate to the Chair, and I think it is very important that the Speaker realize that in fact these discussions have gone on, that we have been working together to try and come up with a process that would allow this committee to meet, would allow the committee to study the estimates and still would maintain the integrity both of the rule changes that we are looking at in terms of future opportunities and, second, to make sure that the work of that committee would be balanced and consistent with structures that exist in the present system for committees of this House.

That is happening at the moment. In fact, I can indicate to the Speaker that I had thought, from conversations I had this morning, that we, on all sides of the House, were very likely to come to an agreement which would have meant an Order in this House later this afternoon. I had those kinds of indications, and that is why I am very shocked that the hon. member has chosen this opportunity, in spite of all those discussions and all those negotiations, to try and score a partisan point on something we, as a government, have been going out of our way not to treat as a partisan issue. Because, as I said earlier, we do believe that committees are a vehicle of this whole House.

My friend offered to you two options. He asked the Speaker to intervene and to enforce or force a decision.

• (1120)

I offer a third option, an option in keeping with the traditions of the Chair and of this House, and that is to let the process that is going on at this moment continue.

An hon. member: It is not going on.

Mr. Cooper: The hon. member says that it is not going on. Why does he not check with his House leader? Why does he not check and find out what conversations have been going on even this morning? Those discussions are going on; I can say that publicly in this House. There is no need for the Speaker to impose on the House a particular action when in fact I think we are very close to a consensus among the House leadership which will result in a decision of the House, of the membership and will protect the integrity of the committees, which is certainly the most legitimate and consistent goal that we

as a government are trying to reach through the negotiations, the discussions and the rule changes.

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): On the same point of order, the government deputy Whip claims that he does not understand why we are raising this issue today. The reason we are raising the issue today is that we sent a letter to the Prime Minister last week in his capacity as the Leader of the Conservative Party and asked him to specifically direct the Whip of the government side of the House to give a vehicle for the estimates of Consumer and Corporate Affairs to be heard. In fact, we were very explicit in our letter to the Prime Minister that if we did not receive a response by today, this matter would be raised in the House.

We want to raise it in the House because the clock is ticking.

[*Translation*]

We have about ten days left to consider the Estimates concerning the Spicer Commission. Since the government and the Prime Minister refuse to act responsibly, it is up to members of Parliament to do so and to consider in detail all expenditures already made and delegated to the Spicer Commission. We advised the Prime Minister last week that if he could not act responsibly as Leader of the Conservative Party, we were prepared to raise the question in the House. We gave the government and the Prime Minister enough time to respond. However, no response was forthcoming. And that is why today, we are trying to get the Chair to rule on a matter that affects the rights and privileges of all members.

If a process is in place according to which we have the right to examine the expenditures of all departments, including commissions, and that process is denied us as a result of the government's refusal to convene a meeting, that is a breach of our privileges, Mr. Speaker. That is why we submitted that the Prime Minister could have dealt with the situation last week. Since he refused to do so, we are taking our responsibility as parliamentarians seriously and we ask the Chair to ensure that this meeting is convened as soon as possible.

Mr. Phillip Edmonston (Chambly): Mr. Speaker, on the same question of privilege raised by my colleague from Ottawa—Vanier. The matter of negotiation referred to by the government member is a pretext. There was no real negotiation. It is nothing but a pretext. I too wrote letters and asked the Prime Minister to intervene. I asked the whip and the other members on the government side to intervene. They did not.

I want to make it clear that I can understand the Liberals and the others wanting to have a good look at the books of the Spicer Commission. I agree with that. But there are other problems, including some that directly affect consumers throughout Canada, others related to gas prices and car warranties, in short all sorts of considerations that members opposite may not deem unduly urgent. We have to respond to letters from constituents and tell them that for six months now the government has refused to convene the Standing Committee on Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Government Operations. The average Joe on the street has precious little use for such legal shenanigans and the various points raised by my government colleague. He wants answers to his questions, recalling full well that the government did brag about enhancing the role of members by giving them more latitude with respect to committee work.

Mr. Speaker, pretending the committee system works has to be the most misleading statement I ever heard. The system simply does not work, and the reference to negotiations is a red herring. Our party whip confirmed that right here and, from what I heard, the Liberals did not get to first base either.

Mr. Speaker, the Clerk of the House will have to get involved in this debate, for I have strong reservations about the good will of the government.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary West.

I would like to know why a resignation back in September has not been filled yet. All members of this House believed once that in the reform committee this kind of thing would be a matter of the past. I want to know exactly why there has not been a replacement of the chairman.

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, we are on very dangerous ground.

Mr. Speaker: Just a minute. We may be on very dangerous ground and there may be very good reasons why the government does not want to go ahead and do anything because the opposition has not approved, or is

not prepared to approve, an order of the House or a proposition that has been put before the House.

I ask the hon. member for Calgary West to tell me how, if we believe in a committee system, we can continue to go without a committee chairman all these months.

The other thing I want to say is this. I probably cannot intervene, but I am being asked to intervene, and this is not the first time. The fault may be on both sides of the House, but for goodness sake, I ask hon. members to get it settled.

Mr. Hawkes: The Speaker is always on dangerous ground when he gets applause from one side of the House.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

An hon. member: That is right.

Mr. Speaker: Just a moment. Let me make it very clear. I am not defending either side of the House in this. I say to the other side of the House be careful about applauding a Speaker, whether it comes from one side of the House or the other.

I spent a lot of years in opposition, I do not have to tell you how many. I thought we had made some very, very positive reforms and changes. All I am saying is that this House and this country, because I do not know that I can do anything about it, are in trouble if we let a committee go from September until now without a chairman.

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, I have to step back to the year 1985, when this government and this party brought parliamentary reform to this Chamber.

An hon. member: Apply it.

Mr. Hawkes: I hear one of the new members who came into this House in 1988 saying: "Apply it". I look her right in the eye and I say: "We have tried". It is the opposition that does not respect the principles of this place when it comes to committees.

An hon. member: Yap, yap, yap.

Mr. Hawkes: Yap, yap, yap. The less you know, the more likely you are to yap in this place from time to time.

A very important element of parliamentary reform was the existence of a striking committee that would name the membership, the House would approve the membership and members on standing committees would be entitled to the retention of that seat within 10 sitting days of the commencement of the fall session until one year later. Nothing anybody in this Chamber could do, except that individual, would change the membership of that committee. People were entitled to resign but Whips could not take the seat away. Year by year by year, it was a conscious decision of this Chamber. The violation arose last September when the opposition refused to acknowledge the striking committee report naming the membership for the year we are now in.

• (1130)

There would be no problem if precedents had been followed by the opposition in accepting the striking committee report.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Angus: Tell the whole story.

Mr. Hawkes: I will tell the whole story. We have had a whole lot of informal meetings, and I will tell the whole story.

You talk about partisan, petty politics and maybe the member for Vanier did not know what he was stepping into, but we have a situation today where the government, when it comes to committees, and the standing committees of this House cannot meet their responsibility to govern. There are two roles in this Chamber: there is an Official Opposition and an opposition, and there is a government. The government has the responsibility to govern.

We will take this one specific committee example. We call a meeting this afternoon. We elect a chairman with the current membership, and the voting power is in the hands of the opposition and not the government. That is true of seven of the 21 committees in this Chamber right now, and it has been true since last September and they know it.

An hon. member: They are playing games.

Mr. Hawkes: They are playing partisan political games with the future of this country, national unity, Spicer committee and everything because they want to control the committees.

Mr. Angus: That's a lie.

Mr. Simmons: You are making a fool of yourself, Jim.

Mr. Hawkes: They have been offered all kinds of possible adjustment and they refuse because they like the situation. They like to stand up in this House and complain. They do not like to run the nation. It is not their job to run the nation, but it is ours. We have the responsibility as the governing party in this Chamber to run it.

You stand up and ask me that question and I will repeat my answer. If I call that meeting this afternoon, when one of our members steps into that chair the voting control of the committee is in the hands of the opposition. That is true for seven of the 21 committees.

That is what lies behind their obstinacy. They refuse to acknowledge the principle that the government has the responsibility of governing. The opposition has the responsibility to oppose and it is an abomination of democracy for it to attempt to use one rule in the Standing Orders to control the governing part of this Chamber in one-third of the standing committees of this House.

You have not even read the rules. You shake your head, you yack, you talk, but you have to read the rules.

Mr. Barrett: That's nonsense.

Mr. Hawkes: You do not read the rules either. Okay? They are operating on a false premise.

Now you stand up and tell me that you should intervene, Mr. Speaker, and hand the responsibility for governing over to the opposition and see how long—

An hon. member: Shame.

Mr. Barrett: You lost control.

Mr. Speaker: Just a minute. I would say with great respect to the hon. member for Calgary West, I did not say anything of the sort. I said that the public of this country is entitled to know, and the fault may lie on both sides of the Chamber, why a committee has not got a chairman since September. One can blame one side or the other, but do not blame the Speaker for being annoyed that it has been brought to my attention, not for the first time.

The country is in no mood to put up with this kind of debate.

Mr. Hawkes: Tell them that.

Mr. Speaker: I'm telling the House that.

Mr. Malone: Don't look at us.

Mr. Speaker: I am not hearing any further debate on it. It is not something I can do anything about. I can say, as somebody who has been here for a long time, for goodness sakes, get it resolved.

The fault is probably on both sides. I do not want to overdo this.

Mr. Malone: Don't look at us.

Mr. Speaker: I will look at everybody in the House. Let us resolve it. I cannot keep resolving these things. It should be resolved in the Chamber.

I can tell you when the country is in peril, to have a debate like this does not do one bit of good in getting us through the difficulties that we face.

That is the end of the debate.

Mr. Hawkes: Point of order.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary West rises on a point of order. I have said that the issue is ended. I cannot intervene and I am not going to hear further debate on it. If it is another matter, of course I will hear the hon. member.

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you might seek from the Chamber unanimous consent to adopt the 49th report of the striking committee?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary West has put what, of course, might be a solution to the whole thing. He is asking for consent.

I put it to the House.

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, we cannot give consent to adopt the 49th report because it does not fill all of the seats that have been approved by this Chamber in terms of the size of committees. That is the nub of the issue, so we cannot.

Mr. Speaker: I am not going to use this morning to have a full debate on this. There is not consent. If there were consent, of course, it would resolve the whole issue.

All I am saying, and I should not have to repeat it, is for goodness sake, go and resolve this.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

PETITIONS

ETHANOL BLENDED GASOLINE

Hon. Ralph Ferguson (Lambton—Middlesex): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in this House to present petitions containing almost 500 names of persons who call on the government to bring in ethanol blended gasolines that are environmentally friendly and do not contain MMT.

The average cost of ethanol production in the U.S. is 47 cents per U.S. gallon, and one U.S. plant produces it for 38 cents per U.S. gallon. A new Canadian plant has forecast costs at 27 cents a litre. This is in direct contradiction to the 47 cents per litre cost of production in the Canadian government response to a similar petition tabled in November 1990.

I call on this government to update the research on this issue and get on with the implementation of this as an alternative friendly fuel.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Shall all questions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

POINT OF ORDER

ESTIMATES

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, I want to rise to make some brief submissions in respect of the point of order raised on Friday, March 8, 1991, by the hon. member for Ontario concerning the provision in the estimates, particularly vote 5 in the votes under Parliament on the Senate which authorizes the implementation of the 41st report of the Standing Committee on Internal Economy Budgets and Administration in the other place.

I have reviewed very carefully the comments made by the hon. member for Ontario. At first glance his point of order looks as though it is well taken, but there are a few points that I would like to draw to the attention of the Chair for the Chair's consideration in reviewing the point of order.

First of all, I would suggest that in considering whether the estimate in question is in fact out of order, Your Honour should have regard to the fact that estimates are recommended to this House by the Governor General.

• (1140)

In the case of both Supplementary Estimates C and in the case of the Main Estimates, Your Honour will recall just the other day that a message was received from His Excellency transmitting the estimates to this place and recommending them to the House.

Estimates recommended by the Governor General are not just recommended because His Excellency receives these documents and says: "Boy, these are great". He gets advice from his responsible ministers who advise His Excellency to recommend these estimates to the House. That little constitutional convention is a very important one, in that these estimates have obviously been approved by cabinet, by the Privy Councillors who advise His Excellency.

I submit that in making a recommendation to this House the ministers of the Crown have put their stamp of approval on this set of estimates and have recommended them to the House of Commons through the Government General, because the Governor General, as I have stated, does not recommend these on his own volition. He does so only on advice from his responsible ministers. Indeed it would be contrary to all constitutional convention for the Governor General to make a recommendation on these estimates without the advice of his responsible ministers who sit on the Treasury benches in the House. Those estimates have been recommended in this way.

I note that in the precedents cited by the hon. member for Ontario he has referred to rulings of the Chair made over a period of 20 years which suggest that estimates cannot legislate a new government program. The question whether this particular estimate falls within the

impugned type of estimates is a matter I think the Chair will have to decide.

I want to point out first that in most cases the arguments for having estimates excluded on the basis that they created new programs were advanced by the person who is now the leader of the government in the House and who must accept very direct responsibility for having recommended these estimates to the House through his boss, the Governor General of Canada.

He, presumably as a member of cabinet, advised His Excellency to recommend these estimates to the House. He, having done so, I presume has satisfied himself as to the form and content of these estimates based on the fact that he is something of an expert on the matter, having raised issues for years and years before the House as to the propriety of the form of various estimates.

I trust we will hear from him in respect of this matter in due course and whether or not he feels this particular estimate is in accordance with the precedents, many of which he established by his arguments.

Second, I would refer Your Honour to two precedents, one I must say the validity of which may be at issue because it was adopted prior to the rulings in 1971 and 1981 which the hon. member for Ontario has cited in support of his proposal. However, I refer Your Honour to Appropriation Act No. 2 for 1965 in which a particular item in the schedule to the act that contained the words of the votes reads as follows:

> To authorize, during the current and subsequent fiscal years, payment of a gratuity in respect of the death of any member of the Senate or House of Commons subsequent to August 2, 1963, to the surviving spouse or the estate of the deceased member, in an amount equal to two months' sessional indemnity and to ratify any such payments made during the 1963–64 fiscal year; estimated amount required for the 1964–65 fiscal year, $12,000.

That was an estimate adopted by this House that did change a program and I think is worth consideration by Your Honour.

In addition there was one other, which I have easily obtained here, in the 1989–90 Appropriation Act No. 3 for that particular financial year. Vote 1 for the Privy Council Office provided in part, and I will only quote the relevant part:

> —the payment to each member of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada who is a Minister without Portfolio or a Minister of State who does not preside over a Ministry of State of a salary equal to the salary paid to Ministers of State who preside over Ministries of State under the *Salaries Act*, as adjusted pursuant to the *Parliament of Canada Act* and *pro rata* for any period less than a year—

Then there is a sum mentioned.

I submit that once again the estimate as passed in the Appropriation Act did something similar to what is proposed to be done in this particular estimate.

In looking at whether Your Honour should rule this estimate out of order, I invite you, Sir, to have regard to these two precedents. I hope that they are of assistance to the Chair and its ruling on this important issue.

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, I this is a very important matter. I intend to be very short in presenting my arguments because later on this morning, our leader, the member for Yukon, will be presenting a motion to this House with regard to the Constitution of Canada and the process that we should be using to bring about changes to our Constitution and the substance related to that. That is also very important and we must get to it as soon as possible.

However, since the day has been chosen to continue arguments on the point of order raised by the member for Ontario, I do want to add to the remarks I made on Friday.

First, I believe that the government has improperly brought these estimates before us. While it is true that the Senate passes its estimates and it is the obligation of the government to present those estimates to both Houses, I believe that the government had the option to look to find out whether or not the Senate estimates were in the proper form. I would submit that that is not the case in this particular case. Vote 2c, under the Supplementary Estimates, for the Senate says:

> To authorize the implementation of the Forty-first Report of the Standing Committee of Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration, 2nd session, 34th Parliament, adopted by the Senate on June 5, 1990, and to authorize, in the current and subsequent fiscal year, payment of the allowance referred to in the report.

The Financial Administration Act is very clear. In section 27 it says:

> All estimates of expenditures submitted to Parliament shall be for the services coming in course of payment during the fiscal year.

It is not subsequent years, but during the fiscal year. The Financial Administration Act goes on further in section 37 to say:

> —the balance of an appropriation granted for a fiscal year that remains unexpended at the end of that fiscal year shall lapse.

Clearly what the Senate has done through its estimates is that it has violated the Financial Administration Act, which has been passed by both Houses of Parliament.

In addition, this vote, which is the vote that gives the senators $153 a day for showing up for work, violates the Parliament of Canada Act. Those types of increases which do not require any receipts whatsoever require a change in the Parliament of Canada Act. The Senate, perhaps for the reason that it does not want the public to respond to this vast increase to its salaries, did not introduce any legislation whatsoever and is trying to do through the appropriation that which it did not have the nerve to do through legislation.

The references that were made earlier on Friday and earlier today were to past rulings which are quite clear: one does not use the estimates, whether the Main Estimates or the Supplementary Estimates, to pass legislation. The Speakers in the past have indicated that one must introduce the legislation in order for any appropriations to go forward.

I will sum up because of the important nature of the debate that is about to commence. Clearly, the Senate of Canada has violated two acts of Parliament: the Financial Administration Act and the Parliament of Canada Act. In addition, it has violated the rules upheld by Speakers in the past with regard to trying to do through appropriations that which should be done through legislation.

This is a case where the senators have individual profit from the measure that is before this House. For it to be done in the improper way suggested under the Supplementary Estimates for this fiscal year is completely unacceptable.

I believe that the Speaker has an obligation to protect not only the House and the legislation of this country, but an obligation to protect the taxpayers of this nation as well.

• (1150)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): As all the hon. members know, the substantive matter raised by the hon. member for Ontario is presently under advisement. I am sure that the Chair is highly appreciative of the opinions expressed by the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands and the hon. member for Churchill and that these will help in making a decision on this important procedural matter.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S. O. 81—THE CONSTITUTION

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon) moved:

> That this House call upon the government to make the next round of constitutional discussions a round for all Canadians by adopting guidelines for the process of constitutional change which ensure:
>
> (1) representation by all sides of Parliament and provincial and territorial legislatures, not just governments;
>
> (2) the inclusion of others with a stake in the outcome, such as aboriginal nations, the north, official language minorities, business and labour, women and multicultural communities;
>
> (3) the process is genuinely balanced, without real or perceived dominance or manipulation by any participant;
>
> (4) discussion is based on the views of ordinary people and expert opinion;
>
> (5) there is a timetable and a commitment from the start of all appropriate participants to make a decision on the final package of proposed amendments;
>
> (6) the process is open and transparent, conducting official business in public;
>
> (7) that discussions begin with only one precondition, a desire to remain within a renewed Canadian federation; and
>
> That this not be considered a question of confidence in the government.

She said: Mr. Speaker, the motion that the New Democratic Party brings before the House today comes at a very critical time in the current round of constitutional discussions. Indeed it comes at a critical time for the country and for the country's history.

We as Canadians have reached a point in our comparatively short history where we are once again taking an honest and sincere look at ourselves, at our successes, at our failures, at our strengths and at our weaknesses. We are looking ahead to where it is that we wish to go as a country, what this country can offer Canadians, and what Canadians can offer to the world.

I have introduced the motion before us today because I believe in Canada and because I want more than anything else for this country to emerge as a united, strong, and compassionate country from this current period of uncertainty. To do this will require significant changes in the way the government and others approach the questions of national unity and constitutional reform.

That is what we are addressing today in this motion.

First on the question of national unity, it is important to realize that it will take much more than constitutional amendments to secure the future of the nation and to ensure that the Canada we want to build for our children is a more caring, compassionate and co-operative nation. It takes more than a constitutional amendment to ensure that we build a Canada in which all Canadians feel at home and that all the world respects and admires.

It will take major economic initiatives, because economic initiatives are not solely designed to make Canada a better country for multinational corporations and corporate profit, but rather to make Canada a better place for Canadian families and a better country for the families of this nation.

It will take a major commitment to building and strengthening the nation's social programs such as medicare, old age pensions and social security. It will take a commitment to national institutions, those institutions that represent the common bonds that we share: the CBC, VIA Rail and the RCMP.

It will take courage to bring in a real environmental program that protects the Canadian environment rather than simply shields corporate polluters.

It will take constitutional change, but not constitutional change that is designed only to meet the needs of governments or the needs of corporations. For Canadians, the debate on national unity is not about which level of government should be more powerful. It is not about who has the larger deficit or about where and how corporations can best operate and profit.

Canada is not simply a Gross Domestic Product, a deficit or a trade zone. Canada is a nation with a heart, with a soul, and a new Constitution must be for all Canadians, all the people of Canada.

[*Translation*]

It is because the Constitution must belong to the Canadian people that the redefinition of federalism must be an open and democratic process. Constitutional changes must be brought upon so as to be construed as legitimate by the people concerned. Our recent failures should have taught us that much. The processes which produced the constitutional accords of 1981, 1987 and 1990 caused discontent.

Whatever their respective merits, these accords were seen as a breach of confidence by those who were excluded. From this discontent sprung today's distrust. The fault does not lie with the country itself or with the people of Canada. It lies with the leaders and the governments. Successive governments waited before vesting powers in the Canadian people and giving them the tools to make a better life for themselves. They undermined the confidence the people had in them and in their country.

For decades, governments in Ottawa made many people believe that the federal government was either unable or unwilling to meet the needs of the population. People were also convinced that Ottawa was unable to respect diversity, contribute to equity, empower the population or simply unite the country.

[*English*]

This government has been telling Canadians that the biggest obstacle to justice, equality and prosperity is the federal government itself: deregulation, privatization, the U.S.-Canada trade deal. This government has destroyed national institutions like the CBC and VIA Rail. It is in the process of killing medicare and has virtually given up its regional development as a key tool for developing unity, and that must change.

Now we are told that the Prime Minister, Conservative, Liberal and Social Credit premiers, and large corporations have united in a constitutional alliance that talks about decentralized federalism but promises to

deliver something much different, a kind of Dow Jones corporation federalism.

A few weeks ago in Toronto the Prime Minister said that the new Constitution must be built on the same principles that brought us deregulation, privatization, the Canada—U.S. trade deal and the GST.

I want to say to the Prime Minister that he could not be more wrong.

• (1200)

I want to say to the Prime Minister that unless he abandons his vision of a corporate Canada and a corporate federalism, he is doomed to fail because it is a vision Canadians do not share and will not accept. If he is not willing to listen to Canadians on this critical issue, then he must step aside and let Canadians articulate their vision of the country through a general election.

Mr. Speaker, it is the responsibility of every member of this Chamber to do what we can to restore the trust of Canadians. We in the New Democratic Party take that responsibility very seriously and that is why we have introduced this motion today.

The Canadian people are not asking their elected representatives for anything to which they do not have a right. They are asking us to be open, to be honest and to be consistent.

The Prime Minister has said that the government has learned from the Meech Lake process. He has set up a number of public committees and working groups to listen to Canadians and to openly discuss the options available. Yet, while the Spicer Commission is in the headlines and the Commons and Senate committee meet publicly to look at the amending formula, there are clearly a whole series of initiatives under way that are not in the public eye and that are being done behind closed doors.

We have, for example, Mr. Speaker, a group of deputy ministers. I asked the Acting Prime Minister yesterday, and he refused to even table the terms of reference for those deputy ministers. Surely the public has a right to know. Surely the public has a right to know what report they put forward. And I say again, that the Prime Minister should table that report in this House of Commons so that all Canadians can know what kind of thinking has gone into the government's position.

At the same time, we have a finance minister who announces he is beginning to negotiate new fiscal arrangements that determine such programs as medicare and other social programs. He is going to negotiate equalization and that, in fact, could result in a kind of decentralization of programs or different kinds of arrangements among the provinces and territories in Canada in a kind of back door constitution making. Well, that is not good enough. We do not want a back door constitution making. We do not want a closed door constitution making. We want an open door process where all Canadians can see the positions of all political parties and of all of the key players in these discussions.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the Prime Minister today that coming up with a way of muzzling critics in order to make the people of Canada feel good and a new way of doing the preliminary work for another last minute marathon will not be enough. It will not work and I can tell the Prime Minister that this caucus will not take part in that process.

I also hope that the Liberal Party will join us to pass this motion and support the amendments we proposed as well as our suggestions regarding the wider scope to be given to the proceedings of the Committee on the constitutional amendment formula.

[*English*]

I said in my opening comments that this motion comes before the House at a very critical time, and the Speaker reminded us of that earlier this morning. It comes at a time when as members of Parliament we have the opportunity to ensure that this round of constitutional discussions is an open round and a round for all Canadians.

We have to learn from the past, and I think we have learned from the Meech Lake process about what it takes to include and involve as many people that can and want to be involved in that process, and not to exclude any one group. The process we are suggesting must be open and conciliatory and, in my view, must meet the seven specific criteria that we have set out in this motion.

I will briefly reiterate those, Mr. Speaker. The first principle of the process should be that all sides of Parliament and all legislatures must be represented, not just one party or one part of the parliamentary process and not just government. Parliament and legislatures

have a role to play but every member must have the real opportunity to participate in defining the future of our country.

Second, the process must include others with a stake in the outcome such as aboriginal nations, the north, official language minorities, multicultural communities, business, trade unions. Because building a constitution is not the private domain of governments or first ministers.

The Constitution is a constitution for whatever party happens to be in power: New Democratic, Liberal or Conservative. It is a constitution for all of the people, therefore, all of the people have to be a part of forming that constitution. There are many interests at stake. All of them are important and all of them represent that diversity of our country which we want to see enshrined in our constitution.

The third principle is that the process must be genuinely balanced, without the perception of dominance or manipulation by any one group, or by any one participant. It is not enough, simply, to have others attend meetings or to be involved to create the perception of legitimacy. There must be a real and legitimate role for all of those who have a stake.

The fourth principle is that we must draw upon the views of ordinary people and of expert opinion. We must take seriously the various commissions that are under way in the provinces and in the Yukon territory. The Spicer Commission, which is going to report, must function as a legitimate vehicle for Canadians and its recommendations, having heard tens of thousands of Canadians, must be taken seriously by this government.

[*Translation*]

Fifth, there must be a precise timetable and a commitment from the start of all participants to make a decision on the a final package of proposed amendments.

The sixth principle calls for the process to be open and have no hidden agenda. We cannot have an honest-looking process going on in one room while the real changes are negotiated in another room, behind closed doors.

Finally, the desire to remain within a renewed Canadian federation must be the only precondition to the discussion process. We must embark on this process with an open mind, ready to listen, and with the courage to act.

[*English*]

There are many mechanisms by which we can proceed with constitutional change that will meet these basic criteria. Some, such is a constituent assembly which I proposed some eight months ago in this House and which, I might add, the Prime Minister agreed to look at very seriously. It has been discussed in this House and has been used with some success in other parts of the world. We can learn from others. We are not the first country that has had to grapple with the issues that we in Canada are grappling with today. There are other models that can be adopted to meet the needs of Canada and reflect the reality of our nation.

We can be developing a new model that will be a model for the world. Constitutional conventions, constituent assembly, constitutional conferences are examples of a process which seek to bring in not only elected politicians but also those others who have a stake in the future of our country. Regardless of what process we choose, it must be a process that involves all Canadians.

I call on this House today to pass this motion and to adopt these seven criteria for an open and honest process. I call upon all members to make it clear that, at this time, we are not prepared to leave the fate of this country and its Constitution in the hands of just a few people.

Canada's future security, the cultural well-being of our communities and the inheritance we leave for the future of our children depends on the outcome of this process. We must clearly define together our vision of where we want the country to go. To do that, we need a process based on the principles we are suggesting today.

• (1210)

We have deliberately said in our motion that this is not a non-confidence motion in the government, but rather it is an attempt to bring together the parties of this House to accept some common principles on the process.

I believe all of us in this House want to build a better Canada. We all have the same objective. Some of us may have different ways we would take to do it. But at least today, let us give hope to Canadians by saying that we can come together, agree on basic principles, that we have learned from the errors of the past. Let us show Canadians that we really are committed to building a true Constitution that belongs to Canadians, that does not belong to one political party or one point of view.

This would be a start today and I urge all members of this House to support this motion.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Rob Nicholson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the comments of the leader of the New Democratic Party. I want to say that I am very disappointed she would use a subject as sensitive and as difficult as this one is for Canadians in a manner that encourages partisanship and, I think, encourages division within this House and within political parties.

Her comments, particularly, about the Prime Minister were very unfair. I think they were in fact quite wrong. The implication the leader of the New Democratic Party came back to again and again was that somehow the government is stifling public involvement or is not interested in public involvement, is both unfair and incorrect. The leader of the New Democratic Party knows or should know that the Prime Minister has launched initiatives in several areas.

I wish to come back to one other point that has been made again and again in this House. I see nothing wrong with the government, within itself, in terms of deputy ministers and others examining options. I think that is only logical. It would be irresponsible for any government department and individuals who work for the Government of Canada not to be thinking about this very difficult question.

What the leader of the New Democratic Party fails to mention is the fact that the government has a number of initiatives to involve the public. Of course, the Spicer Commission is one of those three different ways that the government is encouraging Canadians to come forward and give their opinion. She touched on that only very briefly. In fact, she and the members of her party should be getting behind that organization to ensure that it is a success. It is one of the ways in which this government is encouraging Canadians from coast to coast to get involved with this.

On the technical side, as well, the Edwards–Beaudoin joint parliamentary committee is one that will visit all ten provincial capitals, both territorial capitals and several other cities in Canada, and address some of the questions she mentioned; the constituent assembly referenda, and that sort of thing. We are encouraging Canadians to give us their opinions. That is something that all members, and members of her own party are involved with as well. This is another initiative.

I am proud, as well, that the Prime Minister has asked his own political party, the Progressive Conservative Party from coast to coast, every riding, every region of Canada, to get involved with the question of Canada's future.

In the next week or two, I will be participating in a forum for Ontario Progressive Conservatives, as well as a national forum. Again, the Prime Minister of Canada is asking Canadians to get involved and help with the future of this country.

I would invite the leader of the New Democratic Party to reassess the partisan view she has taken and get behind people like the Prime Minister who are doing their best to unite this country and keep it strong.

Ms. McLaughlin: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my remarks, the Constitution is a series of principles for our country and how we are going to enact those principles. We are talking about something beyond that. We are talking about national unity.

While many Canadians find it difficult to react to the amending formula of the Constitution or particular technicalities, as important as they are, they do know one thing. They know there are 1.3 million people unemployed in this country. They know that poverty is increasing, that the gap between the rich and poor is increasing, that the middle class is finding it increasingly difficult to even maintain the standard of living. Taxes, like the goods and services tax, have made it even more difficult for individuals and small business to survive in this country.

Canadians know that bankruptcies have increased phenomenally in the last year, that the results of the Canada–U.S. trade deal have not proven to increase jobs for Canadians, but to decrease them. You cannot separate that, Mr. Speaker. You cannot separate the policies of this government in the monetary fiscal area, in the economic policies for the feelings of anger about what their country is now able to offer them and what kind of future there will be for their children.

When they see post-secondary education significantly cut back, not just by this government, but by former governments as well, what future is there for young people? What future is there for this country as we cut back research and development to make us less competitive? In fact, this government's policies are doing the very things which make us less competitive and less prosperous.

Those unemployed Canadians, those young children who are living in poverty in increasing numbers in this country, who are standing in the lines of food banks, the increasing number of homeless, has as much to do with national unity as does any constitutional amendment. It is absolutely essential that all of us on all sides of the House recognize that without security in the economy, without policies that will lead to full employment, without real policies to protect the environment, without real commitment to social programs in this country, constitutional amendments will mean nothing.

Mr. David Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the leader of the New Democratic Party. I listened with great interest to what she said. I would ask her though looking at her motion if really she is not calling for a constitutional convention or constituent assembly. I know she spoke about it in her comments, but why not call for that specifically rather than call for so many of the ingredients of one without saying explicitly she thinks that is the way to involve Canadians.

I certainly agree with her it is the only way that we can involve Canadians in redoing the Constitution of Canada. She did point out, I think I am quoting her correctly, that it has worked with some success, I think was her phrase. My understanding is that it has worked very well in many countries and it has been a success virtually everywhere it has been tried.

Why does she not make the call for a constituent assembly the substance of her motion rather than saying everything in it but that?

Ms. McLaughlin: Mr. Speaker, I welcome my colleague's comments about that, because in fact I did address that in my speech today, as I have done previously in the House, and called on the government and others to examine that issue.

The member from Edmonton is quite correct, that the constitutional assembly has worked well in a number of countries. I cite Australia particularly. It is a country that has some similarity of issues to Canada. It was a process that I think worked quite well there.

Why we have chosen today to set out the principles and the process is that we do not want to pre-judge what the best would be. We would like to hear everyone else's ideas but I think the one important principle on which we can all agree, and the member from Edmonton obviously agrees with as well, is that the old process does not work. The old ways do not work. We cannot have 11 men just sitting at a different table this time in a different place. We need to open it up to people from the west, the north, the Atlantic region, from central Canada, to those groups that have particular interests, such as aboriginal people, the multicultural community and women.

• (1220)

We have to make sure that those groups are involved. If we do not do that, we as politicians in this House have dramatically failed the Canadian people. I, for one—and I am sure the member from Edmonton was making the same kind of comment—do not want to be a part of that kind of failure again. Therefore, I would very strongly urge that all parties consider the specific process, whether it is a convention or a constituent assembly. I myself, because I have presented that in the House before, favour that model. There may be better models that I have not thought of. I do not pretend to have all the best ideas, but I think I have some good ones, and the one that is most important is that all Canadians have to be served by this process. All Canadians have to be reflected in this process, and I think we should just get on with it and start doing that. Then we would see some real movement and, hopefully, a sense of hope about the future of this country, because that, of all things, is what Canadians need today.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Resuming debate. The Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism).

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise here today to share with you my reflections on the current constitutional debate and to outline the initiatives taken by the federal government to find, within Canada, solutions which will lead to a strong and united Canada, ready to meet the challenges of the next century.

Mr. Speaker, whenever I return to Canada from a trip abroad or upon visiting one of our regions, I am impressed and proud of the accomplishments of our parents. With a population of only 26 million spread out over the second largest country in the world, our parents overcame a forbidding climate and geography to build the eighth largest economy in the world. The quality of things our parents built, and which we continue to build, can be seen all around us: first rate schools, clean subways, excellent health care, safe streets, marvellous recreational facilities and wide-spread economic opportunities. Millions of people all over the world admire our quality and standard of living and line up to come to Canada because successive generations of Canadians have succeeded in building an open, democratic, peaceful and very prosperous country.

This is the Canada we have. This is the Canada I am proud of and it is the Canada I wish to leave to my children. However, if we want to continue to develop our economy and meet the intense competition of the twenty-first century, while safeguarding our linguistic and cultural diversity, we must commit ourselves to the challenge of re-Confederation. We should not be afraid to take a fresh and new look at what is best done by the federal government and what by the provinces—what we want to do together, and what we prefer to do separately.

[*English*]

In fact I heartily concur and support the views expressed by our Prime Minister on December 16, 1990, in Buckingham, Quebec.

In his speech, the right hon. Prime Minister indicated the distribution of powers devised by the Fathers of Confederation. I quote:

> This distribution of powers admirably suited Canada's needs for many years, and it is entirely appropriate to review this to determine how best Canada can accommodate new realities internally while preparing to confront ferocious international competition for investment, technology, trade and prosperity. I believe it is now timely to review and modernize the Federation, to render it reflective of Canada's true diversity.

The government believes this. Whatever new arrangements we may develop over the course of the coming months, renewal of the federation must respect, above all, certain basic principles of change as outlined by the Prime Minister in his recent February speeches in Toronto and Quebec City.

Change should first lead to a more prosperous Canada. Change should secondly lead to a more efficient federalism and a more competitive nation. Change should respect equality, as well as diversity of citizens. Change, too, should be practical and it should be doable. It should maintain national standards and it should move decision-making closer to the people. We should safeguard rights of all Canadians.

The Prime Minister declared in this House on November 1, 1990: "I believe that if it takes major changes to hold this country together, Canadians want those changes made; and I believe that if it takes a new process to achieve these changes, Canadians want a new process designed".

These are the words of our Prime Minister. It was stated so well by him: "I am also confident that Canadians throughout the land have the will to change and to modernize the federation".

We hear so often that Canadians do not necessarily have the will to do this. I do not believe that is so; I think there is a will to change and to modernize.

[*Translation*]

Discussion and dialogue on change and on the modernization of the federation implies a two-way street. We must never forget that this is a vast and diverse country and we do not want everything run from Ottawa. On many questions and issues, the voices of the regions will be encouraged and not ignored—promoted and not stifled. I believe in a modern and flexible federalism, a federalism that reflects the diversity of Canada.

The federal government cannot modernize Canada alone; the federal government has therefore chosen to listen to all Canadians. In this spirit of listening, the

government has undertaken a variety of initiatives and has welcomed the initiatives taken by certain provincial governments.

[*English*]

We have an opportunity at this moment in history to create a modern, efficient and dynamic Canada for a new century.

The federal government has, therefore, started a process to revitalize the federation and to lead toward a new and modern Canada. As part of this dynamic process the citizens' forum is a specific federal initiative taken to ensure that we do work with Canadians, to listen and to understand.

There are a number of interesting comments on this forum every day in the media; some of them critical, some of them positive, some of them disparaging, some of them hopeful. I read this morning in the *Toronto Star* on page 2 a very interesting column by Slinger, I do not know his first name. It is entitled "Beleaguered citizens' forum at least offers hope".

• (1230)

I have to commend this column; it is eloquent and it points to the importance of our continuing with this, putting our faith in it and using it constructively. The citizens' forum, therefore, is a specific initiative taken to ensure that we do work with Canadians, to listen to and understand their concerns, their goals, their dreams, and also their frustrations. The Special Joint Committee on the Amending Formula, as the member from Niagara Falls reminded us a few minutes ago, will also provide an opportunity to hear their views and best advise on how to amend the Constitution.

People say that this is a technical subject. Of course it is, but if we come up with new values and new approaches, we need to have a mechanical, technical way to bring them about. That is why that committee is established.

It is true that the federal government, with the citizens' forum, shows a very non-traditional approach in listening to Canadians. The terms of reference indicate that the citizens' forum is not to wait for people to come to them but to seek out the views of Canadians; and once they come in, not to treat them in a stonily way but to encourage them to talk about Canada—this is very unique—and to stimulate suggestions about the country's future. This is a forum put in place to animate and bring alive what people feel. The federal government wanted this process to go to the people, not just to the heads of the big corporations, big unions, or big school boards, but to individuals in their villages, in their work places. This is happening. It is unique; it is non-traditional.

I am confident that The Citizens' Forum on Canada's Future will go a long way to help us understand what this great country is about. I believe that the more Canadians talk to each other, the more they will realize how much they have in common and how much can be lost if we allow our differences to destroy our future together.

My daughter told me the other day that she sometimes thinks Canadians define themselves by what they do not like or who they do not like, rather than defining what they do like and what they do share. Other countries often can do this. I would like to see Canadians do this more. The citizens' forum is meant to encourage that, not to just restrict it to that. Of course frustrations must be vented, but also let us build common values together. It is an important and necessary step in the revitalizing process of this country.

Another initiative of the federal government in the listening process is the establishment of the Special Joint Committee on the Amending Formula.

[*Translation*]

As the Prime Minister said in his June 23 address to the nation, "we need to find an amendment process which reconciles the need for public participation and open democratic process with the legal requirements now in the Constitution."

The purpose of the committee is therefore to provide us with recommendations, based on broad consultations with Canadians, on a better way to go about changing our Constitution and, in particular, of involving the public in the process.

[*English*]

Although the federal government has presented a discussion paper to this committee, the paper did not make recommendations. Its purpose is to stimulate public discussion by raising a number of questions and examining a variety of options, without seeking to be exhaustive or suggesting any preferred course. I am confident that the ideas set out in the federal discussion

paper will give rise to others and that Canadians will ultimately develop a consensus on the amending process.

In conclusion, the federal government also supports the initiatives of the provinces in their efforts to engage in dialogue; we have that dimension of dialogue occurring as well. All initiatives to revitalize federalism in this country and to prepare us for the 21st century are encouraged and supported by the federal government.

I was approached the other day by the mayor of the city of London who wanted to send a message to the people across Canada about his city's desire to hold Canada together. We should encourage that, just as we encourage other forums of discussion across the country. Once we have heard as broad a spectrum of views as possible, the federal government then will bring forward—and not before—a comprehensive proposal for a new and stronger Canada.

[*Translation*]

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, the question that all Canadians must answer is very simple: Do we still have the will to live together as a country? I am convinced that Canadians will answer with a resounding "yes" and will be ready to modernize our federation, to make it more sensitive to economic, linguistic and cultural realities. This is why the federal government has taken thoughtful actions to continue the effort of our forebears and develop a national response to a national problem.

[*English*]

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the minister a question. He may not be able to answer it. He is not directly implicated in the constitutional issue, but I want to ask it anyway because it may be useful to the process in this country.

As the minister knows, we have a group of deputy ministers now working on the division of powers and other substantive constitutional issues. That work is being done, by the way it is defined, behind closed doors in the bureaucracy.

I wonder if the minister can explain to this House what the terms of reference are for those deputy ministers, what they are working on, what is their agenda, when will that report be made public or will it be made public? I wonder if he can tell us more about that committee.

It may be useful. One thing we have learned from the whole process is that people want the whole constitutional process open and up front. They want to be involved. They want to know who is doing what. They do not want secret meetings and they do not want closed doors.

Perhaps the minister can help the process by telling us what he knows, if anything, about the deputy ministers, what they are doing, what their timetable is and so on.

Mr. Hockin: Mr. Speaker, it is with a note of sadness that I listen to the cast of the hon. member's question which was about secrecy rather than about the country.

The comment was made before this debate began that this country does not want mindless partisanship to dominate this issue. What we want is the love of country to dominate. If that is going to work, we should not talk about marginal issues of secrecy, especially when the process is as open as it is.

I will answer the hon. member's question. He asks about the deputy ministers, and I will answer it. By the way, I hope that when the NDP has its discussions on the Constitution it has its discussions in public. If it does not have them in public, if it can explain to the Canadian people why not, and there might be occasions when it wants to try out some ideas and do some research away from the public, I want the NDP to answer clearly for itself the same questions it asks the government and other parties.

Let me explain here the mandate of the committee of deputy ministers. After the failure of Meech Lake, the Prime Minister made the following observations: The country needed a new process for going about constitutional change; there were serious misunderstandings that Canadians needed to work out in a way so that they could feel they were contributing to solving these problems.

He also said that the federal government will be bringing forward its own proposals once all of these reports were received and once any provincial government if it so wishes had stated its position.

The government also has made it clear since then that it is monitoring not only the initiatives referred to above, but also the provincial commissions that have been established. The Prime Minister has also make it clear that the *status quo* is unacceptable and that we must all

work together to produce a more prosperous united federation.

The question naturally arises: How will the government then develop its proposal? This is where the so-called committee of deputies comes in. For this task, the government is marshalling the best resources available, and in this context the deputy ministers have been given priority assignments whose results will be integrated with the other work that is under way. There is no secret committee and there is no secret agenda.

This has been stated over and over again. It is very important that we use the resources in this country, including our public servants, to help us with the task. Any government that did not would be wholly irresponsible. Of course, we want to use that advice.

The Prime Minister has asked Gordon Smith, Secretary to the Cabinet for Federal-Provincial Relations, to co-ordinate this activity. This policy advice which deputies will provide will in no way undercut or pre-empt any other review process. I can assure the hon. member and all members of this House that there will be ample opportunity for public discussion and debate once the federal proposals come forward.

• (1240)

That should lay to rest any concern that something secret is going to happen and going to be sprung on the country. This is a preparation for openness, for renewing this country. Let us keep things on that plane, a non-partisan plane.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, I think this proposal could be very beneficial for the people of Canada. For Quebecers, it is not the same ball game, as indicated by the very wording of the motion, where paragraph 7 clearly states:

> (7) that discussions begin with only one precondition, a desire to remain within a renewed Canadian federation;

That would exclude, from the start, participants in the Bélanger-Campeau inquiry, including the three central labour bodies, a movement the NDP is usually closely associated with. These people do not meet the conditions set in the motion. I think it is a good thing for Canada to take some time to define itself. Quebec is doing the same. In Quebec, we have a commission and discussions have been going on for several years. I think it is healthy that these two nations define their identity on their own so they can establish better links afterwards.

In that context, I would like to ask the minister if, as a member of the government of a country that recognizes the United Nations Charter, one of the main principles of the Charter being the recognition of the right of nations to self-determination—if the minister were so kind as to listen to me instead of looking to one of his colleagues for an answer—So, will the minister tell me whether he recognizes or not the right of Quebec to self-determination following a referendum? Since they are signatories of the United Nations Charter, I would imagine that this principle does not apply only to other countries such as the Baltic States, but first in our own house. Otherwise, it is pure hypocrisy. I would like to hear his comments on this.

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that a referendum was held in Canada some 11 years ago. It was a referendum, was it not?

Mr. Plamondon: Yes.

[*English*]

Mr. Hockin: It is a question of fact. It is not for us to declare ourselves with regard to any declaration of the United Nations. The facts speak for themselves.

I thank the member for his comment about the importance of us defining ourselves in all parts of Canada. This is what this process is helping us to do: to define all parts of Canada. He has his definition of what he would like to see happen in this part of North America. I know that. However, he commends us, who do not agree with him, to go through the process of rethinking where we are going and how we want to see this country renewed.

That is what all of these processes which have been put in place by the government are meant to do.

Mr. David Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast): Mr. Speaker, the minister will not have to answer because my comments will take about a minute. I trust you will give him a little extra time.

The Spicer Commission is discrediting itself. People such as myself who referred people to the Spicer Commission are finding that it is becoming a source of embarrassment: the expenses, of course the statement by Mr. Spicer on being appointed or words to this effect that "my job", I think he said, "is to prepare English

Canada for the recommendations of Bélanger-Campeau, especially if they are radical".

There is another committee looking at the amendment to the constitution formula. The minister will know as a former political scientist, as you know, we need unanimity to amend the Constitution of Canada. It is hardly a burning issue. It is a marginal issue. That is why so few people are, I understand, asking to appear before that committee.

The real problem or the most important problem is the fact that the Prime Minister of this country during the Meech Lake process said in effect time and time again that if Meech Lake did not pass Quebecers should consider themselves rejected by the rest of Canada.

That is patently not the case, and to me that is probably the major problem we have right now in Canada. The chief elected official in this country has created that problem by his grossly irresponsible way of treating that Meech Lake issue.

Mr. Hockin: Mr. Speaker, I have heard this criticism of the Spicer Commission. Let me just quote from a column this morning by Mr. Slinger in *The Toronto Star*. I do not read him every day, but I certainly read him today. He wrote:

> The loudest critics of the Spicer Commission are in the mass media and the official opposition. What the critics have not suggested is a better idea. They haven't said what might meet their exacting standards.

He goes on to indicate:

> The citizens' forum represents at least a hope for spinning our straw into nationhood. It is a wonderful thing to hear a roomful of ordinary folks, strangers until then, trying to put into words what they feel for this country, whatever else we have sat and listened to, people very like ourselves searching in plain language for a common purpose.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The hon. member's time is over.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, we are here today to debate a New Democratic Party motion urging parliamentarians to consider what the coming twenty months may entail for the future of Canada.

In the course of those twenty months we will all be called upon to redefine the contract on which our country is based. Few generations of MPs have the opportunity to deal with such a momentous issue which goes straight to the heart of this country. I would not be exaggerating if I were to say that future historians will look upon the years 1991 and 1992 as their predecessors saw the 1864–1867 period, the time which led to Confederation.

[*English*]

Germany succeeded in a reunification plan within one year. The countries of eastern Europe overthrew a whole obsolete political order. The whole world, for a time, buried the cold war, and South Africa is finally burying apartheid at a time when Canada has been floundering in the midst of a paralysing constitutional crisis.

Many people thought that following the death of Meech the dust would settle and people would go about their business, that Canada would carry on as it had in the past. They were wrong. Like it or not, we are entering a period of intense soul searching, probably without precedent since 1867. The end product will be a different political and constitutional Canada.

The constitutional clock is ticking. It may be tempting; as some have said, it is impossible to come up with something that will satisfy Quebec, so why don't we let it go? I say we must take this opportunity to find a new deal that will satisfy Quebec, that will satisfy the west, and that will satisfy all parts of this great country. Otherwise we will all be the losers.

In 1864 the Fathers of Confederation—and they were only fathers then—faced an almost impossible task, and yet they succeeded in providing a framework that has given us a basis for Confederation which has lasted 124 years. Why can we, the men and women of Canada, now not be the mothers and fathers of a new Confederation?

To those who say let Quebec go, its price is too high, I say the price for separation is much higher for all of us.

To those who say the breakup of our country is just a matter of time, I say no. We can and we must reignite the political will to save our country.

To those who would sleep-walk us to separation by ignoring the constitutional crisis and focusing only on our economic problems, I say a strong economy and a strong Constitution go hand in hand. We cannot have a healthy Canada without a whole Canada, and that includes Quebec.

• (1250)

We cannot have a complete Canada unless we undergo a fundamental restructuring of the way we share power in this country.

Our system, designed in the 19th century, does not meet all the needs of the 21st century. Our present structures and institutions have not adapted to new realities.

Federalism is a complex system designed to deal with complex realities. When the situation changes, so must the specifics of our system. We need a new frame of thinking. We have to find a new constitutional deal for Canada. More than most countries, Canada is the creation of the strong will of our people. We were created in spite of geographic, linguistic and cultural differences in our proximity to a very powerful neighbour to the south.

The great majority of Canadians does not want to destroy Canada. It wants to rebuild it. The great majority of Quebecers wants to rejoin Canada in a new Confederation.

Quebecers are putting their ideas on the table in a very articulate and comprehensive manner. The rest of the country is slowly waking up to the scope of those possible changes. We may not like the specifics of some of the Allaire proposals. Then we must make counterproposals. Why not use this opportunity to take a look at other areas of dissatisfaction? To succeed, we must have a realistic focus on our objectives and design an effective and open process.

Unfortunately, the last constitutional round was handled by the Prime Minister like an amateur. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister has already begun the secretive process that failed us in the last constitutional round.

A member on the government side of the House accuses me of getting into the gutter. I have to tell him that I bled a lot and my party bled a lot over the last number of years for the constitutional position I took because I believed it was right. I also believed then—and I continue to believe it—that had the Prime Minister listened to the Parliament of Canada and had the Prime Minister listened to the very process that allowed amendments to the constitutional process which did not derogate from any of the five conditions of Quebec, then we would have had a healthier, happier constitutional framework today and we would not have taken the country to the brink of separation.

An hon. member: Hear, hear.

Ms. Copps: Nothing is perfection in life and nothing is a seamless web. One of the things I have learned in politics is that by listening to those who feel without power and by including those people in the process, we can end up with a product, a constitution and a framework that are happier and healthier for all of us. Surely that is what the new constitutional round must be about.

I believe that is the intent of the NDP resolution, but let me refer to the NDP resolution as it stands.

[*Translation*]

The resolution as worded is confusing and, particularly, incomplete. Indeed, paragraph 7 provides for only one so-called precondition, namely "a desire to remain within a renewed Canadian federation", the only condition for one Canada.

It makes no sense, Mr. Speaker, because Canada has to be more than a shell. Canada and the new federation will have to be anchored on more comprehensive and deeply-seated principles. We do not want an unconditional Canada if, as a country, it should fail to respond to the quest for equality, justice and the various forms of recognition that have been acknowledged for 124 years.

Mr. Speaker, this is why we intend to move a very significant amendment to the NDP motion. Jean Chrétien, the only leader of a federal party who had the courage to present a brief to the Bélanger-Campeau Commission, set forth the conditions for a real Canada—

Mr. Charest: Do not throw the door wide open, Sheila!

Ms. Copps: —a renewed Canada, and I quote: "A new Canada must accommodate the expression of new balances within the federation. The key to constitutional reform is the sharing of powers between both government levels. The objective sought must be a functional

distribution of powers between governments, predicated on the freedom and well-being of citizens".

Surely, Mr. Speaker, even the members of the Bloc Quebecois cannot be against the freedom and well-being of citizens. I should hope not.

Mr. Speaker, there is nothing sacred about the way powers are now distributed. Over and above that fundamental and general principle, we must also keep in mind a number of objectives which are peculiar to Canada and which ought to guide us all on the road to constitutional renewal, particularly when re-examining the distribution of powers between the two levels of government. Specifically: (1) any change in the distribution of powers should guarantee the rights and freedoms of citizens; (2) any change in the distribution of powers should ensure that the two main linguistic communities in this country are maintained and strengthened. The very existence of Canada rests on that basic principle, and it must be generously endorsed by all government levels in Canada.

In addition, Quebec must be recognized as the principal focal point of French life and culture in Canada. Any change in the distribution of power should guarantee the respect for and growth of Native people, promote the rights and growth of cultural communities, endeavour to maximize the quality of life and standard of living of all Canadians, ensure the proper working of the Canadian economic unions, ensure, on a national scale the pursuit of social justice through the sharing of resources between regions and citizens, ensure sovereignty for every government within its respective jurisdiction, take into account the diversity of various regions and their own dynamism, including the distinct character of Quebec society—

Mr. Plamondon: Go and say that to Chrétien and you will see!

Mrs. Copps: I am sorry, but the hon. member certainly did not listen to the submission to the Bélanger-Campeau Commission, because this is part of Mr. Chrétien's statement. So why do you not shut up and listen for once!

Mr. Speaker, I continue: Leave to the provinces responsibility for what is not required by the national interest or the best interest of citizens.

Finally, the streamlining of Canadian federalism is not necessarily an affirmation of the principle of total symmetry in every aspect of our constitutional federation. Canadian federalism has always been and continues to be flexible enough to accommodate the asymmetry of some situations.

Mr. Speaker, that is the reason why we propose an extended amendment to the NDP's motion, because we think, as a party, that it will be important to strengthen such regions as the Atlantic, Western and Northern Canada, so that they may have a greater impact on the drafting of national legislation.

At any rate, this is only the beginning of the constitutional discussions.

[*English*]

To answer the constitutional challenges we need a real Canada round. This round should be aimed at rebuilding the whole country. The task is enormous but it is not impossible.

I see that I am a getting close to the hour of one o'clock. Rather than beginning what I feel to be a very important part of the process, I would like to seek the unanimous consent of the House, if I might, to continue my remarks.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Is there unanimous consent of the House for the motion of the acting leader?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): It being one o'clock, I do now leave the chair until two o'clock later this day.

The House took recess at 1 p.m.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 31

[*English*]

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre): Mr. Speaker, I stand today to congratulate and commend the competition bureau's recent decision to look into retail gasoline prices in the national capital region and various areas across Canada.

I trust that this study will be thorough and in depth, and will cover all regions of the country.

While we await anxiously the results of this study, I would like to call on the federal government, in conjunction with its provincial counterparts to get to the bottom of the situation.

We must ensure that a gasoline pricing system is in place which is fair to both consumers and retailers, no matter where they are situated in this country. Also, we must ensure that when price wars break out in select areas of the country, other areas such as the national capital region are not charged higher prices to cover the losses incurred by retailers elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. I call on the minister to tell Canadians exactly how long this study will take and when the findings will be made public.

* * *

[*Translation*]

MATAPÉDIA VALLEY

Mr. Jean-Luc Joncas (Matapédia—Matane): Mr. Speaker, according to a new prophecy by Nostradamus, "Before the turn of the century, there shall be a marvelous occurrence: The site called Matapédiague shall be designated capital of a great land, between two oceans".

On March 11 last the Matapédia valley was nationally acknowledged as "Canada's forestry capital" for the year 1993.

Such designation constitutes signal recognition of the dynamic and hospitable region of Matapédia.

Over the years, Matapédia has become one of Canada's foremost forest regions where people have very close links with forests.

Congratulations to the organizing committee members who, through sheer dynamism, determination and tenacity, were able to convince our fellow Canadians in the other provinces that Matapédia has always been renowned for its forests and home to people prepared to fight and work relentlessly to enhance end preserve our trees.

[*English*]

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, Canada has the dubious honour of being among a select few nations which is actually decreasing funding for basic scientific research. In Canada research and development has dropped from 1.4 per cent to 1.28 per cent of our GNP; funds for NSERC and the National Research Council have been slashed.

The government has poured billions into offshore oil exploration and a U.S. space station that the Americans are even now questioning, while not recognizing the potential of the TRIUMF KAON project at the University of British Columbia.

The proposed project is a world class initiative which would launch Canada into the frontier of particle physics.

Without sacrificing the need for increased funding for basic scientific research, this government must recognize the need for available funding of special projects like TRIUMF KAON.

It is time to wake up and smell the coffee. If basic research and projects like KAON wither on the vine because of chronic under-funding, so too will our national hopes of becoming a world force in future scientific endeavours.

* * *

TIBET

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Canadian Tibetan community demonstrated in Ottawa to mark the 32nd anniversary of the Tibetan uprising in 1959. That uprising was to protest the Chinese occupation and domination of this small peaceful country, which intensified in that year.

Recently, the UN Security Council used economic sanctions and military action against Iraq for its enforced occupation of Kuwait. This has been described as a new world order for settling disputes and deterring aggression.

Mr. Speaker, my question is this. Will the same new world order be used to get China out of Tibet? Or has the United Nations and the United States a double

standard? Or, at the very least, will the new world order be used to have China respect human rights in Tibet—their language, their religion and their culture?

The Dalai Lama and the people of Tibet have always pursued a non-violent, peaceful approach in dealing with this problem. In 1989 the Dalai Lama won the Nobel Peace Prize for this approach. I hope that Canada, the United Nations and the world community will not let the Tibetans down.

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[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Jean-Marc Robitaille (Terrebonne): Last week, Mr. Speaker, the Government of Quebec finally signed the federal-provincial agreement aimed at cleaning up so-called orphan polluted sites.

I am particularly elated by the signing of this agreement which signals the early beginning of decontamination activities on Mascouche's PCB site in my riding where Montreal garbage collectors used to dump their loads.

Fifty-one million dollars will be spent to clean up various sites throughout Quebec, and $400,000 have already been earmarked for soil analyses on the Mascouche dump site.

I thank Canada's Environment Minister De Cotret for his support in this case. I am convinced that all people in my riding are very pleased by this news, and I thank them all for their confidence and support in bringing this matter to a successful conclusion.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

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[*English*]

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, Canada's national police force and the security of rural Canadians are in jeopardy because of this government's economic folly.

At the end of March, contracts which provide for the delivery of RCMP services expire, and the federal government is negotiating to force more of its costs on to the backs of municipal taxpayers. Small communities are especially vulnerable to cost increases because some of them already devote up to 75 per cent of their budget to simply maintaining existing RCMP contracts.

The federal cuts in RCMP funding amount to nothing less than another tax on rural Canadians. It is unfair to dump more of the responsibility for this government's economic mismanagement on to the backs of those who can least afford it.

The RCMP is important in Saskatchewan, as well as in the other western provinces and territories. If the government can find the funds to finance international security forces, we should be able to find the funds to maintain our internal security forces.

My colleagues and I in the NDP will continue to work for a fair deal for rural Canadians, and that means supporting federal funding levels for the RCMP.

* * *

[*Translation*]

NATIVE AFFAIRS

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Under the program for Natives which Prime Minister Brian Mulroney announced in September 1990, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development will allocate $250 million within the federal green plan to accelerate the installation and improvement of drinking water supply and wastewater disposal facilities on the reserves. Also within the green plan framework, Health and Social Welfare Canada will allocate $25 million to finance water quality control as well as training in water treatment technology on the reserves.

From now on, the federal government will be able to step up the provision of secure drinking water and wastewater disposal facilities in order to solve health and security problems, something the former Liberal administration had failed to do.

* * *

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Lynn Hunter (Saanich—Gulf Islands): Mr. Speaker, the government's Green Plan has thrown $10 million at studies for 11 Atlantic hotspots, a drop in the ocean; $25 million at a centre for more studies, consultation with industry, and what not for the Great Lakes; and

$250 million to meet old promises for water and sewage facilities on First Nation reserves.

Canadians and the environment are sick and tired of this charade. It is time to implement the monitoring and enforcement of regulations already available, to require industry to clean up its act, to spend Green Plan money on substantial green actions that will benefit all Canadians and not just prop up this morally bankrupt environmental agenda.

It is time to stop the stalling, this facade of green action, to stop wasting the taxpayers' money on study after study, to stop propping up old promises, to stop letting polluters break the laws of Canada. It is time to respect the wishes of Canadians.

* * *

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Mr. John A. MacDougall (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, government departments are increasingly being called upon to develop useful science and technology to help Canadians protect the environment, at both local and global levels. EMR is one department which is actively making a difference in this regard.

EMR's research and technology branch, Canmet, co-operates with industry in the planning, performance, and funding of the development and transfer of technology in virtually all areas of mining, recovery, processing and the use of minerals, metals and energy.

In fact, for years Canmet's scientists and engineers have been conducting and co-ordinating research to preserve our environment. Canmet continues to promote environmentally safe technologies to help Canadian industry use our natural resources more effectively and to improve competitiveness of Canadian technologies. I am proud of the contribution Canmet is making, proud of the work these individuals are undertaking in co-operation with industry to find the answers to the world's most troubling environmental problems. I hope all members will join me in commending Canmet officials for a job well done.

• (1410)

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan): Mr. Speaker, in the recent budget the people of Canada suffered yet another slap in the face. The finance minister ignored the cries of Canadians who are out of work or lined up at food banks. What the finance minister needs is a good dose of reality.

Reality is that over 1.3 million Canadians are unemployed. Over 180,000 children rely on food banks to eat. Inflation is on the rise because of the disastrous goods and services tax. Students will be hindered because of increased tuition caused by this government. That is reality.

During his budget speech the finance minister said: "We must deal with the world as it is and not as we might wish it to be". We in the Liberal Party ask the minister to deal with the world as it is and ask him to help the millions of Canadians suffering because of the recession this government has caused.

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[*Translation*]

PERSIAN GULF

Mr. Jean-Guy Guilbault (Drummond): Mr. Speaker, the end of the war in the Persian Gulf is a victory for international law and the United Nations. We can be proud of this extraordinary coalition of 30 countries united to protect and promote international law and order.

The world community must now do everything to ensure first the reconstruction of Kuwait, but also to set up a fair and lasting peace under the eagis of the United Nations to prevent a repetition of such conflicts.

With that in mind, on February 12 our Prime Minister submitted proposals for the establishment of a lasting peace in the Middle East. Sharing in the efforts to safeguard and ensure peace is part of the great Canadian tradition.

We must try to put a stop to the uncontrolled arms race, as well as address the Israel Arab issue while acknowledging the legitimate interests of the Palestinians.

To conclude, I wish to send greetings to all the Canadian men and women, members of our Armed Forces, including nine from my own riding, who fought bravely and gallantly during the Persian Gulf war.

* * *

[*English*]

SUDBURY

Mrs. Diane Marleau (Sudbury): Mr. Speaker, the NDP government in Ontario recently struck a potentially devastating blow to the economic health of the Sudbury region.

Sudbury suffered badly from the effects of the recession which occurred in the early 1980s. At that time assistance from the Liberal federal government and provincial government helped the Sudbury region to diversify. The federal and provincial governments moved decision making powers and jobs to the Sudbury region to assist in the establishment of the city as the centre for government services in northeastern Ontario.

Over the last few years, the Conservative federal government has cut back its support to the diversification of Sudbury's economy through downsizing, reorganizations, and cuts of government departments and Crown corporations.

The recent decision by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources to move its regional office, and possibly as many as 40 jobs, out of Sudbury, represents a stunning reversal in provincial support for regional diversification, and when combined with the similar policies of this Conservative government, will have potentially devastating effects if continued.

It is time the governments reaffirm their commitment to diversify Sudbury's economy. They should be investing in what has been and should continue to be a shining example—

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry. The hon. member's time has expired.

ISRAEL

Mr. Rey Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, Israel needs Canada's help. Over 3,000 buildings, many of them residential, were destroyed by Scud missiles.

This could not have come at a worse time. Israel is trying to house 200,000 Soviet Jews. Twice this number more are expected this year.

Even as I speak they are making their way to Israel, their new homeland. But the tragedy is that the only homes awaiting them are apartments to be shared with two or three other families.

Israel is a war victim, struggling to rebuild and in need of foreign aid. United States and Europe have recognized this. But Canada, a sworn protector of Israel during the gulf war, has offered no assistance.

Why not? Israel's credit rating is impeccable and assistance from Canada would enhance our future trade relations.

I can find no ethical or economical reason why this government has remained silent and turned its back on Israel.

I urge this government to act now.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*English*]

LUMBER INDUSTRY

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. When the Prime Minister and the President get together over dinner tomorrow night, Canadians want to hear a little bit more than When Irish Eyes are Smiling.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: I am sure the hon. member would want to put her question.

Ms. Copps: Mr. Speaker, on the bilateral front, the 15 per cent tax this government imposed on Canadian softwood lumber exports is killing Canadian jobs and Canadian businesses. The Prime Minister promised the tax would only be temporary, but it is still there, four years later. It is a ridiculous tax to appease big U.S. lumber companies at the expense of Canadians, and everybody knows it.

I ask the Prime Minister if he will tell President Bush over dinner tomorrow night that Canada is dropping the 15 per cent tax on lumber exports?

Hon. Frank Oberle (Minister of Forestry): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague, the Minister for International Trade told the House last week, it is our intention to begin negotiations quite soon with the Americans in accordance with some of the new guidelines and criteria that have been changing since the lumber tax was imposed. Any unilateral action would be harmful to Canadian interests.

We think we now have the consent of the provinces to proceed with the negotiations that will be necessary to terminate the agreement.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, with all the due respect I have for the minister, the Prime Minister is going to be having dinner with President Bush.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister specifically whether he intends to raise another injurious program, the export enhancement program of the U.S., which is unfairly subsidizing American farmers and killing off the Canadian farm family.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister specifically if he intends to raise with the President of the United States Canada's intention to kill our export lumber tax and in particular, does he intend to force the President of the United States to end the export enhancement program immediately?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, we have made many representations to the United States with respect to their export enhancement tax and their export assistance program. Of course that is tied directly to the Uruguay Round of the GATT negotiations because this American program is a response to subsidization by the European Community under their common agricultural policy.

This is not a simple problem. Representations have been made by the Minister of Agriculture to the U.S. minister in charge of agriculture. We intend to continue with these representations, but the only sure solution is the conclusion of the Uruguay Round in a way that eliminates the right to impose export subsidies.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the Minister for International Trade, such as it is, I will direct my question to the Prime Minister, since he is the one who will be meeting with the President of the United States tomorrow evening.

I can understand that he may wish to remain silent on the subject of the Allaire Report, but I would like to hear from the Prime Minister of Canada himself if he agrees with his colleague the Minister for International Trade, who is now ready, at the request of the Americans, to put the Canadian culture on the table at the next round of negotiations on international trade with the United States and Mexico. Will the Prime Minister protect the 250,000 Canadian jobs that are dependent on the Canadian culture or is he ready, like his colleague, to give them up to satisfy the Americans?

• (1420)

[*English*]

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, this matter was dealt with through questions in the House a week or so ago.

There is no request from the U.S. for cultural matters to be put on any negotiating table because, as yet, there is no negotiating table. That will depend upon whether or not the U.S. Congress gives President Bush and his administration fast track authority and continues fast track authority for the period of the next two years.

The trade representative of the United States has simply said that they would like to discuss cultural matters. We have no objection to discussing cultural matters with the United States. We are not afraid of discussing cultural matters with anyone, but we will continue to protect Canadian cultural industries as the present minister has done so ably in the last several years.

TRADE

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Etobicoke North): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade.

The President of the United States has committed his government to negotiate a free trade agreement embracing the whole of the western hemisphere. The Canadian government has already decided to participate in the Mexico–U.S. free trade negotiations. Does the government now intend to explore, during the visit tomorrow of President Bush, the United States' intentions about free trade throughout the whole of the western hemisphere?

Last June, the minister stated that he needed more time to examine such a proposal. Will the minister now state what the government's intentions are regarding hemispheric free trade?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): The intentions of the government at the present time are to engage in a negotiation for a North American free trade agreement with the United States and with Mexico if the U.S. administration is authorized through the fast track process to proceed.

The President of the United States has indicated that the United States may possibly be interested in other free trade agreements with other countries of either South or Central America, but there is nothing like that on the negotiating table as yet.

The principle that guides us is that the freer trade can become between all nations of the world—this is the policy the Official Opposition as well, which supports the GATT negotiations—the better it will be for all of those involved, because it is the freer and freer trade that has caused the international prosperity since 1945.

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Etobicoke North): Mr. Speaker, the minister knows very well that discussions have already begun about hemispheric free trade, including free trade between the United States and Chile, and between the United States and countries of Central America.

He knows full well, too, that one of the reasons which he advanced for Canada participating in the talks with Mexico is that Canadian interests must be protected in a trilateral deal. Now, is he telling us that Canada will also participate in western hemisphere discussions?

Will the minister tell us what it is that the Canadian government is doing to help equip Canadians to compete effectively internationally? What programs are there? Were there any programs in the recent budget to assist Canadians to compete more effectively in a global economy? When will the government commit itself to doing such things as reducing interprovincial trade barriers or investing in research and development and training and retraining so that Canadians can be more competitive?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, it is these policies of the government with respect to competition and encouraging Canadians to look outward and to be in a position to compete globally that the Official Opposition and the New Democratic Party have opposed so bitterly over the last several years.

The hon. gentleman is now indicating the conversion on the part of the Official Opposition that it is very welcome news, but no one in this House knows just what the policy is of the Official Opposition on anything.

I am glad to hear the minister apparently advocating freer trade.

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THE CONSTITUTION

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Today our party has tabled a motion before the House to open up the process on constitutional talks. I want to say to the Prime Minister that there is growing concern that, while publicly the Prime Minister and his government is saying that they want to listen to Canadians, privately there is only one voice being listened to, and that is of the corporate elite.

I understand that last week the Prime Minister's top constitutional adviser met with academics at Meech Lake to discuss a paper commissioned by the Business Council on National Issues. In and of itself, there is nothing wrong with that. It is clear that there are many initiatives going on that are not open to the Canadian public, at least even to know the mandate and the direction of this government.

Is the Prime Minister really just trying to formulate a Canada on a corporate constitution, or what is his plan for a new and revitalized federation?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend seeks to ask the government to be inclusive in regard to parliamentary or para-parliamentary discussions involving people in the constitutional process and then proceeds to denigrate big business, when we have welcomed the participation of big labour in these discussions as well.

My hon. friend should not be hidebound by protectionist and other old tendencies of the NDP over the years. Open your arms, open your minds, open your hearts to business and you will find that they are as constructive and productive as big labour in this country as well. All people should be invited to participate.

My hon. friend says that he is opposed to larger business. We are clearly a minority party in this House, but we believe that the private sector and small, medium and big business, in a proper economic climate, can provide jobs and new wealth for the country. That is the position of this government. We would very much like to have small, medium and large business participate in the constitutional discussions, along with unionized members and the unions themselves.

Surely, if on the one hand my friend is asking for openness and inclusiveness, she should not be excluding anybody in the process.

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, a supplementary of the Prime Minister. That is exactly the point. We do not want to see anyone excluded from the process.

I would ask the Prime Minister if he is prepared to have his offices convene meetings at Meech Lake to discuss with the Business Council on National Issues their constitutional papers? Would he also be prepared to hold similar meetings and serious discussions with aboriginal people, with women, with ethnocultural communities, to discuss those same issues and their views on the constitution and take them equally as seriously in equally as serious a forum?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Prime Minister. I think that is an important message that all of these groups who have felt excluded from the constitution need to hear. I appreciate the Prime Minister's direct response to that question.

I have a supplementary.

[*Translation*]

Last week, in the Budget debate, the Minister of Finance mentioned new tax arrangements. The other day, the Minister of Communications suggested that culture could come under provincial jurisdiction. My question is directed to the Prime Minister. Will he suspend all negotiations which could jeopardize the future of the Constitution until he has received all the committee and commission reports and until an agreement has been reached regarding the constitutional process?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance already answered that some agreements need to be negotiated anyway to ensure the proper operation of the federal government and his relations with the provinces. This is part of our usual business and the Canadian government is fully committed to carry on with this work.

On the subject of the implications of these various issues, I would invite her to take a look at the speech I made in Quebec City on February 13, where, among others things, I said that:

• (1430)

[*English*]

"The Quebec government will soon receive the Bélanger–Campeau Commission report and is now studying the Allaire report. Other provinces have also established mechanisms to review Canada's political framework. There is no doubt in my mind that from these and other task forces we will be able to find the elements of solutions to the problems now facing the country.

Once as many Canadians as possible have had a chance to speak their minds, once any provincial government that so wishes to has stated its position, once the federal government and Parliament have had time to analyse the comments and suggestions put forward, I intend to

present proposals for a renewed Canada, one that is proud of its diversity and stronger in its unity.

No idea or suggestion will be dismissed out of hand if it serves the public interest and improves our political system, but we will reject any formula that aims to dismantle Canada."

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Joe Fontana (London East): Mr. Speaker, once upon a time, as a backbencher, the now Minister of State for Housing was a great advocate for the homeless and those seeking affordable housing, but he has become nothing more than an apologist for this government. Budget after budget, year after year, program after program he has delivered less and less for people who need housing more and more.

I want to ask the minister, where has he left his housing conscience, at the cabinet table or in the trunk of his limousine?

Hon. Alan Redway (Minister of State (Housing)): Mr. Speaker, last week in the House I outlined the government's housing program for the coming year. At that time I indicated that, notwithstanding the fact that budgets were tight and money had been restrained, the housing department federally had been able to accommodate and, through efficiencies and cost-effective measures, would be able to produce at least as much assistance this year and help as many households this year as we were last year.

So this year, once again, we will be able to assist some 40,000 more households in Canada, which is over and above the 640,000 we already assist.

Mr. Joe Fontana (London East): Mr. Speaker, cutting the housing budget by $411 million in five years will hurt not help people waiting for affordable housing in every province and territory in this country. Provinces must now fight each other year after year for the meagre morsels that this minister wants to give them.

I want to ask the Minister of State for Housing why he will not bring this country together, build this country by building good housing policy, by affording Canadians decent and affordable housing today and tomorrow.

Hon. Alan Redway (Minister of State (Housing)): In fact, Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what this government is doing. We are not only spending and will be spending this year close to $2 billion with respect to assisted housing in this country, but in addition to that, we have initiatives under way for dealing with surplus federal lands in order to increase the amount of housing that is available to Canadians.

Shortly, I am going to be announcing the creation of a centre for public-private housing partnerships which will also be of great assistance to Canadians in their housing needs.

* * *

CANADA POST

Mrs. Coline Campbell (South West Nova): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for Canada Post.

The people of Lawrencetown, Nova Scotia, are the latest to bear the brunt of Canada Post's rural policy. They join the customers of over 700 post offices across Canada whose post offices have closed since the 1986 policy was first announced.

Lawrencetown is a crossroads in Annapolis County. It is the hub for farmers, students, and government offices. With that level of service demand, I wonder if the minister can say whether there are any circumstances in which a rural post office will now be allowed to remain open.

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, without having prior notice from the hon. member, I cannot comment on the specific example she raised, but the question of the policy of modernizing, bringing up to date with today's living styles and so on the postal delivery systems has occurred across the country in many, many locations.

The post office has gone back with post-change surveys to find out how the people affected reacted to it. Over 85 per cent found the changes favourable, an improvement. When 85 per cent approve of a policy, we do not change it.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Coline Campbell (South West Nova): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is directed to the same minister. In

all small communities in Canada, the post office is the pillar or nerve centre for all kinds of activities.

Will the minister confirm whether Canada Post's policy is to keep post offices open only in a few urban centres? And will he table in the House the number of post offices that will still be open in Nova Scotia and Canada, once this policy has been implemented?

[*English*]

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): I would be glad to provide that detail for the hon. member, but I would say that part of this policy is to increase the service to the public.

It was anticipated when this policy was implemented, I think three years ago, that in the following 10 years the number of postal outlets would increase from 12,000 to about 18,000. So there would be 6,000 new postal outlets to serve the customers of the post office. I am sure an appropriate proportion of those will be located in Nova Scotia.

* * *

CANADA–U.S. WATER AGREEMENT

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina—Qu'Appelle): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Minister of the Environment. An agreement that was signed between this government and the United States in October 1989 allows the state of North Dakota to call for 50 per cent of the natural flow into the Souris River any time that it is to the benefit of the State of North Dakota.

In other words, in the middle of a hot, dry summer, North Dakota can phone up and say it wants their 50 per cent of the water. This will of course necessitate diverting water from other river basins, like the Qu'Appelle system which is in the middle of my riding.

My question to the Minister of the Environment is this: why did this government allow the province of Saskatchewan to divert water in the licence it granted to it under the international treaty. Second, can the minister assure me that water from the Qu'Appelle River will not be diverted into the Souris and into the United States?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague would be well advised to read the Canada—U.S. agreement. He would immediately find that it does not commit any additional water to the U.S.

The United States has a right to 50 per cent of the natural flow from the Souris River under a 1959 interim apportionment agreement which is being administered by the International Joint Commission.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Cid Samson (Timmins—Chapleau): Mr. Speaker, today we heard that the Government of Quebec intends to freeze the salaries of its employees.

Last week, the Government of Newfoundland cut 3,200 jobs in the public sector.

These vicious attacks on employees who pay income tax and GST and are faced with increases in the cost of living reflect the present lack of compassion of our leaders for Canadian families.

The federal government was the first to ignore the collective rights of its employees.

My question is directed to the Minister of Labour, but in his absence I will direct it to the Prime Minister. Will the minister ask the Minister of Finance to withdraw the unfair restrictions he has put on the bargaining process?

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, to the credit of the last Budget, the government has taken a certain number of measures that will launch economic recovery in the long run. These measures include a number of major constraints on the government's expenditures.

Mr. Samson: It's illegal.

Mr. Loiselle: After wide-ranging consultations during the pre-budget period, we decided that we would ask our employees, who have been reasonable in the past, to be reasonable once again during the bargaining process and, together with all Canadians, to help us reduce the deficit, so that interest rates can go down and we will all benefit from the ensuing prosperity.

• (1440)

[*English*]

TOBACCO INDUSTRY

Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture who has just come from a meeting with the tobacco board.

The minister must know that he has tobacco farmers between a rock and a hard place. The government has just levied a massive tax hike on tobacco farmers' produce, while at the same time it has not given one penny this year to the program that helps farmers get out of the tobacco business.

When is this government going to stop punishing tobacco farmers? When are we going to see some money for this year's REDUX program? When are we going to have some money to help these farmers adjust?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, it is true that I met with the Ontario Tobacco Marketing Board, as well as with Quebec tobacco producers, and I was joined by my colleagues, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Employment and Immigration, to talk about foreign labour, off-season labour.

The hon. member knows that there are ongoing programs in existence: the transition and adjustment programs, the alternative enterprise program, and the REDUX program. We talked about a number of other options that we may explore, particularly in the area of enhancing their export capabilities. I think the hon. member is aware that some 45 per cent of the Canadian tobacco production is now exported to some 50 countries.

We agreed to sit down with them and work out an action plan that hopefully will provide some stability and some promise for the future.

Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk): Mr. Speaker, the minister must know that there is uncertainty and anguish in tobacco growing communities and that this government collects over $5.5 billion off tobacco products.

Will the minister devote part of that money to help these communities cope with the disintegration of their economies and their livelihoods?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in my earlier response, my colleagues and I sat down with the tobacco producers to explore alternatives and options.

Obviously it is with that in mind, I want to assure the hon. member, that we recognize the impact upon the producers. We will work with them in devising plans and programs that will help alleviate the pain.

* * *

EXCISE TAX ACT

Mr. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence): Mr. Speaker, last Friday on CBC *The Journal* reported a change in the interpretations of the Excise Tax Act that resulted in what some former revenue officials called a "tax scam" and a "tax fraud".

The act provided for refunds to the consumer/taxpayer for any overcharges in the FST, through the manufacturer. But, by revising interpretations in fiscal 1985–86, the minister has since allowed manufacturers to keep some additional $770 million in refunds intended for consumers and taxpayers.

How can the minister justify allowing a scam that lets manufacturers pocket an additional 60 per cent in refunds of taxpayers' money since 1985–86?

Hon. Otto Jelinek (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member had been here last week, he would know that I answered exactly the same question by a member of the New Democratic Party, at which time I said that it was quite obvious and apparent that the decision of any refunds to a business or a corporation rests between the business and its clients or its customers.

I also went on to say that is one of the reasons the federal manufacturers' sales tax was riddled with loopholes. In fact there were 22,000 of those suckers in there, exemptions or loopholes. That is one of the reasons why we made the very strong and decisive decision to scrap all of them and replace it with a fair and equitable tax like the GST.

Mr. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence): Mr. Speaker, the answer was as unacceptable last Wednesday as it is unacceptable today.

In fact the changes in the interpretations go counter to the suggestions of the Minister of Finance and the justice department. Those changes resulted in windfalls to manufacturers that averaged some $154 million per year over the last five years. By proceeding with those changes through an internal memo distributed to a privileged few, the Minister of National Revenue has diverted some $770 million in taxpayers' dollars to manufacturers in 1985–86.

What guarantees can the minister give the House that taxpayers' refunds under GST will not end up in the same pockets as happened under the former system?

Hon. Otto Jelinek (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, it is very obvious that the hon. member has not done his homework, either on the federal manufacturers' sales tax which had to be scrapped and which is long overdue for scrapping or on the GST which it replaced.

I can stand here and assure the hon. member and this House that the provisions of the bill which brought in the goods and services tax in replacement of the antiquated, unfair federal manufacturers' sales tax will not allow for those provisions to which the member referred that were part of the federal manufacturers' sales tax.

* * *

[*Translation*]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Jean-Guy Guilbault (Drummond): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of State for Agriculture. A special binational panel to settle disputes, created under the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, has just examined the case of countervailing duties levied by the United States on Canadian exports of fresh, refrigerated frozen pork and the subsidy aspect.

Could the minister inform the House whether the U.S. International Trade Commission could reverse its decision of February 12 and reconsider its conclusions that imports of Canadian pork constituted a threat to U.S. industry?

Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, the question raised by the hon. member is a vital one for pork exporters. In recent years, Canada has consistently defended the Canadian position. When we managed to include in the free trade agreement a specific clause that gave both Americans and Canadians access to a binational panel to settle disputes between our two countries, it was a golden opportunity to help and do justice to our producers. I hope that the ruling favourable to Canada and Canadian producers who, it should be said, have an excellent product, will be upheld.

* * *

[*English*]

FORESTRY

Mr. Brian L. Gardiner (Prince George—Bulkley Valley): Mr. Speaker, one of the major trade irritants between Canada and the United States is the softwood lumber tariff memorandum of understanding.

Thousands of forestry jobs in British Columbia and Northern Ontario have been lost as a result of this deal. Canadian sovereignty has been seriously eroded because this government has turned over forest policy making to the United States.

My question is for the Prime Minister, and I hope he will answer it to show his concern for forestry workers across Canada. Has the Prime Minister responded to Premier Rae's letter to form a broad coalition to fight the MOU? Will he raise this matter with President Bush when he visits Canada tomorrow?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, anyone who keeps up with current affairs or reads the papers will know that I saw Premier Rae within the last two weeks to discuss this very matter with him. Premier Rae and I are heart to heart. Even though he destroyed my budget, I am still heart to heart with him on the question of the memorandum of understanding.

We are in the process of discussing this with the provinces. I have yet to speak with some of the people from the Atlantic provinces who have a different view on this matter, but when that process is finished I will be consulting the government and taking appropriate action.

Mr. Brian L. Gardiner (Prince George—Bulkley Valley): Mr. Speaker, I hope the minister can get heart to heart tomorrow with President Bush.

Given the information released under the Freedom of Information Act regarding the softwood lumber tariff, could the minister confirm that in fact the U.S. government must approve any changes in the export charge? I wonder if that is the minister's interpretation of the softwood lumber tariff MOU. And does he have agreement with the United States to do that?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I do not need the agreement of the United States to do whatever is in the national interest of Canada.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Crosbie: Despite the fact that the United States and Canada are allies, we do have differences from time to time. We will prosecute our side of any issue on which we differ with them very strongly, as we intend to do with reference to the memorandum of understanding with respect to softwood timber.

• (1450)

With respect to the question the hon. gentleman asked, with changes in the royalty systems and otherwise, we pass the information on to the United States so that there can be no misunderstanding as to what is happening. It has the right to be consulted and to be given information. We have the right to make the decisions and to bear the consequences of those decisions.

* * *

PEARSON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Transport.

Just last week the Deputy Prime Minister said that the Department of Transport is not cutting air traffic control shifts at Pearson International Airport in Toronto.

I have in my possession an internal government document—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Keyes: —which calls for the elimination of four controller positions at Pearson effective Thursday.

Why is the Minister of Transport prepared to put the lives of the Canadian air travelling public at risk just to meet his financial bottom line?

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, at no time is the government prepared to put any lives at risk, because safety is the number one criteria in the way Transport Canada operates.

My hon. friend knows that there has been a downturn in traffic and any reductions would be reductions in shifts, which is a temporary matter while there is a downturn in traffic.

Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, the memo states: "Do not cancel any overtime currently assigned" to those "shifts until March 14" and that these shifts will no longer be in place.

It is on the memo. The shifts are gone. There is no temporary movement. These are shifts that will be terminated.

Given the memorandum signed by the manager of air traffic control operations in Toronto, and the fact that it spells disaster for the minister's own recruitment program, how can the minister on the one hand promise safe skies and on the other hand justify the elimination of critical air traffic control positions at Pearson International Airport?

Will the minister now rise in his place and say that he is going to reassess and review these cuts at Pearson.

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, perhaps my hon. friend might do well to reassess the question and the answer to his previous question.

There is no cutting of any employment at Pearson. My hon. friend knows that we have difficulties in finding enough air traffic controllers, that we have been working to increase the number of air traffic controllers in the system, and in no way are we cutting employment.

* * *

OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

Mrs. Christine Stewart (Northumberland): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for External Relations.

This year's budget cuts another $262 million in Official Development Assistance, adding to total foreign aid

budget cuts of $4 billion in the last three years; this despite dramatically increasing need in the Third World.

Given the crisis in many of our traditional Third World partner countries caused by their international debt burden and the economic repercussions of the gulf war, will the minister assure us today that the focus of our aid expenditures will remain with human resource development in the world's poorest Third World countries?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Monique Landry (Minister for External Relations): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is aware that the aid budget was not only maintained but increased by 5 per cent this year, in line with the government's commitment last year.

Mr. Speaker, with projected expenditures of $18 million over the next five years, the government will continue to provide assistance in priority areas, i.e. the development of human resources in the poorest countries of the world, as promised.

[*English*]

Mrs. Christine Stewart (Northumberland): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is to the Minister of Finance.

The last budget, despite so many cutbacks, was able to commit $600 million to defence to cover additional gulf war expenses.

Now that the war is over, it appears that the $600 million will not be required to cover defence war costs. Would the minister commit those unused funds to assist war crippled Third World countries in order not to drain foreign aid funds from our traditional recipient countries?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the Minister for External Relations, has stated very clearly what is the budget of the Official Development Assistance Program.

Her question is addressed, though, to the $600 million for defence as it relates to the Persian Gulf. At this point we do not know the full costs of the commitments we have made in the Persian Gulf. We will be making an accounting of that sometime toward mid-year. At that point we will know how much will be left over, but I should say to my hon. friend that our intention is to put that to reducing the deficit.

INTEREST RATES

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State for Finance.

In light of the fact that the Bank of Canada rate dropped to 9.98 per cent last week from a high of 14.05 per cent in 1990—

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Rodriguez: —but, in the same period, the average interest rate on the major banks' Visa and MasterCard have dropped by only 1.28 per cent, to 20.05 per cent.

Is the minister now prepared to accept the 1989 consumer and corporate affairs committee recommendation of a rate of 8 per cent above the Bank of Canada rate for Visa and MasterCard?

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, I take great pride in the fact that the hon. member for Nickel Belt who knows this area has recognized that our interest rate policy is working and interest rates are coming down.

Of course, as he knows very well, interest rates are only one factor in determining the total cost of using credit cards. I think he knows that as well as any member in this House.

We believe that finally it is the element of choice which is the determining factor. It is an element of choice that will be essential.

I have, as he knows, introduced legislation that will expand the range of options available. The legislation is presently in front of this House and it will increase competition.

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the same minister.

Unfortunately interest rate reductions are not working for millions of Canadian consumers who hold Visa and MasterCard cards.

In view of the fact that the marketplace obviously is not working when it comes to consumers holding these cards, that they are being gouged by white sharks in banks and trust companies, and that the minister has rejected the unanimous recommendation of the standing committee, can he tell this House now what he intends to do specifically to ensure that Canadian consumers are

not gouged by the banks and trust companies with these exorbitant and usurious interest rates?

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, of course I think the essential element is for Canadians to have access to the best possible credit.

The hon. gentleman will realize—and I think he will agree—that this government by introducing the legislation it has introduced will create many more outlets and will give Canadians much more access to credit sources. In our view this is the best way, by competition in our market economy, to bring the rates down for customers.

* * *

[*Translation*]

THE CONSTITUTION

Mr. Gilles Rocheleau (Hull—Aylmer): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. After last weekend's Liberal convention, and given the Liberal Party's new sovereignist approach as well as the adoption of the Allaire report, is the Prime Minister now prepared to enter into bilateral constitutional negotiations with the Government of Quebec?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I simply cannot accept my friend's interpretation with respect to the political approach of the Quebec Liberal Party because, as I recall, Premier Bourassa made it quite clear on Sunday afternoon that "the Liberal Party's first choice was an ever stronger Quebec, but within a strong and united Canada". In my opinion, this was a statement—

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Mulroney: My friend may have found that rather depressing! But in a speech in Toronto February 12 last I stated that—

Mr. Rocheleau: Do you accept bilateral negotiations? That is what I asked.

Mr. Mulroney: Yes, but—

Mr. Speaker: The Righ Hon. the Prime Minister.

Mr. Mulroney: That is what you asked, but first you made a comment to the effect that the Liberal Party has become a sovereignist political formation, and that is quite false. Mr. Bourassa said it was a federalist political formation, and that is the difference. In a spirit of friendship I simply wanted to correct one small mistake among many others. Referring to Canada's problem, I said before the Canadian Club in Toronto that divorces are expensive propositions. They are very harmful and create ill-feelings on both sides. But reconciliation does not come easy either. It calls for humility and understanding. It puts the married couple in a position where they must sit with the rest of the family to discuss their problems until they find a solution. I believe that once Canadians have considered the costs and consequences of a divorce they will choose reconciliation.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

* * *

• (1500)

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

DESIGNATION OF ALLOTTED DAY

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I would like to designate tomorrow as an allotted day for the business of supply.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

COMMENTS OF MINISTER OF INDIAN AFFAIRS AND NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to you at the beginning of Question Period, I wish to give notice of a possible question of privilege. The minister of Indian affairs is not here today but I believe the statements he made in the House on September 25, 1990 have been contradicted by a tape that has been released by the natives in Oka earlier today.

I do not wish to raise the matter in his absence at this time but I do wish to reserve my right to raise it upon his return to the House.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. member who gave me notice of the question. He rises on a question of privilege and it will be heard later.

Supply

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S. O. 81—THE CONSTITUTION

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Ms. McLaughlin (p. 18331).

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): At the suspension of the debate at 1 p.m. the Acting Leader of the Opposition had the floor. She has six minutes left. The hon. member for Hamilton East.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, I think that many members of this House welcome what the Prime Minister said about the importance of Canada, about a renewed federalism, a federalism in tune with the new needs of Canada. That being said, I fear that the process this Prime Minister is establishing will deny that possibility.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker, we are supposed to live in a parliamentary democracy. That means the will of the people should be expressed through the assembly of their elected representatives. This should be obvious.

Why do I care to remind the House of this simple fact? Because as we are entering this period of far-reaching reform, the Prime Minister is ignoring Parliament.

Quebec has understood very well how our system works. Immediately after the death of Meech Lake, the National Assembly established an extended parliamentary commission to look at all aspects of Quebec's political and constitutional future.

The legislatures of Alberta, Ontario, Manitoba and New Brunswick also set up parliamentary commissions to look at this issue. All parties are represented in those groups. These provinces will be holding public hearings and will be coming up with specific parliamentary reports.

This is the real way to allow public input and public discussion. What has this Prime Minister done, Mr. Speaker? What has this federal government done? The Prime Minister has denied the right of the truly elected representatives of Parliament to look at an issue of utmost importance, the very existence of this country and the division of powers that will flow therefrom.

Four months after the failure of Meech, the Prime Minister set up a group to travel across the country to let citizens vent their frustrations and their views. Such a forum is not a substitute for Parliament. Nearly six months after the failure of Meech, the government created a special joint committee of the House and Senate, but immediately after creating this committee, it tied the hands of parliamentarians.

[*Translation*]

The government explicitly limited the mandate of the committee, and I quote: "—investigate and report on the process for amending the Constitution, including proposals to revise one or more amending formulae."

Mr. Speaker, every time it was suggested in this House by the Liberal Party to broaden the mandate of the Beaudoin-Edwards Committee, the Prime Minister said no. Every time we propose setting up an extended parliamentary commission to study all aspects of the Constitution, the Prime Minister argues that this idea could be considered on an opposition day.

Mr. Speaker, I am no fool. The mandate of the Beaudoin-Edwards Committee prevents it from even listening to the people who want to express their opinions on anything besides the amendment formula. The Prime Minister tied the hands of parliamentarians by denying us the chance to examine thoroughly the true issues, including the division of powers, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and any other question dealing with the basis of what makes this country we call ours, Canada.

A group of people coming from here and there, such as the members of the Citizens' Forum, can never be a substitute for Parliament. To claim the contrary, as the Prime Minister is doing, shows great contempt for our democratic institutions. Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister must realize that the failure of Meech is the result of an in camera process. I do not want and we do not want this to happen again. That is why we ask the Prime Minister again to broaden the present mandate of the Beaudoin-Edwards Committee. If he refuses, we should at least, in

the 23 months we have left, take a broader look at the conditions that make Canada what it is.

The New Democratic Party believes there is only one condition. I think that the motion could be broadened and freshened by adding the following. At this time, Mr. Speaker, I would want to move an amendment, seconded by my colleague the member for Saint-Boniface, which would read as follows:

[*English*]

That the motion be amended by deleting everything after the word "federation" and by substituting the following therefor:

such renewal to be based on the following considerations:

(a) the demands on nationhood produced by the globalization of the twenty-first century

(b) the values of Canadian nationhood, including freedom and fairness and equality; a sense of order and justice; the distinct character of Quebec society and the diversity of the provinces; regional diversity; and respect for the collectivities of Canada and

(c) the contemporary constitutional issues of today, including those being raised by Quebec; the issue of Senate reform being raised in the west; and aboriginal issues,

(d) any change in the distribution of powers:

(i) should guarantee the rights and freedoms of citizens;

(ii) should ensure that the two main linguistic communities in this country are maintained and strengthened, with this principle being generously endorsed by all levels of government and with Quebec being recognized as the principal focal point for French life and culture in Canada;

(iii) must guarantee respect for and the growth of the aboriginal peoples;

(iv) should promote both the rights and the growth of cultural communities;

(v) should endeavour to maximize the living and standard of living of Canadians;

(vi) should facilitate the working of the Canadian economic union;

(vii) should ensure, on a national scale, the pursuit of social justice through the sharing of resources between regions and citizens;

(viii) should ensure sovereignty for every government in its respective jurisdiction;

(ix) should take into account the diversity of different regions of the country, including the distinct character of the Quebec society, and should leave to the provinces responsibility for what is not required by the national interest or the best interest of citizens;

Provided that the adoption of this motion not be considered a vote of no confidence in the government.

• (1510)

I so move and I hope that the NDP will accept this as a friendly amendment.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The Chair will take under advisement the amendment moved by the Hon. Deputy Leader of the Opposition. Questions and comments. The Hon. Member for Sherbrooke has the floor.

[*English*]

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Sherbrooke): Mr. Speaker, I have listened with a great deal of attention to the speech made by the acting leader of the Liberal Party of Canada.

To be quite honest, I must say that I was somewhat optimistic at the beginning of her speech because I sensed that the hon. member was reaching for the high ground in this national debate that has had more than its share of partisanship. I sensed in the beginning of the member's remarks that she was trying to reach for a higher ground.

I think it is fair to say that some of the remarks made by the hon. member were very close to what the Prime Minister of Canada and the leader of my party said in his speech in Buckingham concerning changes and the sense that these changes would have *vis-à-vis* a more competitive Canada in the division of powers.

I am sorry to say though that the tone of the member's speech changed somewhat, but before that happened, I did take note of one important remark that she made.

[*Translation*]

To make sure that everybody understands how important the speech made by the Hon. Member for Hamilton East in the House today is, Mr. Speaker, I wish to bring to your attention a comment which she made and which represents, in my view, quite a significant change in the position of the Liberal Party of Canada in this national debate.

On behalf of her party, the hon. member stated that nothing was sacred anymore in the division of powers between the federal and provincial governments. This represents a complete about face in the Liberal Party of

Canada's position of the past ten years. I think in all fairness, that this change must be mentioned in view of the fact that during a speech he made on January 16, 1990 at Ottawa University,—one of the very few substantial speeches he has made since assuming the leadership of his party,—the present Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada had clearly indicated that in his view Canada needed, as always in the past, a very strong central government to deal with all major problems for the benefit of all our regions. "A strong central government is more necessary than ever if we want to successfully meet the world challenges in the 1990s".

Mr. Speaker, if I bring this speech to your attention and that of all hon. members, it is because what the hon. member for Hamilton East has just told us represents a complete about face on the part of the Liberal Party of Canada.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend could not resist a partisan remark, which I find regrettable, to the effect that Mr. Chrétien is the only leader who had the courage to appear before the Bélanger–Campeau Commission. We, on this side of the House, cannot overlook such a remark. We find this altogether unacceptable and we cannot let such a statement go without setting the record straight. Mr. Speaker, such are the facts: I personally chaired a Parliamentary committee which produced a unanimous report from this House.

This report, although not the most popular, served as the basis for an agreement signed on June 9 of last year, between the provincial Premiers and the Prime Minister of Canada. Mr. Speaker, this agreement is known as the Charest Report. The Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada had said that he supported the Charest Report. However, between June 9 and June 23, he kept silent, something the Hon. Member for Hamilton East is not only aware, but something she blamed him for and with reason during the campaign for the leadership of the Liberal Party of Canada. Today, I should like to know how in all fairness she can blame somebody else for lacking fortitude when Mr. Chrétien displayed such a total lack of courage when he failed to state his position on the June 9, 1990 agreement.

[*English*]

Ms. Copps: Mr. Speaker, it is awfully hard for me to respond to the member's comments about the fact that I have been partisan in the light of the statement he has just made. It is incredible to me that a member on the government side of the House, who in fact undertook in the course of the last Parliament a process that would bring some of the other participants into the constitutional process, is now standing in his place trying to defend the actions of his government which caused the death of the constitutional accord.

I hope that the member does more than read the words of his leader at Buckingham. Perhaps the reason he thought they had been heard before is because the statement to which he refers in my speech was a statement made by the leader of the Liberal Party when he spoke before Bélanger–Campeau. Although the member may believe that his leader is leading the charge on this issue, I would agree with him that we need an approach that brings all political parties together.

What I have said here today I will defend in any part of this country. We need a parliamentary process to complement the process of public participation and to complement the process of private discussion that is now going on behind closed doors. If we do not have that parliamentary process by an expansion of the mandate of the Beaudoin–Edwards Committee, we will find ourselves in the same mess that we did with Meech Lake.

The member should understand that the reason that Meech was doomed to failure was because Senator Lowell Murray called it a seamless web. Had the senator understood, bearing in mind the sanctity of the five conditions of Quebec, that there was room to involve other questions, we probably would not be discussing a constitutional crisis here in the House today.

I supported the government of the day. I supported in a non-partisan way the initiative to find a solution. I realized it was not perfect, but I also felt that the process put in place by the Prime Minister doomed it to failure.

If you want to sell constitutional reform, with all the respect that I have for Senator Lowell Murray, you do not send a no name across the country to try to sell the accord in English Canada. The Prime Minister did a great job selling it in the province of Quebec. Everybody

heard day after day, "If Meech is rejected, you are rejecting Quebec", but he sent a second stringer out to try to explain the importance of the deal in the rest of Canada. He did not have the courage of his convictions in English in the same way as he did in French.

I will tell you that I, as one who defended and supported in the House through trials and tribulations of my own party, am prepared to throw my lot in with whatever movement can save this country. But I will also tell you that we have to learn from the message of Meech.

• (1520)

The message of Meech is that if we take constitutional reform as a seamless web, if we prevent public input, if we prevent real parliamentary discussion, then we are dooming the results to failure. We do not want failure on this side of the House. We want success. We want to work with whatever political parties are capable of achieving that, but we want to do it with the full participation of the Canadian people so that we can truly have a Canada round of constitutional discussions.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The hon. member for Richelieu has the floor. He has only 30 seconds.

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu): I just want to remind the leader of the Liberal Party that the only reason Mr. Chrétien appeared at all before the Commission was because he had not been elected yet as a member of Parliament when he made his request. We all know that hon. members were not allowed to appear before that Commission. There is nothing heroic about that, specially with all the rubbish he said then. In any case, Mr. Chrétien, as you know, personifies everything that can possibly be harmful and treacherous to the Quebec nation.

Therefore, would the hon. member be prepared to recognize, as Acting Leader of her party, that during the next referendum in Quebec, the federal government should respect the limit of 2,2 million dollars each for the "yes" committee and the "no" committee and not be allowed to spend 25 million dollars as it did during the last referendum to launch a crushing assault on democracy in Quebec?

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): First, I would like to reply to some falsehood expressed by the hon. member. I assumed, coming from a person who has based his whole career on Quebec separation from Canada, that he would admit the truth about the Bélanger-Campeau Commission, because, in fact, hon. members appeared in front of the Commission, including the hon. member for Chambly who made a submission. There was also his seat mate, the hon. member for Hull—Aylmer. I don't see why he argues that members did not have the right to appear.

The hon. member for Hull—Aylmer made a submission, which proves the falsehood of what he was saying. If they want to speak about the Bélanger-Campeau Commission, they should tell the facts as they are, because when they tell Canadians that the Prime Minister and other people were not permitted to appear, this is absolutely false. Anyone who wanted to could appear. Many things can be blamed on the Liberals, but not that, because we appeared and our leader made a submission which provided the basis for the amendment we are proposing today. If the Bloc Quebecois was even so slightly opened to constitutional reality, they would realize that other people—outside the Bloc Quebecois—have ideas about renewing the system for the good of Quebec and the rest of Canada. If you want to play chess with the situation, whether it is on the federal side or on the separatist side, I can tell you I am not here to let federalism be checkmated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Resuming debate. The hon. member for Sherbrooke.

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Sherbrooke): Mr. Speaker, I don't want to spend too much time on the case made by my colleague from Hamilton East. I just want to say that I am pretty satisfied with the answers she gave me a few minutes ago. Although very passionate, I think she is much closer to the kind of non-partisan approach we should be looking for in the future in a constitutional debate. And in concluding, as far as the hon. member is concerned and Mr. Chrétien's testimony before the Bélanger-Campeau Commission, I think it is pretty clear, Mr. Speaker, and I might as well call a spade a spade, that if Mr. Chrétien, the leader of his party, had taken the trouble to say what he thought about the June 9 accord, without pulling any punches, perhaps there

would have been no Bélanger–Campeau Commission and he would not have had to testify. That is the truth, Mr. Speaker, and it should be said. These things should be said quite frankly. We must be open about these things and not let ourselves be fooled.

Mr. Speaker, of course you realize that I have something of a stake in this debate, whether I like it or not. As fate had it, I was again in the midst of the debate on Meech Lake last spring. I tried to make an honest contribution to unravelling the constitutional impasse we had reached at that time. Colleagues from all parties represented in this House at the time, and I, got together to try and find a solution to this problem. We produced a report which was subsequently named the Charest Committee report and was in fact ratified by the provincial Premiers on June 9.

If we take a good look at the report, at the agreement signed on June 9, we see that the Charest report was indeed ratified. I have a comparative study of the two documents, and for all practical purposes, everything the parliamentary committee suggested was approved by the provincial Premiers, with a few exceptions. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, Meech Lake was not ratified, despite the June 9 accord.

Mr. Speaker, you will recall that at the time, our national leaders made it clear to the Canadian public and to those who had to make the decisions that, if Meech Lake was not approved, we would be facing a difficult situation. Well, today it comes as no surprise, especially after the Quebec Liberal Party's convention, that we are indeed facing very serious problems, not insurmountable but very serious nevertheless.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good time to stop and consider where we are and remember that Meech Lake contained some very clear provisions that provided that once the accord was ratified, subsequent constitutional debate would take place in a certain order. That was one of the advantages of Meech Lake. Not only would it let us catch up with history, because it was intended to obtain the Quebec government's approval of the constitutional document repatriated in 1981–82, it was also a way of providing an orderly sequence for subsequent events. For instance, in the June 9 document it was agreed that there would be subsequent discussions on Senate reform and discussions followed by initiation of the process to deal with the claims of Canada's native people. That was the advantage of Meech Lake, Mr. Speaker.

As a result, non-ratification—since ratification was supposed to give us an orderly sequence—means that we are now faced with a certain lack of order in our constitutional debate, Mr. Speaker. It is the kind of disorder which prompts everyone to return to base, review his positions, re-assess positions taken in the past, consult Members of Parliament and the population. Mr. Speaker, that is where we stand right now. And it is in that context that we should consider the resolution advocated by the New Democratic Party.

Mr. Speaker, our socialist colleagues in the New Democratic Party are proposing a seven-prong resolution, if my count is right. I want to deal quickly with each in turn. The first goes like this:

> (1) representation by all sides of Parliament and provincial and territorial legislatures, not just governments;

Suggesting that governments do that in future does not create a major problem. I can even go further than that. There is no need for a day's debate to get the opposition parties and the government involved. If that is not precisely what we are doing today, I have no idea what involving opposition parties and government means. And what about parliamentary committees like we had about Meech, Mr. Speaker, what was that if not involving the governments and opposition parties of practically all legislatures?

Mr. Speaker, I am saying this because there is no need to pass a resolution to invent that. The mechanisms are already there. So for now I do not see any point—I have no idea how my colleagues feel about this—in voting on an issue like this one, considering that our entire political system is indeed based on these principles.

The second suggestion is to ensure

> (2) the inclusion of others with a stake in the outcome, such as Aboriginal nations, —official language minorities, business and labour, women and cultural communities;

Mr. Speaker, these groups are represented in our political system, they are structured and organized. No problem there either. I admit I feel no need to vote on this suggestion to endorse or confirm it, for this is something I take for granted.

• (1530)

The third point, Mr. Speaker, is this:

(3) the process is genuinely balanced, without real or perceived dominance or manipulation by any participant;

This feeds on the paranoia of some who think that there is a lot of manipulation right and left going on behind the curtains. If I may, Mr. Speaker, I should like to share with you a secret, provided it does not go any further. If only governments could indulge in as much manipulation as we are led to believe there are days when I would feel re-assured. It would mean that we might be able to do things in some areas where we sometimes feel totally powerless and unable to act. I wish there were as much manipulation as they seem to believe. I should like to re-assure them today by telling them that most of the time the manipulation is a figment of their imagination instead of a reality based in facts. However, this is their own problem, and there are professional people who can cure such disorder. This is the case of the Hon. Member for Gaspé who is here.

Finally, through number 4 which is one of the best, Mr. Speaker, the motion ask the House for change which ensure—

(4) discussion is based on the views of ordinary people and expert opinion;

Ms. Copps: That is quite good!

Mr. Charest: The honourable representative of the Liberal Party says that it is good and that she supports it. Frankly, I should like to tell her that if there are views in Canada which are neither those of ordinary people nor expert opinion, I wish she would tell me where they come from. They certainly do not grow on trees!

Some hon. members: From extra-terrestrials!

Mr. Charest: I do not think that they would fall from the ceiling either. Well, I do not know. I do not think I have been elected by my constituents to tell Canadians that from now on, we are going to accept only the views of ordinary people and expert opinion and nobody else. I do not see where else we could get these views.

An hon. member: We are ordinary people.

Mr. Charest: They may be able to tell us at some point, for this debate is far from over.

Fifth point: The process of constitutional change should ensure a timetable and a commitment. I suggest that in politics, events always dictate. We shall see. Again, I do not feel pressed enough by events to try and set up from the start a timetable. They want an open and transparent process—we have nothing against that—and discussions begun with only one precondition, a desire to remain within a renewed Canadian federation.

Mr. Speaker, all this leads me to believe that we must understand the situation we are in today. Meech did not work. We were then confronted to a failure, a constitutional failure. So, each at our level, in our jurisdictions, our provinces, we must go back to the people we worked with, evaluate our situation and then come back to the negotiation table. This is where we are at, Mr. Speaker. Meech failed more than 200 days ago. We had to give ourselves time to turn ourselves around, as we say. Quebec did just that. It set up the Bélanger-Campeau Commission. The Liberal Party in Quebec produced the Allaire Report. Other political parties also engaged in discussions and reflexions. The same thing was done within the Progressive Conservative Party. We will hold a general meeting in August 1991. The federal government set up the Spicer Commission precisely to talk with the Canadian people.

I do not know what could be more democratic than to go out and talk with tens of thousands of Canadians, after the people had requested just that. At the same time, we set up the Beaudoin-Edwards Committee—with the support of the opposition parties, by the way, except for our colleagues far back—to examine an extremely fundamental issue, that is the amendment formula.

Why focus specifically on the amendment formula? Because, Mr. Speaker, the Meech episode taught us that the amending formula that was really put to test for the first time in those negotiations served neither the interests of Canada or that of Quebec. It is important to mention this, and I will repeat it, this formula did not serve the interests of Canada.

Through this experience, we came to realize that the amendment formula had dimensions that the Canadian people as well as the legislators were unaware of and that appeared when we tried to have the accord ratified. I will give you an example, if I may. The Prime Minister and most premiers believed that the negotiations were

over in 1987 when they signed the accord. But what did Meech teach us? That they were wrong, that the negotiations continued until the ratification stage. Now, Mr. Speaker, how could one reproach the Prime Minister for not being aware of this dimension of the amendment formula issue when we know it came to light with Meech? That was not mentionned and is worth repeating, because it might prevent rude and simplistic arguments to be made on what Meech was or was not.

This is a tangible proof, Mr. Speaker, that that amending formula has not served the interests of Quebec nor—and that is the point of view of this government—those of Canada.

That is why we must now find a formula that will allow us to bring about changes without risking to fail because only one or two provinces representing populations that are not always proportional to the power they have in general may stall the process. That is why then, Mr. Speaker, the role of the Beaudoin-Edwards Committee is so important—has become even more important—and why they must focus on that issue.

Mr. Speaker, the Spicer Commission will table its report on July 1st. Then, the Beaudoin-Edwards Committee will table its own; the Allaire Committee has already produced its report; the Bélanger-Campeau Commission will have taken a stand; Ontario will have taken a position in an interior report; other provinces will have done so—and so on. The Progressive Conservative Party of Canada will hold its debate in august 1991. Then, Mr. Speaker, nothing is impossible.

Even so we must not put the cart before the horse. We must take things one step at a time and then the federal government will propose an alternative to Canadians.

What is important in the short term, Mr. Speaker, is to create, invent and develop a process that will allow us to start the debate over in a context where we will be able to find solutions.

What does it ask for, Mr. Speaker? It asks for, among other things—I am not embarrassed to say it—perhaps a less macho approach than the one we had this past year. You know, the macho approach, the "yield-or-break approach", has not often succeeded, as I see it. I do not know of anybody who could settle all his businesses with this method. I do not know of many, Mr. Speaker.

Well, it is also true in politics. If you really want to make changes as profound as those suggested to us today, not only in Quebec, but elsewhere in Canada, let us think for a few moments about the aboriginal groups who also want profound changes. Let us think, among other things, about the people from the West who have been experiencing a feeling of alienation for several years. It does not go back ten years, but several decades.

If we sincerely want to try to solve those problems and sit with these people and start making the big changes that we long for, but which can be different for some and for others, well, we must do it in an atmosphere and a spirit of goodwill. That is our short term challenge.

That is the way things present themselves. In that context, Mr. Speaker, I frankly admit that I do not feel I have a mission today to tell Canadians that, from now on, we will only consider the discussions based on the points of view of ordinary people and on expert opinions.

I admit to you that we should not go to that extreme. We should not either lend ourselves to simplistic outlines of certain methods that could solve all our problems. There are talks about constituent assemblies. I do not have anything to say against that, Mr. Speaker, we are very open about that on this side of the House—the Prime Minister has said he was very open about that.

It has been mentioned today in the House that in Australia, the whole process did work very well. To be honest, I think it is the leader of the New Democratic Parti who said that. It did work very well, except that in Australia, when they set up a constituent assembly, it did sit for ten years. It seems to me that, considering the situation, ten years is a bit long. We should think about it before undertaking that.

Secondly, that constituent assembly in Australia was comprised of only the legislators—the members of state legislatures and of the federal parliament. I am under the impression that it is not what we ask for today. I don't say that to contradict her, on the contrary. What I am trying to say with these explanations, it is that these things are never simple. They are never all black or all white. We will have to find a formula that is more like us.

To conclude on that point, Mr. Speaker, I will tell you I think we must put things in perspective and recognize that Canada is overall a country which has been successful.

• (1540)

Again, Mr. Speaker, I say this in confidence, because if we mention it in certain parts of the country, people are going to say that it does not make any sense. Between you and me, Mr. Speaker, when we consider all the human suffering in the world, when we think about it, I believe we can reasonably say that our country has worked well.

The problems we are presently experiencing are not caused by a constitutional arrangement; it is not the Constitution which determines and regulates peoples' lives and attitudes. The Constitution reflects what we are and what we want to be. And if we are presently experiencing problems in Canada, it is probably because certain governments have taken steps which have caused these problems. But they have not taken these steps, and at times spent too much money, because the Constitution forced them to do it. That is false.

We must recognize the facts for what they are, except that we are faced with an important basic problem. Do you know what it is, Mr. Speaker? The problem is that we have a constitution with which people do not identify, a constitution which is 123 years old. It is a constitution which does not reflect what we truly are. Since a constitution should be a mirror of the people, we should be able to identify with it. A constitution, Mr. Speaker, is made of mythology, of a certain amount of myths.

When people realize that their national institutions, whether the Senate, the Supreme Court or the Federal Parliament do not reflect what they are, they distanced themselves from them. Our Constitution does not sufficiently reflect what we are and want to be. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, do you know what was so great about Meech? It was that by recognizing Quebec as a distinct society, Quebecers could feel that they belonged both to Quebec and Canada. Perhaps for the first time in our history, we had managed to come to terms with our own ambivalence as Quebecers and Canadians. That is the reason Meech was so great.

Now, the real challenge ahead of us will be to find a way to change the Constitution. Yet, in closing I should like to make one point, Mr. Speaker. There are some in this debate who claimed that no change can be made without adherence to the major principles of a certain federalism or system of government. Some politicians with this argument, have managed to attract a great many Canadian men and women to their cause. I will not name them, but I am referring to Clyde Wells. As you will no doubt remember, he said then and repeated it again today and last weekend that we must abide by some basic principles.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you this: A constitution which represents, respects and reflects the basic principles of federalism to a greater extent than the reality of its country is a constitution with serious problems. But that is a starting point, Mr. Speaker. It is not true to say that people create institutions to their image and that people should try to fit as best they can within federalism. The opposite is true, Mr. Speaker. When people build a constitution, they must make sure that it resembles and reflects what they are, and I conclude on this, they adjust the principles of federalism or republicanism to this great mirror.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, I will tell you that Canadians are not the servants of some constitutional principle, but that the Constitution should be the servant of the Canadian people.

[*English*]

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre–Dame–de–Grâce): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised at the remarks of the hon. member for Sherbrooke, because the hon. member was chairman of the special committee appointed late in the day during the Meech process and that committee was appointed in an attempt to break the log–jam existing at that time.

I firmly believe that if that committee had been appointed at an earlier date, let us say in February or January, and if the same report had come out of the committee that was produced, the Meech accord might have been saved.

The hon. member knows because he sat day after day on that committee listening to many groups, including aboriginal groups, women's groups, language minority groups and multicultural groups, and they told him—and

although I was not an official member of the committee, I sat in on many of the hearings—of their dissatisfaction with the process that had led to the Meech accord as it stood.

I can recall very well that the chairman, the hon. member for Sherbrooke, was very sympathetic and understanding in listening to those people. As a matter of fact, the report that he helped to produce I felt was a good report. We all supported the report. We felt it was one that could have broken the logjam if it were not so late in the day.

My point is this: this motion and many of the paragraphs—paragraphs 1, 2 and 3—are meant to avoid the pitfalls that existed in the production of Meech. I thought that the hon. member who sat through those long hearings in the spring of last year recognized that. He listened to the intensity and the emotion with which those groups presented their positions. He knows that they had not been listened to and the changes that he himself had suggested to the committee had not been implemented. We know what happened in Manitoba, with an aboriginal member of the Manitoba legislature expressing the dissatisfaction of aboriginal peoples with the final result. We had both ethnic and language minorities in different parts of the country expressing their dissatisfaction.

I ask him again: What is so wrong with the attempt made in this motion to broaden the discussion, to bring in opposition members of Parliament, and to bring in special interest groups representing the aboriginal peoples, minorities, women and multicultural groups? Would that not enhance the process and help to avoid what happened during the Meech process? Would the transparency which is suggested here not avoid the harsh criticism that took place after the last futile attempt to get through the report when we had those long meetings in the Conference Centre?

We are both Quebecers and we both believe strongly in Quebec and Canada. I want to see this new process work. I want to see us rally people behind this great country. The hon. member did a good job as chairman. I thought he understood that more people had to be involved and that is why he supported the report he did.

Mr. Charest: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his remarks and say to him that essentially I do agree with him on the fact that as we undertake further constitutional change in this country we are certainly going to have to devise methods by which we automatically take into account a wide public consultation process. At this point in time with the Beaudoin–Edwards Committee working now, my understanding is that part of its mandate is to deal with that. I am not ready to commit to any specific type. I would rather have the benefit of its wisdom and its work before we reach that point.

Certainly I recognize that Canadians today, more than ever before, want to be part of the process. Let me share one of the reasons why I think that is the case, from our own informal gathering of facts and what we witnessed as we travelled across the country.

From our experience on the committee, it was our sense that ever since the Constitution had been patriated in 1981–82, and ever since Canadians had given themselves a charter of rights, we sensed that there was out there in the country a stronger sense of ownership than ever before toward this Canadian Constitution. Because there was this stronger sense of ownership on the part of Canadians, there was also a willingness on their part and a sense of belonging to this Constitution that compelled them to want to be part of the process. That is what a lot of members—some of whom are in this House today—shared as a vision of what was happening across the country.

What I am saying is that in the very specific context of what we are witnessing today, it is important to let all those provinces, those different political parties and the government undertake the work they have undertaken to bring us to the same place and point in time when we will embark upon a process that I am convinced will devise new methods by which the public will participate.

• (1550)

It would be premature, today, to come forward with this statement when in fact a lot of it I take for granted anyway. I take it for granted in the sense that it will happen. I am not saying that it will happen. I am among those parliamentarians in legislatures who will watch the process very closely and ensure that it happens.

It is important at this time and place to let those committees come forward and then deal with those issues. As we come to those bridges we will cross them.

That is exactly how I feel today. I anticipate that we will all do that together when we cross those bridges.

Mr. Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to make reference to the amendment of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. We certainly welcome the amendment as a useful contribution to the debate and to the issues before us. The amendment raises issues which we will all want to discuss at different times.

However, I would say that the motion does appear to be on a separate issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The time is for questions and comments on the previous speaker. Does the hon. member have a question or comment?

Mr. Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): No.

Hon. Alan Redway (Minister of State (Housing)): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague who obviously has an outstanding background in the current history of our constitutional affairs, particularly with respect to the committee he chaired.

I was interested particularly in his response to the last question in which he outlined his feelings that we should wait until the Beaudoin-Edwards Committee reports to see what it brings forward.

I would like to know my colleague's view. In my view people across the country seem to be asking for public involvement in charting the course for a new Constitution. Does he think that the Beaudoin-Edwards Committee will in effect bring forth the method and approach by which we will have this public involvement and participation in the creation of a new Constitution which all of us want to make sure ensures that we do have a unified and strong Canada?

Mr. Charest: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. Minister of State for Housing for his very important question.

In my opinion—and I think it is quite clearly the opinion of the government—the Beaudoin-Edwards Committee which has a mandate to study the amending formula and operates with representation from all sides of this House cannot escape dealing with the question of public participation.

It has quite clearly been an issue in the testimony that it received up until now. There really lies the crux of the debate for today. If it is dealing with that today, how could we logically entertain drawing conclusions within this House on that issue, if the House itself has mandated a joint Senate and House of Commons committee to study that very question?

In terms of the proposals put forward either by my colleagues in the New Democratic Party or in the Liberal Party of Canada, we are not saying that we disagree with what is in there. What we are saying is that if we have committed ourselves to a process by which colleagues are studying this very issue and will deal with it, why should we undertake to draw any conclusions at this point in time?

It is a matter of logic and a matter of reasonable function. In the meantime, it means we all have our own responsibilities at our own level. For example, within the government there are people within the bureaucracy who are doing what they should do, that is looking at and examining options.

Beaudoin-Edwards is studying the amending formula. The Spicer Commission is speaking to Canadians. Within the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada detailed, extensive efforts are put forward in consultations so that we may deal with this issue at our general meeting in August 1991. We are dealing with this issue at four different levels on this side of the House. I expect that that would be the case for members who represent the other side of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Now that the question and comment period is over, I am ready to receive a brief comment on the opposition amendment.

Mr. Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Mr. Speaker. I apologize. I did not realize that we were still in comment period. I will be brief.

As I was saying, I think the contents of the amendment moved by the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party are useful contributions to this debate and to the issues before us.

However, I do think that the motion before the House deals with the process of discussion and debate on the Constitution. It does not deal with the substantive issues about what that outcome might be and the nature of the content of those discussions.

The motion concludes with a precondition for entry into the discussions about constitutional change, and that precondition says in the motion "a desire to remain within a renewed Canadian Federation".

I suggest that what the Liberal amendment seeks to do, if I read it correctly, is to define essentially the objectives of that discussion. In fact, it attempts to define what that renewal might be, and surely that is beyond the scope of the motion. I think it is a separate question.

If you wanted an analogy or a situation to compare it with, Mr. Speaker, it is perhaps rather like attempting to amend a bill by amending an interpretation of a word in that bill, and we know that would be ruled out of order. Similarly, I would suggest that this amendment is out of order too.

I would though, just in closing, suggest that it would be interesting to debate these issues. Perhaps on one of its allotted days in the near future the Official Opposition might introduce this motion as a separate question.

Mr. Dingwall: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague in the New Democratic Party for being so succinct and coming to the conclusion that the contents of the amendment were perhaps very substantive in that they would add a great deal to the debate and to the deliberations taking place here this afternoon.

It should be noted that although my colleague refers to process I think paragraph (7) of their particular motion goes on to say that discussions begin with only one precondition: "a desire to remain within a renewed Canadian federation".

In view of recent events and things that have been said across this country by a variety of interest groups, it would seem to me that is just not a matter of process but indeed is a matter of substance. As a result, we have made an amendment which addresses the issue of renewal in paragraph (7). We have indicated a number of considerations. They are not exhaustive in every conceivable sense, but they are considerations which we believe to be important to the entire process that is taking place.

On those grounds I would think that the amendment, notwithstanding the fact that it may be lengthy in its content, adds greatly to paragraph (7). I think it is important that we have an opportunity to debate those kinds of considerations in an important element before the House. I would think the Chair would find it both appropriate and fitting for members to have this latitude in terms of discussing the motion of my colleague from the New Democratic Party, as well as the amendment being offered by my party.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I wish to thank the hon. member for Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing and the hon. member for Cape Breton—Richmond East for their wise considerations. The Chair will surely take them into account in its decision on the acceptability of the amendment of the opposition.

• (1600)

[*English*]

Resuming debate. On a point of order.

Mr. Prud'homme: Mr. Speaker, it is strictly a short point of order.

We are bound to vote today unless I have missed something. It would be good if you could give us an indication, Your Honour.

[*Translation*]

Could you tell us, approximately, when we will know whether the amendment is in order or not, because this will change the whole reasoning in the debate. We would say certain things that we would rather not if it is in order and we would say other things if it is not.

Consequently, could you kindly tell us when we can expect a ruling in this regard.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The Chair has listened to the request and will take it into consideration when thinking of a way to have a speedy ruling. However, I can safely say that hon. members can now speak to both the main motion and the amendment. A ruling will be made as soon as possible.

Mr. Rocheleau: Mr. Speaker, I think you shed some light on the matter, but we—the Bloc Quebecois—would like to table an amendment to the amendment to the motion.

If we can speak to both the main motion and the amendment, I would like to know whether we can table an amendment to the amendment, or an amendment should the amendment from the Liberal Party be ruled out of order. We are interested in this debate as long as

Quebec is excluded, because Quebec is in the process of deciding for itself.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): As the old adage says, we will cross that bridge when we come to it. I understand the argument from the hon. member for Hull–Aylmer, but it is still premature. I must allow the debate to develop, and eventually give the floor to the hon. member, but for that the debate has to get under way.

The hon. member for Richelieu on a point of order.

Mr. Plamondon: It is on the same point as my colleague, Mr. Speaker, but I would like to add a few precisions.

You know that the vote will be held at 6 o'clock, but the bell will start ringing at 5:45 p.m. There is exactly one hour forty–five minutes left. With 30 minutes per member, this means that a maximum of three members only will be able to speak. But, it is extremely urgent— If necessary, may be we could suspend the sitting while you make your ruling and we could wait a little bit longer to know if we will be able to come up with an amendment which, I am sure, would give rise to an extremely interesting and important debate if it is our amendment that is tabled and if, for example, the liberal amendment was ruled out of order.

On the other hand, if it is in order, then, we will work on an amendment to an amendment. But we must abolutely know where we stand, Mr. Speaker. The text seems to have been drafted in one of the two official languages and the Chair, after looking at it, should be able to judge quite easily whether it is in order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I think it is still premature to rule on the request of the member for Richelieu since the Bloc Quebecois would have first to be recognized by the Chair to be able to introduce an amendment. For now, I must, in the parliamentary tradition, recognize the parties according to the percentage of their representation in the House and in that respect, I must resume the debate and recognize a member of the opposition.

[*English*]

Mr. Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Very briefly, Mr. Speaker. I think it is worth giving consideration to the point that the member behind me suggested, that we should leave it open so that other amendments could be moved. Perhaps it would be best to provide some time later. I suggest it would make some sense to have a short gap and then add that time afterwards so that there is the possibility for another amendment or a subamendment, whichever appears the most appropriate. It might make it rather difficult otherwise for the member to plan his action unless he knows ahead of time.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I do not think the hon. member understood what I said earlier. Ten amendments could be moved, if you like, but members must first be recognized. Right now, according to parliamentary tradition, I must first recognize a member of the opposition, in this case the hon. member for St. Boniface, so the debate can continue. It is not new for the Chair to take an amendment under advisement for a while. So that no one will be penalized, members will be able to speak until a decision is announced on both the substantive motion and the amendment of the opposition. This way no one is penalized in the proceedings.

[*English*]

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, first I want to thank my colleagues Messrs. Nystrom and Nicholson for permitting me to make my address at this particular time. There is a commitment I have made that I still hope to be able to honour.

This constitutional crisis, or call it a difficulty or a challenge if you prefer, should really give us an opportunity for a new deal, a new initiative to try to bring the country together, to build upon the good that is there and to go beyond where we have been.

I think we can probably have this new deal if we recognize certain basic needs in society today, as they have been expressed by a number of people.

The time has come for us to respond to the needs of our aboriginal peoples. I am talking about land claims. I am talking about greater self–autonomy, self–government, if you prefer.

The time has come, as well, to put away our quarrels between the English speaking and the French speaking people of this nation, whether they be in a minority or a

majority position. Clearly, we need to set that aside and go beyond.

In all of this, we must not forget that there are eight million to nine million Canadians who are from origins other than aboriginal, English or French. They do not want to be left by the wayside; they want to be considered.

Some of you have, in fact, followed this debate for a long, long time. You have participated in the Meech Lake Accord process, in the Charest Commission. I was a member of that commission and played a small role. I felt that even there we had started to move forward, because we had started to recognize those groups I mentioned. All of these groups came forward with their representatives and each wanted to be heard and each would have concluded and accepted that they had legitimate concerns to make.

Women, as well, had serious reservations about how the changes might impact upon them. We must not forget that. The handicapped people of Canada too often feel as if they have been forgotten. Whatever it is that we do, we must give them some reassurance that they are valued and important Canadians.

It seems to me that we cannot do anything, until each region of this country, whether we speak of the north, the west, Quebec, Ontario or the Atlantic provinces, feels as if it is an important part of this great nation. Only when men and women from every region of the country, whether they be of aboriginal origin, English, French or other origins, feel as if they are needed and wanted and can build and contribute to this nation, only then will there be some sense of harmony and some sense of future potential growth.

Some will say: "Is the struggle worth it?" And I say, yes, unequivocally. It is worth it. It is definitely worth it. We need to find a creative solution to the problems we have, a new way of doing things. I am an optimist. I believe that we will.

It is a big challenge. Sometimes I like to think of it as if it were a large mountain to climb. But once we have climbed that tall mountain, its success will be that much sweeter. I believe we will climb it.

I want to address the motion of my colleagues from the NDP. I want to stress, unequivocally, at the very beginning, that I support it. In principle, I think the intent is noble and it is worthy of real consideration and serious debate. I have to ask whether or not we have lost a golden opportunity to look at the sharing of powers. This is something that has been mentioned on our constitutional committee, of which I am a member, time and time again. A number of very credible witnesses have, in response to my question as to whether or not we ought to be looking at this as an essential question facing Canada, said yes. I would have liked to have seen it as part of this particular debate today and as an integral part of the proposal that went forward.

• (1610)

It does not include this and I guess the question that I have to raise is, why not? As I have indicated, it has been mentioned several times before.

I would hope that we could support this point. I think it is an important point. I think it is equally important to the other questions that have been raised; that is, the amending formula or formulae as well as the involvement of the public in this process.

I would hope that the party did not forget it, that the party understands the complexity of the problems that are facing us today. The fact that it was not part of the motion is not a manifestation of their lack of awareness of the seriousness of that issue; that is, the division of powers.

The motion contains several areas which I think are somewhat vague. I do not say that in an unkind way, but I think they need to be clarified and perhaps could be improved upon. The motion asks for guidelines which ensure representation by all sides of Parliament and provincial and territorial legislatures, not just governments. Some people could question, "by all sides", means what? Does it include Bloc Quebecois, the Reform Party, independent members and if yes, I think we should say so very clearly. Otherwise people will be confused.

I go to the second part, and I want to quote:

> (2) the inclusion of others with a stake in the outcome, such as Aboriginal nations, the North, official language minorities, business and labour, women and multicultural communities;

I know it says "such as", and I know it was intended to include the west, the Atlantic provinces and no doubt, handicapped Canadians as well as visible minorities. I want to make that point and I want to stress it because I

think the intentions were noble, but somehow people reading it might forget that that was also included.

I go to the third paragraph. They want to ensure that the process is balanced "without real or perceived dominance or manipulation by any participant". I guess the question that I need to ask is: How does one ensure participation is not dominated by a participant? I think that needs to be, but how does one go about ensuring that that is so and how do you prevent manipulation? Again, I think it is a noble concept and one that is totally essential, but at the same time, very difficult to control.

I continue to the fourth paragraph, to ensure "discussion is based on the views of ordinary people and expert opinion". Potentially this one is a little awkward. I think we are all ordinary people. Perhaps it could have read "expert opinion on constitutional and other related matters while including other Canadians". I would have preferred that wording.

I go to the fifth paragraph, to ensure that "there is a timetable and a commitment from the start of all appropriate participants to make a decision on the final package of proposed amendments". I have some difficulty with this one, and I would appreciate some clarification. Is it to decide, yes; or is it to decide, no? What happens if some people decide yes on certain parts and no on others? The point that I want to make is that while I have a sense of the intent, I am not sure it is clear enough for people out there to understand what was meant.

I proceed to the sixth paragraph, to ensure "the process is open and transparent, conducting official business in public". Again, and without trying to be picky or naughty I assure you, the word "transparent" sometimes has negative connotations, see-through but flimsy and weak. I think what was meant was above board, on the table. I draw your attention to "conducting official business in public". If one wanted to be Machiavellian about this, I suppose someone could say: "We will call this unofficial business", and then what would happen? So there is some potential for misuse of the term.

Finally, the seventh paragraph, to ensure "that discussions begin with only one precondition, a desire to remain within a renewed Canadian federation". To many Quebecers, that is what Meech was all about and clearly I do not think they are arguing that Meech is the solution. What is appropriate to you, to me, or to others about a renewed Canadian federation may be conflictual, may be problematic.

I think as much could have been achieved if we had simply said that we wanted an honest and open negotiation where everyone affected by the Constitution participates in the process committed to renewed federalism containing a new division of powers.

I think that that is the better way if you wish.

I would like to contrast what was in the particular series of statements with what my leader, the Hon. Jean Chrétien, said at the Bélanger-Campeau Commission, and I quote from the text to ensure that I do not misrepresent anyone's point of view and therefore upset people. When he was talking about constitutional change he indicated that the change, or the division of powers, was an essential element.

[*Translation*]

Here is what he had to say: "Any change in the distribution of powers should guarantee the rights and freedoms of citizens. Any change in the distribution of powers should ensure that the two main linguistic communities in this country are maintained and strengthened. The very existence of Canada rests on that principle, and it must be generously endorsed by all government levels in Canada. In addition, Quebec must be recognized as the principal focal point of French life and culture in Canada."

No. 3: "Any change in the distribution of powers must guarantee respect for and the growth of aboriginal people". 4: "Any change in the distribution of powers should promote both the rights and the growth of cultural communities". 5: "Any change in the distribution of powers should endeavour to maximize the living and standard of living of Canadians". 6: "Any change in the distribution of powers should facilitate the working of the Canadian economic union". 7: "Any change in the distribution of powers should ensure, on a national scale, the pursuit of social justice through the sharing of resources between regions and citizens". No. 8: "Any change in the distribution of powers should ensure sovereignty for every government in its respective jurisdiction". And finally, No. 9: "Any change in the distribution of powers should take into account the diversity and dynamism of different regions of the country, including the distinct character of the Quebec society; and should leave to the provinces responsibility for what is not

required by the national interest or the best interest of citizens".

[*English*]

I am concerned about the somewhat ambiguous wording which may, unfortunately, communicate a message that was not intended. Perhaps more thought might have gone into the motion to try to capture some of the essential elements that have been mentioned.

Some people may interpret this, and I do not say it unkindly, as a lack of a clear position. I will give one other reason why that may be so. In response to a question on December 20, 1990, at the Bélanger-Campeau Commission, the member from Quebec, from the NDP, said the following: "Yes, I understand your question. Can we have a kind of renewed federalism?" He said: "No".

My understanding was that the most essential part of this particular thrust, this particular initiative, of my colleagues in the NDP was obviously to define how the public might be involved, but also in the spirit of renewed federalism. So I bring this to your attention:

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, our country is the envy of the rest of the world. Millions of people would just love to live here. I hope that together we will continue to build Canada. I firmly believe that is the intent of the motion of my NDP colleagues and of our own amendment.

[*English*]

I believe that we should start rebuilding right now, immediately.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Pronovost (Saint-Maurice): Mr. Speaker, I just listened with great interest to the speech by the hon. member for St. Boniface and putting all partisanship aside, I would like to congratulate him. Except for some aspects which I do not agree with, his speech was a heartfelt cry, *à cri de coeur* showing that Quebeckers and the Canadian people that we are still capable of talking to each other. The hon. member for St. Boniface also took the opportunity to read the Liberal sub-amendment which I do not fully support. I would like to correct one of numerous inaccuracies the hon. member for Richelieu told us this afternoon.

• (1620)

He tried to raise a point of order on the misleading grounds that the Liberal subamendment was only available in one official language. That is entirely false, Mr. Speaker, because as soon as the subamendment was tabled by the hon. member for Hamilton East, I immediately went to the Table for a copy of the subamendment in French and was given one immediately.

So once again, the hon. member for Richelieu would have Quebecers who are watching us believe that the House of Commons provides documents in only one official language, which is entirely false. I wanted to set the record straight, because the hon. member for Richelieu tried to pull a fast one, but we are on to him now.

Mr. Speaker, I carefully read the nine points of the Liberal subamendment, and I am a little concerned about the way these points are presented. Let me explain. We have had a debate on Meech Lake. There were a number of items on the table. The country is in very serious shape, something everybody realizes. On the weekend, the Quebec Liberal Party defined its position. However, I see a disturbing element in the Liberal subamendment, and I would like to ask the hon. member for St. Boniface about this. Does he not think it would be unwise, at this stage of the debate, to introduce guidelines with restrictions in certain areas, as the Liberal subamendment seems to be doing? Why not leave the debate wide open? Why not give all the commissions a chance to submit their reports? Why not give the Beaudoin-Edwards Commission on the amending formula time to give us its report, and the Spicer Commission and the provincial commissions, before imposing the kind of conditions the Liberals are suggesting today? I do not question the Liberals' intentions, but perhaps we could prevent certain parts of Canada from feeling overlooked in these amendments.

I wish the Liberal Party would leave this question open and withdraw its subamendment, which might otherwise cause a return to the counterproductive state of affairs we have had occasion to deplore in recent months.

Mr. Speaker, I would be interested to hear the comments of the hon. member for St. Boniface, who, I may recall, took a very correct position, and I hope I can say the same for the hon. member for Richelieu if he has a chance to speak in the House today.

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (St. Boniface): I want to thank my hon. colleague for his flattering remarks, and I will attempt to answer his question.

First of all, the conditions. Personnally, I do not see them as conditions, but mostly as principles. I cannot understand how the principles I mentioned would of necessity preclude the addition of other principles should we want to do so later on. I really want to emphasize the key point. I do believe that the division of powers is a key issue. I feel this is an issue that has to be considered. And its importance has been recognized, because as was mentioned many times in this House during Question Period, a committee has been established by the Prime Minister and his government to look at and thoroughly discuss this issue.

So, those are not conditions but principles. Nothing prevents us from adding some or bringing on changes should we come to the conclusion after a lenghty debate and discussion that it would be useful. And I think we should not disregard the main question I asked, namely should we not, through the committee set up by the Prime Minister to look at the process for amending the Constitution, thorougly consider the matter concerning the division of powers? I firmly believe we should.

[*English*]

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for St. Boniface for his presentation as well.

I would just like to make a couple of comments and ask the member his viewpoint, I suppose specifically about the issue of Senate reform since his party has been in power for most of the years since confederation. That is probably why we have not seen Senate reform to this point. It has certainly become a hot issue since the Meech Lake debate.

In terms of specifics, where we have seen the amendment and the NDP motion as well for this, that we would all get together and talk about what is going on in the country and perhaps what our constitutional future is going to be.

I think many people in Canada are just afraid that the politicians are all getting into this fray, I suppose, and they are wondering about what is happening economically with the fiscal situation in the country. We all seem to be paralyzed with our constitutional future.

I would like to ask the member for his opinion on setting up actual constitutional conventions whereby people would be elected to these conventions at the local levels—they would be elected and not appointed by politicians—and each of those people would contribute to drafting a new Canadian Constitution. There would be technical experts there as well so that these people could go through clause-by-clause what interests them in terms of real and actual change for the Canadian Constitution. Once they had come together for two to four months, they would come back and report and ask us what we thought of it. The only way that could ever happen is by a Canadian referendum.

We have heard time and time again that that is not the Canadian way. I would be interested to know how the member would put forward his party's proposal on actual constitutional conventions as well as true Senate reform.

Mr. Duhamel: I thank my colleague for a number of questions.

First of all, I want members to know that it was the Liberal Party which said that Senate reform is necessary and would be an asset to areas such as western Canada. We have said it and we continue to say it, and I just want to make sure that we recognize that. I shall continue to work for a reformed Senate, and I shall continue to seek additional powers for western Canada, but in the context of Canada. I want to make sure that power is distributed fairly, and I am not sure that the Senate is a panacea either.

With respect to the fiscal situation, I have to agree with the hon. member. I have a signed document from the Minister of Finance which says that the debt was $168.8 billion at the end of 1984; the revenue has gone up from $70-plus billion to $130 billion; the deficit is as large as it was, shaved a few billion here and there; and the debt is more than twice as large. So we have a serious problem.

Let's not kid ourselves. If we cannot come to grips with the constitutional situation of this country, if we cannot bring some calm and stability—I think they are two sides to one coin—if people are not confident that we are going to stay together united and strong and pull in the

same direction in the same way with mutual self-help, then we are going to continue to have fiscal difficulties.

With regard to constituent assemblies, I recognize that they, like referenda and other mechanisms, can have very positive features. I would simply caution people coming forward with any one mechanism thinking that it will solve this problem. I do not believe that separation will resolve the problems that Quebecers feel. I do not believe that there is one single answer out there for complex problems.

There are some positives of constituent assemblies; there are some positives in referenda; there are no doubt some positives in independents. But there are some positives in working together to try and find the best tools to attack the problems and to help each other in a generous, sensible and sensitive kind of way.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, before I get to my main comments, I want to express a few words about the Liberal amendment. I see that my friend from St. Boniface is no longer in the House.

He was talking about our original motion and basically nit-picking over the seven or eight different clauses in it. However, they have a very long subamendment here, and one could do the same thing with their subamendment and express all kinds of misgivings.

For example, point No. 9 of their subamendment says that we should take into account the diversity of the different regions of the country, including the distinct society of Quebec, and should leave to the provinces the responsibility for what is not required by the national interest or in the best interests of citizens.

What does he mean by national interest? And who decides that? I do have a few misgivings about that.

They also talk about national economic union. What is the national economic union? Is it defined so narrowly that it infringes upon provincial rights in that case, such as, for example, non-renewable resources?

• (1630)

I do not think there is any need to be greatly concerned about the precise wording of some of the things you are seeing before the House. The main thing and what we are saying today in this debate as a party is that we want to have the process well established.

That process should be a very open, accessible and democratic process that is available for all Canadian people, regardless of where those people may live in our country. That is one of the things that we have not seen in the past. Here I make no criticism in any precise way of the Meech Lake process. It was no different substantially from the process back in 1980–81 when the Constitution was patriated and when Pierre Trudeau was the Prime Minister of this country.

At that time, too, we did not have a great, open democratic process. At that time, too, there were a lot of meetings behind closed doors. I remember 1980–81 very well. The parliamentary committee of the House of Commons did not leave this city. It sat in the West Block for about three months and had public hearings.

There were a lot of provinces that never once had public hearings in 1980–81. In fact, the process under Meech was a bit more open and a bit more democratic. In 1987, the parliamentary committee, once again, did not leave this House. We sat in the Railway Committee Room for a month or so in August 1987. There were a few provinces that had public hearings, but not all of them.

We did have some public hearings that were chaired by the member for Sherbrooke. In the spring of last year, we travelled extensively in a very short period of time—too short and a little bit too late—but at least we were going in the right direction. Many provinces did not have public hearings.

One of the premiers who protested so loudly, long and clearly about the lack of democracy in the process last year was the premier of Newfoundland, Clyde Wells. Did Clyde Wells have public hearings in Newfoundland before he rescinded support for the accord? No.

We do not have to take lessons from that particular premier about democracy and the openness of the process. I think we have to put the past behind us and move on from here to try to construct a process that is more open, more democratic and more accessible to all the people of this country.

[*Translation*]

And developing a Canadian constitution will be far from easy, Mr. Speaker. We now live in such a complex country, with Quebec's distinct society and its realities, realities which existed even before the founding of our country, Canada.

There is also another reality, Mr. Speaker, the reality of aboriginal peoples living here, in our country. Moreover, there are the language rights, the cultural rights and the legal rights of Indians, the Indian people living here, in this country. We must solve theses problems and find where to enshrine aboriginal rights in the Canadian Constitution.

There are the rights of other persons living in our country: minorities; visible minorities; ethnic groups; West Canada; Newfoundland minorities, because Newfoundland is a province which is also very different from the others.

We must come to an arrangement, Mr. Speaker, for everyone who lives here, in Canada.

[*English*]

For those reasons, the process is extremely important. What we are saying today in a vote that is not a non-confidence vote is that we must come together as three political parties and have a very open and democratic process.

We are saying that the old ways of meetings of only first ministers is not enough. Sure, some place in the process we need the first minister, but the process must be a lot wider than that, a lot broader and must include members of the opposition from the Parliament of Canada, from the legislatures and the territories of this country in a real, open, equal and genuine way. That is what we have to do.

Second, we must include those who got elected in the process. Non-elected people must be part of the process, whether they be women's groups, trade unions, business groups, aboriginal people, ethnic or visible minorities, or what have you, they must all be involved in the process. That is extremely important. The process must be free of domination by one group, or one leader, or one party or one Parliament, because we are a very diverse and very much federated country. We must also drop on the views of, not just the experts, not just the Gordon Robertsons, the Peter Hoggs, the Meekisons and—

[*Translation*]

—Mr. Rémillard, from Quebec and the others, Mr. Speaker.

[*English*]

We must have Canadians, regardless of their occupation and regardless of their background, involved in the process. No one knows better how this country should be run from the point of view of all the diverse regions and groups than the ordinary people themselves, and they must be involved in the process.

I am remaining a person with an open mind on this. I am member of the committee on the amending formula along with the member for St. John's East and others. I am coming around to the point of view that we must have in this country a constituent assembly or a constitutional convention of one sort or another.

All of us should open our minds to that possibility, open our minds to the possibility of broadening the process.

I think it was Peter Russell who said to our committee last week that we should have a constituent assembly that would bring people from the provinces and the territories and the federal Parliament together to determine what the Constitution should be.

Throughout history we have examples of constituent assemblies. In Australia, the United States and other countries around the world, in almost every single case that constituent assembly has been made up of only elected people. I would suggest that if we go the route of the constituent assembly that we should have more than just the elected people. Perhaps we could have the constituent assembly drawn up on the basis of each province, as was suggested to our committee, determining the size of their own delegation, with each delegation having one vote. Those delegations could be drawn up on the basis of proportional representation according to the most previous provincial election and the most previous federal election, so that we have a genuine reflection of the legislature and Parliament during the most recent vote. One quarter or a third or half of those delegations should be made up of non-elected people so that we have a greater balance and better reflection of Canadian society when that group comes together to talk about constitutional change.

This takes tremendous power away from the Prime Minister and from Premiers Vander Zalm, Wells, Bourassa and anyone else who is a first minister. And so it should. The Constitution belongs to the people of this country. The Constitution is a basic law of this land. It does not belong to 11 first ministers who happen to be there at that particular time.

That is why the process does not work. That is why, as somebody said, we got into some trouble the last time around. We have to expand the process, and if we do not do it, we are asking for trouble once again.

One reason I am optimistic this time around is that I think there is a movement in the House of Commons and a movement in the country to expand the process, to make it more open, to make it more accessible, to involve more people, to look at some of the recommendations we made last spring in the Special Committee on the Constitution, chaired by the member for Sherbrooke, which talked about public hearings and making sure there were public hearings in the federal House and the provincial legislatures and territorial assemblies before we had constitutional change. So, those are the things I think have to be done.

The time will come when we have to also proceed with a certain timetable. As happened in Australia, we cannot go on for eight or nine years or maybe even ten years in a constituent assembly without coming to some kind of a conclusion. We need to have a timetable. There has to be a period for discussing the process of constitutional change. Then we have to move to discussing content and substance of constitutional change, the principles of those changes and, finally, the period of ratification. I think that can be done in a very creative and national way.

In the last few minutes remaining to me I would like to say that the whole question of national unity is not just the Constitution itself. We should constantly say to the Canadian people that the Constitution is only one problem in unifying this country.

• (1640)

National unity is about the economy of this country. It is about greater equality. It is about national institutions like the CBC, VIA Rail and the post office. National unity is about a strong and sovereign and economically free and more equal country. National unity is about creating jobs in this country so Newfoundlanders can work in their own province and not have to go to Toronto or elsewhere to find a job. That is also part of national unity, and that must be addressed by this Parliament at the same time.

Another thing we have to address, in addition to the amending formula, is the whole question of substance. I would like to know from the Prime Minister or from one of his spokespeople across the way whether or not they have a timetable as to when we talk about substance.

I suspect the Prime Minister is waiting until after Bélanger–Campeau. I suspect the Prime Minister is waiting until he gets the report from his deputy ministers who are now working in the committee. I suspect the Prime Minister is waiting for the wise words of wisdom of Dr. Norman Spector and others in the government.

It might be very useful—

Mr. Hockin: Don't be partisan with us.

Mr. Nystrom: I am not at all. I used the wise words of Dr. Spector. If the minister thinks those words of Dr. Spector are going to be unwise, then he can stand in the House and be partisan, but I am not being partisan.

I want to know from the government across the way what the timetable is. When can we expect in this House to deal with substantive issues?

The House of Commons itself, sooner rather than later, must be involved in substantive arguments on the division of powers, on the rights of aboriginal people, and on what we do about the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the province of Quebec. These are things this House is going to have to deal with and deal with very shortly. We should know the timetable of what the Prime Minister is planning.

That is what I mean by what I said. Constitutional discussions must involve not only the first ministers, but all parliamentarians and people outside the House of Commons and outside the legislatures of this country. We are going to be dealing with very difficult issues that are not going to be very easy to tackle.

I conclude by saying that the process is important. I think we have to move toward a constitutional convention or a constituent assembly of one sort or the other. We have to involve the people of this country in a really

open and genuine way. It has to be as democratic as possible.

We must put everything on the table. The round must not be a round that is dictated by one province or one group or two provinces or two groups or by the federal government. It must be the Canadian round where people can come and say: "Look, these are the problems we have in Newfoundland" or "These are the problems that aboriginal people have", or the people of Quebec, of Saskatchewan or of Manitoba. It must be on the table. If everybody puts their agendas on the table and we debate those agendas, I am optimistic in the long run that we can find the accommodation and keep this country together.

The last point we mention in our motion today is that the only precondition that we lay down at this stage—and I hope members of the House all agree with this, a few may not—is the desire to remain within a renewed Canadian federation.

[*Translation*]

Mr Speaker, we need a new federation in our country, because the old one did not work any better for the people of Quebec than for other Canadians. I have in mind the aboriginal, many people in western Canada, many minorities in our country. That is why we need a new federation. But there must be a federation. I know the people of Quebec have difficulties with our federation, but Canada has been a good country for Quebecers for a long time. The French language has been well protected, better than it would have been in a separate country. I mean Quebec. I know there are a lot of problems in the province of Manitoba, and our party supported the rights of minorities, the language rights of the French-speaking people outside Quebec.

One thing is certain, Mr. Speaker. If Quebec decides to leave the country, the problems of francophones outside Quebec will be even more serious than they are now because those Francophones represent only a small minority in the country, about 5 or 6 per cent of the whole Canadian population.

[*English*]

We need a renewed federation. We have to look at the division of powers. We will have to modernize the division of powers. People should put their ideas on the table. My friend from Chambly has gone to the Bélanger-Campeau Commission and put his ideas on the table. Many of those ideas are extremely valid in trying to modernize the division of powers in this country; some may be debatable. At least he has put those ideas on the table. He is talking about some more powers in certain circumstances, like the environment, going to the federal government, and some provincial powers perhaps going to the provinces.

There are other ways of looking at it as well. Perhaps in this country instead of a radical decentralization of power to the provinces, we can look at a decentralization in the delivery of certain programs, in the administration of certain programs, so that we maintain national objectives and national standards. This is so important, in particular for poorer provinces like the Atlantic provinces and Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

In the meantime, we can still have more localized administration of those programs and delivery in the hands of local people. I think that is important.

In day care, for example, there are a lot of differences in my riding, in towns like Kamsack, Canora and Yorkton, and in the riding of the minister from Manitoba, in a town like Steinbach, in comparison to, say, Toronto, Montreal or Vancouver. If we had more localized delivery of programs, perhaps that may solve some of the problems we have today.

There are a lot of ideas out there that I think we should be looking at, but we have to put them all on the table. The best way of coming out of this thing with an accommodation that makes everybody feel at home is to have an open and fair and democratic process, and that is what our motion is trying to accomplish today. Without the process, the end result will fail.

With the process, I am sure that we as Canadians will find the consensus, will find the compromise, will find the accommodation that reflects our reality. That is that great mirror that reflects our reality, and that is how we will build our Constitution and build our country.

[*Translation*]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Before we get into the question and comment period, I would like to inform the House that I am ready to give my ruling.

The Chair has now had the opportunity to take into consideration the arguments put forward by hon. members concerning the admissibility of the amendment moved by the acting leader of the opposition and is ready to give a ruling on this issue.

During an allotted day, the Chair would rather not get involved unless members specifically ask for help. I wish to thank the members for the very useful arguments they put forward. Citation no. 482 in Beauchesne's Fifth Edition states one of the most important prerequisites for this kind of amendments. It says, and I quote:

[*English*]

> On an allotted day, during consideration of the Business of Supply, an amendment must not provide the basis for an entirely different debate than that proposed in the original motion.

[*Translation*]

According to this citation, and after due consideration, I must protect the nature of the debate, as moved by the hon. member for Yukon, and therefore, I must rule against the amendment on the basis of today's debate.

[*English*]

ALLOTTED DAY, S. O. 81—THE CONSTITUTION

Hon. David MacDonald (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make basically a comment, although the member who has just spoken on behalf of the New Democratic Party might want to respond briefly.

It would be very unfortunate to let this day pass without acknowledging, since we are discussing the future of the country, one individual who spent more than a decade in this Chamber and who still serves this country in the other chamber, a man who has already set so many records that there is not time during questions and comments to acknowledge them. I am talking about Senator David Croll, who was born 91 years ago today in the Soviet Union. He immigrated here at the age of 5 and who beginning a political career in 1930 as the mayor of Windsor set a number of firsts; not because he was the first Jewish mayor of Windsor or the first Jewish cabinet minister of Ontario, or even the youngest cabinet minister in the British Commonwealth in 1934, but because he stood for a series of principles about this country which the hon. member from Yorkton—Melville has just referred to in his own speech. Certainly on behalf of another party in this Chamber, I would like to acknowledge the distinguished contribution that Senator David Croll has made and to remember that we have a history in this country that is very important, a history of acknowledging those fundamentals which transcend often the kind of partisan debates that take place in the House and that David Croll in many ways represents the finest of that tradition.

• (1650)

Ms. Lynn Hunter (Saanich—Gulf Islands): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to make a comment in the context of this debate. I think what we have to do today is acknowledge in this Chamber that this is an opposition day and our party has put forth in good faith a motion whereby we can bring a resolution to the growing crisis that confronts our country.

As someone who has had the opportunity to travel outside of our country, both prior to being elected and since being elected, I think it is in that context we realize how blessed we are to live in Canada.

This debate is not just about our country. It is about the confidence in our institutions and the confidence in Parliament. I encourage members on all sides of the House to vote in favour of this motion.

It confounds me that if we are going to build a trust, a trust in politicians, a trust in the process, a trust in the work in this place, to vote against such a motion at this juncture would send a very negative signal.

The people of Canada elect us to come here and do the nation's business. We have to do it in good faith. We are trying to conduct this debate not in a spirit of partisanship, but in the sort of dread that confronts us in this constitutional dilemma.

I fear for my country. I urge that all members in the House vote for this motion to send a signal out to Canadians that that we have got our act together here, that we all care for our country and that we are going to support this motion and support our country; that we are willing to work as parliamentarians for all of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out earlier in the debate, it seems to me that this motion is attractive to the people of Canada but has very little interest for the people of Quebec. I am referring to paragraph 7, which states:

(7) that discussions begin with only one precondition, a desire to remain within a renewed Canadian federation;[—]

With this condition, the majority of the poeple who took part in the hearings of the Bélanger-Campeau Commission are excluded from the start. It excludes central labour organizations who, by the way, had very good relations with the NDP among others in the past, but took a stand for the sovereignty of Quebec and will therefore be excluded from the debate. And that, for me—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Duceppe: If you wish to speak, my hon. friend, you will have a chance to do so later.

So, we would have wanted to make an amendment at this time, but it seems that, although we have been here since the beginning of the debate, the procedure will not allow us to make one. The right to speak is curtailed. I will, however, clarify a few things my hon. colleague mentioned about language, when he said it was very well protected. I would like to remind the members of this House a couple of facts. First, Quebec had to legislate on the subject, that the Supreme Court of Canada restricted the application of Bill 101 and that the rest of Canada opposed it. Second, the assimilation rate of francophones outside Quebec is extremely high.

Nonetheless, it seems dangerous to say that, once Quebec will have separated, the French-speaking groups outside Quebec would be in danger. That is a kind of blackmail Quebec will not lend itself to, arguing in turn that the survival of the anglophone minority in Quebec would be jeopardized. Quite the contrary, in Quebec, we will recognize their rights. We are lead by higher principles than some second-rate political party.

I appreciate the fact that the NDP was the only other party to recognize the right of Quebec to self-determination. It was a very noble gesture on their part. That makes sense because that is what the UN Charter says. It seems that all parties here have signed and accept it, but when you ask Conservative or Liberal members to recognize the right to self-determination for Quebec, it is as if they could not speak because something is stuck in their mouth.

Mr. Speaker, I have a specific question for my colleague on the Referendum Act. If a referendum is held in Quebec, and there should be one in 18 months at the most, there is a law in Quebec governing expenses on both sides, those who oppose and those who support the question.

Would a NDP government respect that law or would it do like the Liberals did in 1980 when they poured $25 million in the campaign even though the maximum allowed was $2.1 million. Would it do like the Conservatives with their Spicer circus and their national unity group? Would a NDP government respect the Quebec Referendum Act? Obviously, as a federal government, it would sing the praises of federalism, which is quite normal I presume, but in the framework of democratic institutions in Quebec, or would it disregard it like Liberals did in 1980?

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, I have three things to say to my friend. First of all, last weekend, our national council met in Montreal and we have published a four page document in which we say we respect the right of Quebec to self-determination. Quebecers themselves will have to decide freely of their future and fulfill their unique collective responsibility. They must do it through a democratic and fair process. This could be a fair and democratic referendum, but that is for Quebecers to decide.

Second, Mr. Speaker, I am not a Quebecer and I want my country to include Quebec. I am for a Canadian Federation; I want Quebec to remain a part of this country but in the context of a renewed federation. For me and my party, the reality is one of a country that includes Quebec, Saskatchewan and the other provinces and territories. That is why, Mr. Speaker, we have included this proposal no. 7 in our motion today.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the issue of francophones outside Quebec is a reality. It might not be always fair, and it might be sad, but a Canada without the province of Quebec would be a Canada where protecting francophones outside Quebec would be more difficult since they are a minority of 5 or 6 per cent. In fact, it will be more difficult for them, and that is a reality, to preserve the rights they enjoy now.

We have a country which is officially bilingual at the federal level and in Canadian, national institutions. Language rights have been enshrined with much difficulty in our Canadian Constitution, as well as education rights in the language of the minority. Anglophones in Quebec have exactly the same rights and I know these rights are well protected in that province, better than the rights of francophones outside Quebec. I agree with that. The rights of anglophones in Quebec are better pro-

tected that the language rights of francophones outside Quebec. That is a Canadian reality.

But I say, Mr. Speaker, that without Quebec, the process to ensure that protection will be more difficult for francophones outside Quebec.

Mr. Duceppe: And what about the legislation on the referendum?

[*English*]

Mr. Ross Reid (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, I participate in this debate this afternoon with some very mixed feelings. I tell you frankly, and some will say this is not unusual, but I participate with some very mixed thoughts on the situation that we deal with in terms of the Constitution in this country.

I was a member of the Charest Committee. I am today a member of the Standing Joint Committee on the Process for Amending the Constitution of Canada. I guess as a politician from Newfoundland and Labrador, there are probably some other unique pressures that confront me and my colleagues.

• (1700)

As Canadians and as Newfoundlanders we try to deal with the Constitution. Perhaps a little bit unlike my colleagues, I have some very mixed thoughts and have not come to conclusions on some of the approaches that will be taken in the future, that we should take as Canadians in dealing with what I consider to be the most serious problem this country has faced in probably 60 or 70 years.

I would like to start at what I consider at this point to be first principles. I think all Canadians must recognize that this country has changed fundamentally. The process which was started in 1986, which was an attempt by the premiers of Canada's provinces with the help and co-operation of the federal government to bring Quebec back into the Constitution, was not successful in June of last year.

However, once that process started, this country changed because if what we called Meech Lake had been successful, we would have had Quebec back at the table. We would have been able as a country of individuals and of provinces, as governments and people coming together to address over a period of time some of the very real constitutional issues that this country faces in the next period of years.

It was not successful, and because it was not successful, again this country is fundamentally changed because we face the reality that Quebec and Quebecers are very serious about the concerns they have had for many years. They are concerns that successive governments and politicians have tried to address but have been clearly unsuccessful.

I think, as a Newfoundlander and as a Canadian, Quebecers are saying to us: "You've heard our concerns. Our concerns are legitimate." I happen to agree with that, but as Canadians, we are either unwilling or unable to address those concerns.

As a result, what is the point in all of us making our lives miserable for each other and continuing on? The last rebuff was Meech Lake under which I think for whatever reason we were not able to reach the conclusion that would have seen some of the very fundamental and not particularly serious concerns of the province and the people of Quebec address.

When I say that the people of Quebec are serious, I am not just talking about the politicians or the opinion leaders. I am talking about Quebecers of all walks of life and of all parts of the province. I am talking about Quebecers who genuinely believe that they have an economic capability. There is a renewed political confidence in that province that is quite understandable. It gives them the confidence to move ahead outside of Canada.

Where do we go, Mr. Speaker? What do we do? We see the Allaire report and the discussions that the Liberal Party of Quebec has had around the Allaire report, as we await the results of the Bélanger-Campeau Commission and as six or seven provinces—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rocheleau: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The hon. member for Hull—Aylmer on a point of order.

Mr. Rocheleau: There are barely seven members in this House, Mr. Speaker. We are asking to rise since 11 o'clock this morning. We are being refused and the House talks about the Canadian Constitution. I think we

should be serious about the discussion today on that motion and I would call for a quorum count.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I would point out to the hon. member for Hull—Aylmer that I recognized representatives from the Bloc Quebecois on four occasions. Having said that, I find that we have a quorum.

The hon. member for Saint-Maurice on a point of order.

Mr. Pronovost: Mr. Speaker, I just heard in this House, only a few seconds ago, some very insulting comments with regard to the Chair. The member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie told you, and I quote: "I will settle your hash, you Mr. Speaker, in the next election"! These remarks are completely unacceptable. I ask immediately the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie, who is present in this House, to take back what he said.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I recognize again the member for Saint-Maurice on a point of order.

Mr. Pronovost: Mr. Speaker, I want to be sure the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie has really heard what I said. We did hear very clearly, on this side of the House, that he questioned your authority. He directly challenged you, saying: "I will settle your hash—

An hon. member: In the next election!

Mr. Pronovost: —in the next election"! We heard him. He has questioned the authority of the Speaker of this House. It is something absolutely unacceptable, Mr. Speaker, and I ask him to take back immediately what he said.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Is the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie seeking the floor?

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): I made no public comment in this House. I was talking to you. I have nothing else to say.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Resuming debate. The hon. member for St. John's East.

[*English*]

Mr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, the question I ask is, where do we go from here? As I was saying, we have seen Allaire, we await Bélanger-Campeau. Six or seven provinces have started the process of consultation on the future of the Constitution and the amending process in their own provinces.

In this House of Commons and the Senate, we have undertaken the process of considering the amending formula and the process of changing our Constitution and what that does.

It is my belief that the people of Quebec have a far greater sense of where they want to go and what they want to do than, perhaps, the rest of Canada does. I think it is absolutely incumbent upon us, as Canadians, to decide exactly what it is we want to do. The first step is to decide as Canadians if we want a country. My own view is that we do want a country and one of the most integral parts of that country is the province and the people of Quebec.

Second, I think we have to decide what it will look like. That involves a process to which we have been a little adverse. That is the process of each of us defining and deciding, individually and collectively, I guess, in the end, what it means to be Canadian. It is that perception of the country that must guide what this Constitution is going to be.

As my friend from Sherbrooke said earlier: "A constitution is a mirror of the country". It is absolutely essential that we build a Constitution through a consensus that reflects the needs of Canada in 1991 and into the next century and that Constitution not be based on a series of principles so, therefore, we define the country based on the Constitution.

As well, a part of that has to clearly be our history. How did we get here? What has happened to this country, not only in the last 125 years, but also in the last 400 or 500 years, as we moved towards 1997, which is a big anniversary in our history.

The third question is, how do we get there? First of all, as Canadians, what we must stop doing is looking at the future development of our Constitution and our country in terms of what Quebec wants or what we are going to give Quebec. That will lead us nowhere and it is not the approach that is going to find a solution to this problem.

As I say, all of us must look at what we see this country to be. The consensus that is going to be absolutely essential is the consensus that must come from all Canadians, from all parts of this country. Without that consensus, we are not going to be there.

• (1710)

We must talk about some of the fundamentals of this country. We must talk about the best way to reflect things that have historically been important and, to an extent, have given us some definition in terms of process and in terms of substance in this country, our parliamentary democracy, our representative and responsible government, our tendency to look upon the provincial governments as the best way to provide programs to our people and that, by the nature and the definition, they are closer to the people who depend upon government.

What is it that a national government in this country must have to be a national government? What is it that a federal government must have so that we can be properly represented internationally, so that we have the broad control of the economy that is so essential for a central government and, I think, at least from my point of view, the ability to redistribute wealth in this country so that those individuals and regions of the country that need the help from others that have the capacity to help them can be properly facilitated?

I think it is fair to say that the problem of Meech Lake, as we have come to call it, is a problem of process. I am not one who completely accepts the argument that some of the fundamental, substantive issues in the agreement and some of those issues such as distinct society really were the things that, in the end, cratered the process.

I do, however, accept the argument that the Canadian public was concerned that perhaps they were not part of the process. I think it is fair to say that no process of amending our Constitution has been as open. There were public hearings sponsored by a number of provincial governments, and certainly the Government of Canada, but there is no question that Canadians believed that they were being asked to discuss something that they did not feel they were a part of or that they did not feel they could have an affect on.

Be that as it may, that is past history, but there are lessons to learn. There are things that we can take from that and that we must take from that. But what kind of participation do Canadians want? What role do Canadians perceive that they can play or should play in the development, in the acceptance and in the changing of our Constitution?

I do not think we know that, and I think it is probably unsafe to make assumptions. I look forward, as the Edwards–Beaudoin committee travels across the country starting next week, that we talk to individuals about their perception. I get the sense that Canadians want to know that they have the ability to express an opinion on the Constitution, have their leaders listen to it and have the ability to have it changed.

What is it that Canadians expect of their leaders in this process? We have a democracy where elected politicians, as we are, are accountable for our decisions, for our actions and, ultimately, to provide some leadership and some focus on how we deal with issues, be it energy policy, fish policy or constitutional development and that accountability is ultimately the thing that ties this country together in a political sense.

How do we change our Constitution? One way or the other, all Canadians must feel that they are part of that process. We talk about amending our Constitution and I think that is an unfortunate choice of words. Technically, amending our Constitution is a legal process and, I think, a process that, quite clearly, is one that has to be addressed in a legal point of view. But the question of changing our Constitution talks more about public participation, talks more about how all Canadians can be part of the development of the initiatives, can perhaps be part of the development of the words around the Constitution and, perhaps, can be part of the ratification process around the Constitution, but all Canadians must feel they are part of it.

The Charter of Rights had an interesting impact. Somebody here in this House today talked about ownership. Canadians felt that they had an ownership of the charter. I believe that the charter gave a number of Canadians the feeling that there was a recognition in some very fundamental and important institutions in this country and the charter is one of them. Status has been conferred and as a result those that are not there feel that status is to be conferred to them.

I think it is unfortunate if we look at the charter in terms of status. It is critical that we look at the charter in terms of the protection of rights. I recognize that it raises some interesting problems concerning individual rights and collective rights, but that is part of this country and the history of this country, and one of the things that we are going to have to deal with as we address the substantive questions of the Constitution.

I am one that believes that a charter is absolutely essential. I also believe that there is room for amendments within our charter, but I think the impact of the charter on the constitutional process is important to recognize. We must clearly address the concerns of a number of Canadians.

The native people in this country have some very real historical and current grievances which I think, partly through the Constitution, but primarily through the will of the Canadian people we can and we absolutely must address. Any politician knows it is risky to go into a list. There are a number of other groups. I want to mention only one because of the importance that I place on it, but not exclusive to others.

In the few short minutes I have, with all the disturbances and the carryings on, I thought it important to talk briefly about some of the things that we have heard in the committee. Quite clearly, the government and the Prime Minister on January 24 last year said that in the coming months and years we must find a way to reconcile the need for public participation and open democratic process in the legal requirements now in the Constitution.

When the committee was set up, the Prime Minister again stated that the mandate was to consult broadly with Canadians in the process for amending the Constitution of Canada, in particular on the role of the Canadian public in the process. I do not think we are going to come to a consensus that will allow us to change the Constitution in substantive terms, nor in process terms, unless the Canadian public feels that it is genuinely involved in the process.

As I said before, it is unfortunate and premature for us to assume that we know how that is going to work. I think there are a number of approaches to take. We started our deliberations on February 19 and since then we have heard 26 witnesses. I think all of them have stressed, and I know my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands will agree with me that there is no question that public participation is important and vital in the process. Unfortunately not every agrees on how to find that. They do not know where the answer is. The 17 of us on the committee have no consensus on what that is either.

A number say that what we should do is take the current process and make it work better. There are two or three arguments around that. One is the question, as we have talked a bit about it, the nature of our democracy. The other is the reality that one way or another the current amending formula, technically and legally, is the thing that we must address and we must deal with.

There are problems. We all know that there are potentially very serious problems. We have had the debate over legitimacy and legality in terms of our ability to talk to the Supreme Court about a broad Canadian consensus overtaking a legal question, and that is one we are going to have to grapple with again. But are there ways that we can do it?

I think my friend from Yorkton—Melville talked about the ability to come to agreement; the question of allowing powers to be delegated through a variety of different processes, that we as Canadians can find the accommodation that is so essential to make some of those jurisdictional questions become less of a problem.

There have been a number of discussions on the question of a referendum. Many believe that a referendum is particularly important to make democracy more democratic, somebody said that. Vincent Lemieux from Laval said that a referendum makes democracy more democratic, but he worried about the tensions of the time.

• (1720)

Gordon Robertson talked about a referendum that could perhaps be operated in two stages if people were not prepared to participate: Quebec to clarify its position, Canada to respond to Quebec.

There is the question of a constituent assembly, which has gained some great currency in this House and in a number of other places. However, there are some real problems with that. Some say not to get into a constituent assembly because too much time would be spent in discussing how to set it up. Some worry that a constituent assembly will in itself create a whole new class of politicians who get elected to it if they are broadly

elected based on the position that they take, and the whole thing becomes a foregone conclusion.

Some argue that a referendum does not protect the rights of the minorities, that it is in itself in a funny way anti-democratic.

Suffice it say, Mr. Speaker, that a number of these questions will be considered by this committee, will be considered by this Parliament, and I hope will be considered by Canadians over all. It is absolutely essential that as Canadians we start to think about the future of this country. It is not good enough to say: "Let one part of it leave and we will continue on without it." It quite simply does not work that way. It will not work that way in terms of economics; it will not work that way in terms of the political future of what is left. And it denies a history that we are all so terribly proud of, if we take the time to think about it. It denies the construction of this country that has been built over 500 years of history, and it denies the fundamental approach that was taken in 1864 and in 1867 to set this country up.

We must recognize that what we have seen in the last 125 years, the contributions we have made to the world, the way we take care of ourselves as Canadians, and how we present ourselves to the world is based on so many people coming together. This country does not exist without Quebec. It is an opportunity today to be looked on in a positive way, for all of us to see a future that we have come together, a conclusion that we have developed together, for a great country for the 21st century.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Phillip Edmonston (Chambly): I was struck by my colleague from Newfoundland when he talked about the elements of a possible agreement with Quebec, maybe in relation to the next Constitution that we might negotiate.

I have a comment to make on a subject that I think the hon. member touched upon. There is one thing that goes beyond all the provincial boundaries and it is the values that we have in common.

Because, you know Mr. Speaker, I do not have the cultural background that people born in Quebec or in Ontario would have, I come from the United States, but I have enjoyed taking the time to study at both cultures: the Quebec culture, of course, and the English Canadian culture. But I can see there are obvious differences.

But there are similarities. And if we are not prepared to recognize those some similarities, whether we come from an English or French background, we really refuse to acknowledge this reality. One of the similarities that I think the two cultures have in common here in Canada is the spirit of compromise. I think we have had this similarity for a long time. We can now see some changes, of course. We notice a certain polarization which is the result I think, of provocative action on both sides.

There have been some actions that have been considered provocative by the English speaking Canadian. I am referring of course to Mr. Bourassa's Bill 178. As for me, I was perfectly satisfied with Bill 101, and I thought that Bill 178 was really a nonsense. But Mr. Bourassa is the one who made it into law. English-speaking Canadians considered that their freedom of speech had been violated. Mr. Speaker, as a former reporter, I can tell you that when French-speaking Quebeckers saw people in Brampton, I think it was, in Ontario, trample on the Quebec flag, the atmosphere in the province of Quebec was electric. I cannot begin to tell you how awful it was to see their reaction. It was really electric.

One thing is for sure, when those provocative acts took place, I could see the spirit of compromise beginning to vanish in Canada. Today, in the House of Commons, following the failure of the Meech Lake Accord, we find for the first time in the history of our country a Federal political Party which preaches sovereignty, something unheard of in the past. Personally, I feel it is quite natural to have a Bloc Quebecois, because during the Meech Lake debate Quebecers found some arguments revolting. It should be emphasized that if there were no Bloc Quebecois, there might be some other group, because in Quebec people are polarized just like everywhere else.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, I suggest the government should accept the blame for the polarization which resulted from the improper handling of Meech Lake. Finally, because of the unsound process we have inherited from Mr. Trudeau and Mr. Chrétien, I suggest that the failure of the Meech Lake Accord was inevitable.

[*English*]

Mr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, my friend from Chambly has raised a number of questions, some of which are even connected to each other.

[*Translation*]

When I consider the culture and history of Newfoundland and Quebec, I find some similarity in their history. I know it is not a good choice of words. But in spite of the all-perversive presence of the Church, the dependence on natural resources such as the fishing industry in Newfoundland and farming in Quebec, their cultures were also very different.

[*English*]

Newfoundlanders are as different from other Canadians as Quebecers are in many ways and I do not want to equate the distinct society thing.

If you end up at a party with Canadians from every province, you end up with the Newfoundlanders and the Quebecers fighting over the rum bottle in the kitchen.

Mr. Langlois: Screech.

Mr. Reid: We end up in construction camps in northern Canada together. We have large families, or we used to have large families together. I think, Mr. Speaker, we have viewed the world very much the same way. We got forgotten a little bit. Perhaps sometimes by nature we got forgotten, left out there, in my case on a cliff and in Quebec on a large field on which it is difficult to grow things.

But that is something that should draw us together, something that demands that we look at the world very much in the same sort of way. I use the example of Newfoundland.

• (1730)

The shared values that my friend from Chambly talks about are shared values that we can have between any of the provinces in Canada, if only we take the time to look, and stop throwing barriers up in front of ourselves, providing excuses for us not to go ahead and find some solutions. We are allowing ourselves to be angered by things that normally would really not anger us if we thought about it.

Sometimes in some parts of Canada it is kind of cool to walk on flags, where it is accepted to be against one group or another. Unfortunately, it is far too easy. It is too easy to be anti- somebody, and it is too easy to insult a particular group, or exclude a particular group, because perhaps sometimes to accept that we may not be as tolerant as we like to think demands that we not only look at ourselves as we are today, but demands that we do things in the future a little bit differently.

I think if we are willing to take some of those steps, some of the things that my friend from Chambly talks about, perhaps that may see us through all of this.

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, I listened very closely to the speech by the hon. member for St. John's East. The remarks and the arguments that he made seem to me to be strongly supportive of the motion before us by the hon. member for Yukon. His remarks strongly supported a broadly based process. He supported consultation with many groups, including aboriginal peoples, minority groups and so on.

When I look at the motion, that is what the motion says. It says that the process must be broadened, that it must include not only governments but parliaments, including the various parties in parliaments. The motion also says it must include discussions with the aboriginal peoples, with women's groups, cultural communities, language minorities and that the process must be open and transparent.

Consequently, I want to ask my hon. friend what parts of this motion he is opposed to. I cannot seem to understand that he is opposed to any of the parts. I know he is with the joint standing committee and it is studying the amendment formula and consulting broadly, but it is not studying all the different aspects of the Constitution. Therefore, I put the question to him, listening to his remarks, how can he be opposed to this motion? If he is opposed to the motion, what parts of the motion is he opposed to?

Mr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, my friend from Notre-Dame-De-Grâce knows that I try to be positive and I try to be supportive. However, as I said before I started, I also try and be sure of where I am going. The essence of the individual points of this motion I obviously have very little concern with. Yes, I could enter into a debate on some of the specifics.

I think, though, the time is not right in that, as I said earlier, we have the process of Bélanger-Campeau, we have the process that has been undertaken by Ontario, by Quebec, obviously, and by Manitoba. I think there is a

process under way in New Brunswick. We will see processes undertaken in other provinces.

As we wait for Mr. Spicer, as we wait for the Beaudoin-Edwards Committee, as we see and hear what those groups have had to say, it is the time for us to take our direction and to see in which direction we want to go. That would be my concern. It is simply one of being a little premature.

Mr. J. W. Bud Bird (Fredericton—York—Sunbury): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to take part in this important debate this afternoon. There is no subject more critical to Canada at this time than constitutional development.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The hon. member for Hull—Aylmer on a point of order.

Mr. Rocheleau: It is about the quorum, Mr. Speaker. We are talking about Canada, about its future. Could we take a count of the members present, please?

[*English*]

Mr. Nystrom: Very briefly on the same point of order.

We are talking about an open constitutional process and I think the Bloc Quebecois and the Reform Party represent a certain point of view. I think they should be heard, even if only for a few minutes. What about the idea of dividing the remaining time between my friend from New Brunswick, who understands the necessity of all Canadians being heard, and one of our colleagues from the Bloc Quebecois. I think that would be fair.

Mr. Allmand: Mr. Speaker, as you know, we have only had two Liberals participate in this debate. I have been waiting here all day on the list. It looks like I will not get on. I have great sympathy with members of the Bloc Quebecois and the Reform Party in wanting to speak in the debate. I think you have to follow the order of precedence in recognizing parties and we all have to take our chances.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I am ready to give my ruling. Since there is no unanimous consent, I will follow our Parliamentary tradition.

Up to now, we have had seven speakers, three on the government side and four on the opposition side. In all fairness, I have now to recognize an opposition member. I will therefore give the floor to the hon. member for Fredericton—York—Sunbury.

[*English*]

Mr. Bird: Mr. Speaker, I regret that there is not time for everybody to speak on this issue. I hope that there will be before the debate is over. We have a great many important days before us in Canada, and I am sure there will be ample opportunity for all of us to state our position.

I would like to quickly tell you this afternoon that as a New Brunswicker and as a Canadian, the kind of message I have thought seriously about giving to one of the many forums examining the constitutional future of Canada, the one that is now operating within my own province of New Brunswick. What I would say to them would not attempt to be a reasoned analysis of constitutional matters nor a political science treatise, but rather an effort to state one or two key values which I hold as much in my heart as in my head, about my province and about my country.

There are many ways, in my view, that New Brunswick seems a microcosm of Canada. That is particularly true in the composition of our citizenry, which uniquely portrays the balance among those of English-speaking and French-speaking heritage. Although our multicultural content is small in comparison to some areas, we have displayed a reasonable capability to accommodate and embrace a wide range of cultures with sensitivity and respect. Therefore, I feel that New Brunswick has a special opportunity, indeed an obligation to help set the tone for Canada and to be a model in several respects for what our country can become.

If there is any one expression to describe my feelings as a Canadian and a New Brunswicker, it is the sense of real freedom which is to be found here: Freedom to exist and to live in a vast country with lots of room for everyone. Freedom to grow, freedom to expand, freedom to develop in a society that is open, generous and tolerant; freedom to participate in a democracy that is just and accessible; freedom to dream and a potential which is overflowing with opportunity.

Those are the feelings I get when I think about the unique privilege of being a Canadian. They represent a state of mind not easily attainable in most other parts of the world, where landscapes are becoming ever more limited, population densities ever more burdensome, society ever more volatile, democracy ever more fragile and dreams ever more distant. Therefore, it is critical in my view that in any vision for New Brunswick or for Canada, we always be mindful of the special reality of individual freedom which exists for every one of us here. That is a value above all others and should be the foundation for any vision of nationhood.

There are other exemplary values which New Brunswick models for Canada. Among the most obvious of these, of course, is the manner in which we have advanced the accommodation of our two official linguistic societies, English and French. In so doing, we have become Canada's only officially bilingual province, not just in a formal sense, but very much also in a practical context. While there do remain a few who have resentment and intolerance about language issues in New Brunswick, I believe that the overwhelming momentum is toward a future that will be enriched by the abilities of an ever growing number of our citizens to speak and to work in both official languages. Yet, it will also be a future where a full life can be found in only one, and either one, of those languages.

• (1740)

I am frequently inspired and encouraged in these respects by the signs of the future to be found and seen in the youth of New Brunswick. The ability to speak both languages is ever-increasing, but what is even more important about our young people is that standards of goodwill and acceptance are growing and levels of intolerance are waning. Those are also fundamental characteristics on which to build any New Brunswick vision and ones on which to build a national vision as well.

Another value that is not unique to New Brunswick but always prevalent there is the entrepreneurial spirit. From our beginnings in the shipyards, the forests, the oceans and the farms, New Brunswickers have demonstrated the imaginative capabilities to create enterprises and the willingness to take risks in running them, which have led to a disproportionately high record of entrepreneurial success in this country.

It is not necessary to mention the family names of our citizens who have founded fortunes both within our province and elsewhere in Canada, but they do exemplify the spirit of enterprise which permeates our population.

Perhaps it is because we exist as a geographic link between Atlantic Canada, central Canada and the United States or for whatever other reasons, but New Brunswick has always clearly taken aggressive and positive directions toward economic growth that convinced me of our ultimate economic viability in a united Canada. We have had our successes and our failures, but we have never lost our sense of enterprise. For example, the province's solid support for the free trade agreement was an expression of that spirit.

It is also a fundamental value of any vision of ourselves and of Canada that prosperity and economic growth are part and parcel of Canadian unity.

I could go on about New Brunswick values, but my time is brief so I will close with a reference about the land both here in our province and throughout Canada. If ever there was a promised land, with clean water and clean air and great beauty and broad horizons and green forests and running rivers and rolling oceans, Canada is it and certainly New Brunswick is part of it. Nature has blessed our nation almost beyond imagination and, for me, a large part of the meaning of life has been found in the enjoyment of our natural environment and its resources. Those are values which are increasingly endangered around the world and ones which we must commit to preserve in every aspect of our vision. It is a vision, an area of our vision, with which New Brunswick has commenced to deal and one where we all must lead.

However, given the historic nature of our task, I do feel the need at least to declare in this debate my deep pride and affection for my province and my country and to try to convey some of the particular values which support those emotions within me.

In the final analysis, it seems to me that it is the spirit of Canada that needs renewal. If the will to be a nation can be restored, all else will follow. It seems to me also that this exemplary spirit is to be found in New Brunswick, and in Canada today; perhaps more faintly now than in the past, but it is here. If we can start by

rekindling this spirit again for ourselves then I have no doubt that we can help to breathe new life into Canada.

The Prime Minister has articulated seven principles on which the future of our constitutional development will be found. The first is that any change should lead to a more prosperous Canada. The second is to promote constitutional change that makes us more efficient and competitive as a country. The third principle is fairness as a nation to show respect for the equality of our citizens and the diversity of our citizens. The fourth is to avoid stale dogma or tired ideology. Now is the time for innovation. The fifth is the need to maintain national standards in the interest of all Canadians. The sixth is to consider any and all arrangements that have an effect of moving decision making closer to the people. Lastly, the rights of all Canadians must be safeguarded.

Those are seven powerful principles for the future of our Constitution and we must not settle for less.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): It being 5.45 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply, pursuant to Standing Order 81(14).

The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Call in the members.

The House divided on the motion, which was negatived on the following division:

(*Division No. 394*)

YEAS

Members

Allmand
Angus
Baker
Benjamin
Black
Blondin
Breaugh
Butland
Catterall
Comuzzi
de Jong
Edmonston
Finestone
Fontana
Fulton
Gaffney
Gardiner
Gray (Windsor West)
Harb
Harvey (Edmonton East)
Hunter
Karpoff
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)
Kristiansen
Laporte
Lee
MacDonald (Dartmouth)
MacWilliam
Manley
Marleau
McCurdy
Mifflin
Murphy
Nunziata
Pagtakhan
Peterson
Pickard
Rideout
Rodriguez
Speller
Taylor
Volpe
Whittaker
Young (Acadie—Bathurst)

Althouse
Arseneault
Barrett
Bevilacqua
Blaikie
Boudria
Brewin
Callbeck
Clancy
Copps
Dingwall
Ferguson
Fisher
Foster
Funk
Gagliano
Gauthier
Guarnieri
Harvard
Hopkins
Jordan
Keyes
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Langdon (Essex—Windsor)
LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso)
MacAulay
MacLaren
Maheu
Marchi
Martin (Lasalle—Émard)
McLaughlin
Milliken
Nault
Nystrom
Parker
Phinney
Proud
Robinson
Samson
Stewart
Vanclief
Wappel
Wood
Young (Beaches—Woodbine)—88

NAYS

Members

Anderson
Atkinson
Beatty
Bernier
Bjornson
Blais
Bosley
Boyer
Cadieux
Casey
Charest
Collins
Côté
Crosby (Halifax West)
Darling
de Cotret
Desjardins
Dobbie
Dorin
Duplessis
Epp
Feltham
Fontaine

Andre
Attewell
Belsher
Bird
Blackburn (Jonquière)
Blenkarn
Bourgault
Brightwell
Cardiff
Chadwick
Clifford
Corbett
Crosbie (St. John's West)
Danis
DeBlois
Della Noce
Dick
Domm
Duceppe
Edwards
Fee
Ferland
Fretz

Friesen	Gibeau	Redway	Reid
Gray (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)	Greene	Reimer	Ricard
Grey (Beaver River)	Guilbault	Richardson	Robitaille
Gustafson	Halliday	Rocheleau	Saint-Julien
Harvey (Chicoutimi)	Hawkes	Schneider	Shields
Hicks	Hockin	Sobeski	Soetens
Holtmann	Horner	Sparrow	Tardif
Horning	Hudon	Tétreault	Thacker
Hughes	Jacques	Thompson	Thorkelson
Jelinek	Johnson	Tremblay (Québec-Est)	Tremblay (Lotbinière)
Joncas	Jourdenais	Turner (Halton—Peel)	Van de Walle
Kempling	Koury	Vankoughnet	Venne
Landry	Langlois	Vézina	Vien
Larrivée	Layton	Vincent	Weiner
Lewis	Littlechild	Wenman	White
Loiselle	Lopez	Wilbee	Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia)
MacDonald (Rosedale)	MacDougall (Timiskaming)	Winegard	Wilson (Etobicoke Centre)
MacKay	Malone		Worthy—135
Marin	Martin (Lincoln)		
Masse	Mayer		
Mazankowski	McCreath		
McDermid	McKnight		
McLean	Merrithew		
Monteith	Moore		
Nicholson	O'Kurley		
Plamondon	Plourde		
Porter	Pronovost		

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It being 6.15 p.m., this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

The House adjourned at 6.15 p.m.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, March 13, 1991

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 31

[*English*]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. George Proud (Hillsborough): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to affirm that under this government the gap between the rich and the poor is widening at tremendous speed.

While the government plays with the unemployment insurance benefits, employment is suffering its largest drop since 1982 and the economy continues to show no signs of recovery. The Minister of Finance predicted at budget time that the unemployment rate would be 10 per cent, but as I speak today, it is much higher than 10 per cent.

I am afraid for the people of Prince Edward Island and for Canada. The Canadian Jobs Strategy fund has been cut by $100 million. Between April 1990 and January 1991, Canadians have lost 288,000 jobs. At a time when the people of Prince Edward Island need work to support their families, funds for new social housing have been reduced and Islanders have been forced out into the street.

Since 1984, the people of Prince Edward Island have come to expect economic hardships. How much more will this government ask Islanders to take before it stops catering to the rich and faces the real problems of the average Canadian.

* * *

RED CROSS SOCIETY

Mr. Terry Clifford (London—Middlesex): Madam Speaker, when we are honouring Canadians for their efforts in the Persian Gulf war, let us not forget one of Canada's great traditions, the Red Cross Society, leaders in international war relief.

To assist them in the role of the Persian Gulf, the federal government has pledged $4 million. In addition to this money, the society has launched a $1 million Persian Gulf appeal. So far individual Canadians, participating banks, provinces and territorial governments have contributed more than $370,000.

This year, 1991, marks the 95th anniversary of the Canadian Red Cross Society. This volunteer based organization, with over 3,000 volunteers in my city alone, provides emergency relief blood centres to 600 branches in more than 1,000 operating units.

It is particularly fitting at this time, when the original role of the Red Cross is highlighted by the gulf crisis, to invite all Canadians to congratulate the board members and the staff of volunteers of the Red Cross Society. They do a great service for Canada.

* * *

CANADA POST

Ms. Catherine Callbeck (Malpeque): Madam Speaker, without any consultation with the residents to be affected, Canada Post advised the people of Freetown, Breadalbane and Winsloe that all three post offices would be closing down. This "close them down and ask questions later" policy of Canada Post has got to stop.

Once again, the policies of this government have impacted negatively upon the lives of my constituents in Malpeque. Once again, this government has taken away another pillar of rural life in three communities in my riding. Once again, the only federal presence in these three communities is being removed.

The very fabric of rural life is being threatened, and rather than try to assist rural Canada in its fight for survival, this government's policies are accelerating the process.

I call on the federal government to demand that Canada Post review the damage its policies are causing rural communities. It is obvious the needs of rural

Canadians are a low priority for Canada Post and for this Conservative government.

CLEAN AIR ACCORD

Ms. Lynn Hunter (Saanich—Gulf Islands): Madam Speaker, today's much-touted Clean Air Accord remains deficient; celebration is premature. The ceremonial signing offers appearance without substance, hiding government failings in a flashy replay of previous agreements.

Compliance mechanisms required from monitoring and enforcement remain window dressing at best. Transboundary pollution of Canadian lands by toxic chemicals continue to be a threat. Funding for energy conservation and alternatives to fossil fuels has been slashed. December's promise by the environment minister for national acid rain caps in the Green Plan has been forgotten. Federal air standard agreements with the three western provinces have not been achieved.

This accord may be better than nothing, however, it fails to prevent pollution or protect the health and environment of Canadians. It leaves Canada satisfied to follow the lead of the U.S. in setting standards for air emissions and fails to commit the resources to determine our own stringent regulations for the well-being of Canada's future.

* * *

KIDNEY FOUNDATION OF CANADA

Mr. Harry Chadwick (Bramalea—Gore—Malton): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to express my appreciation and sincere good wishes to the Kidney Foundation of Canada on the occasion of Kidney Month for 1991.

Dedicated volunteers of the Kidney Foundation of Canada ensure that Canadians afflicted with kidney disease and related disorders have access to quality information and specialized services.

In addition, the Kidney Foundation of Canada, with the help of thousands of donors, raises significant sums of money which go toward research and public education programs. The foundation's diligent work in enhancing the quality of life for people with kidney disease and in sensitizing all Canadians to the special needs of those affected is to be commended.

I invite all Canadians to join me in saluting the members of the Kidney Foundation of Canada and in wishing them continued success in their important work in promoting public awareness of kidney disease, supporting excellence in research and encouraging organ donation.

* * *

ACID RAIN

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Madam Speaker, to you, first of all, and your colleagues, my congratulations for the role you have played over the last decade in the long and difficult saga of reducing acid rain pollution in Canada.

• (1410)

As the Prime Minister and President Bush pose for a photo opportunity today, 3.2 million tonnes of sulphur dioxide pollution continue to cross from the U.S. to Canada every year. Put another way, in the 17 hours that President Bush is in Canada, over 6,000 tonnes of U.S. pollution will have crossed the border too. By 1995, 2.7 million tonnes per year will continue to drift our way and, by the year 2000, still two million tons.

Therefore, the Canadian public should keep in mind that the political accord signed today is only the first, not the final, step in the battle against transboundary acid rain. The next phase is to establish how much we must reduce acid gas emissions beyond the 50 per cent goal that was established a decade ago.

The acid rain battle is far from over.

* * *

[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Gilles Bernier (Beauce): Madam Speaker, my statement concerns acid rain. Once again, we see the benefits of co-operation between the United States and Canada. In a few moments, a very important event will take place in Parliament.

The President of the United States, Mr. Bush, and the Prime Minister of Canada, Mr. Mulroney, will sign an air quality agreement. As result of this agreement, substan-

tial funds in the United States and Canada will be released to guarantee cleaner air for a healthier environment in both our countries.

This is a great day for the whole North American continent, since our countries are committed to controlling transboundary air pollution. I want Quebecers and the people of Beauce to realize that without the leadership shown by Brian Mulroney, today's ceremony would not take place.

Madam Speaker, as the member for Beauce, I take pride in having organized a major seminar on acid rain and in having kept up the pressure on the government. Once again, the voice of the people of Beauce has been heard!

* * *

[*English*]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie): Madam Speaker, since President Bush is in town today, I hope the Prime Minister takes an opportunity to discuss the U.S. loan rate on grain with him. The loan rate guides the price established on the Chicago grain market, and a modest increase of at least $1 a bushel in the loan rate would substantially raise world grain prices and reduce government deficiency payment expenditures to farmers.

Beneficiaries of such a policy would be taxpayers in the U.S. and Canada and farmers in both countries and in all other countries, including Third World farmers; U.S.-Canada deficits would be reduced; trade figures and trade balances in Canada and the U.S. would increase substantially.

Surely our leaders cannot reject such a good and sensible proposal, and I trust that the Prime Minister and the President will be able to make such an announcement after today.

* * *

CLEAN AIR ACCORD

Mr. Stan Darling (Parry Sound—Muskoka): Madam Speaker, at 3:35 p.m. this afternoon, our two great nations will conclude a formal Canada-U.S. air quality agreement of historical proportions. With the signatures of President George Bush and the Right Hon. Prime Minister Brian Mulroney firmly affixed to the document, a major precedent will have been set in undoing some of the damage man has inflicted on the environment.

Beyond a doubt, the fight against acid rain has been long and hard but Prime Minister Brian Mulroney is to be commended. By placing acid rain high on his personal agenda, we are here today reaping the fruits of his efforts.

As one of the many who has been heavily involved in the battle against acid rain for over ten years, I can honestly say that today is the culmination of time and energy well spent and invested. The future now looks clearer and cleaner.

As well, we must not fail to commend Speaker Fraser for the great job that he has done as an environmentalist and a former Minister of the Environment.

* * *

MIDDLE EAST

Mr. David Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): Madam Speaker, the most positive outcome to the recent war in the gulf would, of course, be a lasting peace between Israel and its Arab neighbours. When we consider that Jews, Muslims and Christians have lived side by side in the Middle East for thousands of years, such a peace is long past due. Until now, the deep rifts of hatred and misunderstanding have often led to horrible abuses. For example, Jews, living in Syria since before Roman times, see their most basic rights denied.

In the past we have had difficult and unpleasant relationships with Syria, but during the gulf war Syria was our ally; Syria was Israel's ally. This very fact of fighting on the same side has created an opening for new understanding between them.

Peace must be built on such an understanding and human rights abuses on all sides must stop.

* * *

[*Translation*]

THE BLOC QUEBECOIS

Mr. Gilles Rocheleau (Hull—Aylmer): Madam Speaker, I have an important point to make, further to what was said by the Prime Minister yesterday in the House. The Prime Minister said that reconciliation does not come easy. It calls for humility and understanding. It

means the whole family must be able to discuss their problems.

Yesterday, in this very House, members of the Bloc Quebecois wanted to take part in the debate on the motion presented by the New Democratic Party, and we were denied the right to speak directly to the motion. We were only allowed to ask questions but not to speak to the motion as such. Is that Quebec's place within Canada? Is that the kind of respect Canada has for Quebec: Ask questions but don't speak to the motion? Madam Speaker, I should think that in the interests of democracy and out of respect for the rights of all members, you would want to hear what everyone in this House has to say.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Madam Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of the Environment, I would like to direct my question to the Deputy Prime Minister. If an agreement on the environment is to be at all useful, it must contain the following: sanctions, enforcement, mechanisms for public scrutiny, independent monitoring mechanisms. My question is this: Can the Deputy Prime Minister give the House the assurance that the air pollution agreement to be signed today meets all these criteria? Can he give us the assurance it will not be just another case of window-dressing, like the Green Plan?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Madam Speaker, today is an historic date for Canada. Our Prime Minister and President Bush will be signing an agreement very shortly. We have been discussing these possibilities since 1978, as some of my fellow members who were in the House at the time will remember and others who were not. However, the Prime Minister, Brian Mulroney, was the first one to raise this issue, with very substantial support from all concerned, and especially from the hon. member for Parry Sound—Muskoka who, for as long as I have known him, has worked very hard on this issue, and I want to congratulate all those who have given this matter their support.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Madam Speaker, members of the government ought to know that this initiative was begun by my colleague. That is where it started.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Martin: I will say something else. The agreement that this government finally came to is just so much political puffery and so is this minister's answer.

The issue in an international agreement, if the minister does not know, ought to be, how can the citizens of each country be assured that the other country will carry out its terms?

The question I put to the minister is this. Is this agreement enforceable, one country versus the other? If not, of what value is it other than to provide a photo-op for a couple of Tories?

An hon. member: Sour grapes.

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Madam Speaker, the policies of his hon. colleagues did little or almost nothing in this area for 20 years.

Some hon. members: Nothing, nothing.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Weiner: Today is a day to reflect on achievement and accomplishment, to celebrate what we have been able to do together. A vigorous new partnership has been brought together. Why not congratulate today instead of belittling. Today is a day to reflect on this success.

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Madam Speaker, it is very clear that the agreement is not enforcable; that the agreement is an empty agreement. This is an agreement of absolutely no significance, so let us go on to something that is.

This week the Rawson Academy reported on the secret diversion of water from Saskatchewan to the United States. In the last two months, a number of incidences have been reported of potential exports of water. Let there be no mistake about it. We are dealing with potential precedents under the free trade agreement. The question is when will this government bring forth comprehensive legislation on water exports so that

Canadian citizens, both those who are for and against, can argue the issue out in public debate?

• (1420)

The true question is when will this government understand that Canadians do not want to be faced with a *fait accompli* by a government that is hiding its true agenda under a mound of public relations flackery.

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Mr. Speaker, when will that member understand that this Canada–U.S. agreement does not allow for water exports.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Weiner: Except for bottled water, of course, which, coincidentally, I am able to buy from time to time in the United States.

An hon. member: There you go.

Mr. Weiner: The United States is entitled to a certain portion of the natural flow of the Souris River according to a water apportionment agreement which was developed by the IJC in 1959 and revised as part of this agreement.

The licence issued on August 31, 1989, under the International River Improvements Act, included a condition prohibiting any water diversion from outside the Souris River drainage basin which would increase the natural flow of the river at the international boundary.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. Yesterday the Minister of the Environment and another minister told the House that a 1959 agreement developed by the International Joint Commission controls the diversion of Canadian waters to the United States.

Surely both ministers are aware that the IJC, a hallmark of co–operation between Canada and the United States, was entirely excluded from the amendments to that agreement, which are contained in the Rafferty–Alameda agreement—

Mr. Harvard: Shame.

Mrs. Catterall: —which are effective for 100 years and that even today the International Joint Commission has not been informed that its mandate has changed.

Will the Deputy Prime Minister commit the government to immediately call on the expertise of the International Joint Commission and get an agreement that lets Canada control Canadian water in the interests of Canadians?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Madam Speaker, I am sure I was clear in what I said.

Mr. Cadieux: Absolutely.

Mr. Weiner: The agreement that is in place does not allow export of any water except bottled water. The IJC is a public body. The United States is entitled to what I underlined and I am sure when the hon. member reflects on the answer that I have given her colleague, she will appreciate that there is absolutely nothing but bottled water that could be available right now in the United States.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Madam Speaker, I can understand that the minister is not familiar with the agreement, but it is very clear that this agreement for 100 years surrenders control of Canadian water, no matter what Canadian needs are. Surely, both Canadians and Americans are entitled to a straightforward position and answer from the government on Canadian water and its availability to Americans.

Will the Prime Minister take the occasion of President Bush's visit to say that an unfortunate error has been made with this agreement, that it is not acceptable to Canada. The President is a reasonable man and I am sure he will understand that the Prime Minister wants to correct his mistake.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Madam Speaker, the straight answer is no. No.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

BUSINESS COUNCIL ON NATIONAL ISSUES

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Madam Speaker, the Business Council on National Issues is one of the loudest big business voices calling for major cuts in government spending. The BCNI in fact has called for "sacrifices on the part of everyone" and said that no money at all should go to business.

Yet, now we learn incredibly that this government is giving $400,000 as a hand-out to the BCNI to help with the study. Will this government block this hand-out to the corporate elite and tell the BCNI that this is the sacrifice that it must make?

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I should point out to the hon. member that this was a study that we wanted to do in the government. We went to the BCNI and asked it to share in the cost of this study. It agreed to share in the cost of that study. The reason why we asked it to share is because we view the question of competitiveness as a matter which involves both the private sector and the public sector.

We are participating in that study, the BCNI is participating in the study, and I believe there are others who are participating in that study, because we believe that with a partnership, with both private sector and public sector addressing this problem, we can have a broader commitment and therefore broader chances of success.

* * *

CAPITAL GAINS TAX

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona): Madam Speaker, while we are on the topic of hand-outs to the BCNI, I have another question for the Minister of Finance pertaining to the draft legislation that he released on February 11 that allows people to keep the capital gains in private trusts safely sheltered from tax beyond the original 21-year period that ends in 1993, allowing some of the wealthiest families in Canada a tax dodge potentially worth billions of dollars.

I want to ask the minister, given his persistent rhetoric about burden sharing and deficit reduction, how he can justify a measure that would allow the super-rich to avoid a tax that they have had 21 years' notice to pay, while calling in his recent budget for everyone's help in sharing the burden of debt.

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): This is one other example where this government is closing a loophole.

The provision was originally put in place in 1971 and explicitly called for more precise rules surrounding this particular rule, and it was contemplated that those rules would be designed prior to the termination of the 21-year period.

What the paper that I released in February does is provide those precise rules which permit the government to put a tighter control on this and avoid the extension of the rule, as my hon. friend would allege.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona): Mr. Speaker, the minister knows that what he is referring to could have been done by another means and is only part of the legislation that I am referring to.

The fact is that this amounts to, as Professor Neil Brooks has said, "a gift worth several billion dollars". Katherine Bush of Blake Cassels says "the government is giving away money".

The fact is that this is a boondoggle, this is a tax break for the very rich, and it belies everything the Minister of Finance says about burden sharing and deficit reduction.

Will the minister rise now and make a commitment not to bring this in; to deal with some of the problems that need to be dealt with in another way, but not to provide this tax break to the rich.

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): I would point out to my hon. friend that if we do not do this, it will be a tax break to the rich. What we are proposing to do with the paper that I put out on February 11 is to bring in far more precise rules to avoid the extension of these trusts, which could be done under the existing rule.

It is another example of this government tightening up on tax provisions to make it far easier for this government to gain a greater share of revenues from people in upper income brackets so that they will bear their fair share of tax.

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT

Mrs. Shirley Maheu (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister responsible for Montreal Island.

In 1990, the manufacturing sector in Montreal lost 31,500 jobs. Today, 188,000 people in Montreal are unemployed.

An hon. member: Shame!

Mrs. Maheu: Forty-one thousand of these jobless are young people. Is that how we build a country? When is the minister going to wake up and do his job, which is to look after the development and prosperity of Montreal?

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Labour and Minister of State (Transport)): Madam Speaker, it takes a lot of nerve for a member of the Liberal Party to try and teach the Conservative Party how to create jobs on Montreal Island.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Corbeil: Perhaps, Madam Speaker, we should make allowances for the hon. member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville who may not have all the facts, but we cannot make the same allowances for the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce who has been sitting in this House as a Liberal member for 25 years.

Before 1984, Madam Speaker, during the last 17 or 18 years the Liberals were in power in this country, Montreal lost not 100, not 200, but 4,000 jobs. When they were defeated—a good thing for Canada—there were 4,000 jobs less on Montreal Island than when they came to power. When this government took over in 1984, it managed to create what is today a total of 83,000 jobs, many of them in the riding of the hon. member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, when for instance, we helped Canadair with the stretch jet.

• (1430)

Mrs. Shirley Maheu (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville): Madam Speaker, the answer is totally unrelated to the current situation in Montreal.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mrs. Maheu: You are always referring to the past, seven years ago. Come back to the present!

My supplementary question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. How can a $100 million cutback in the Canadian Job Strategy make the unemployment rate drop in Montreal where it stands at 15.1 per cent?

Hon. Monique Vézina (Minister of State (Employment and Immigration) and Minister of State (Seniors)): Madam Speaker, if my colleague wants to talk about what has been happening since 1984, I must tell her that economic and regional development agreements with the province of Quebec are already planned and will amount to approximately $440 million for the period between 1988 and 1993. As Minister of State working with the hon. Barbara McDougall, I have personally participated in the constitution of committees in support of the recommendations of the CREESOM Report. We developped programs concerning the industrial base, with the help of the Department of Industry, Science and Technology. I could also mention the housing assistance we provided.

In response to the hon. member, the $100 million cut she is referring to will enable us to pursue the programs that are already part of the process. We will continue to work with the collectivities which are aware of their needs and we will identify priorities. Bill C-21 and the Labour Force Strategy finally enable us to provide training and have an adequate labour force. I could go on. We supported MACs. I was with my colleague in Montreal, last Monday, to make a joint announcement—

Madam Deputy Speaker: I think the hon. minister will have a chance to finish answering later.

The hon. member for Hamilton East.

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the same minister. The government's logic is pitiful. She claims that taking $100 million out of the job creation budget is going to help 41,000 unemployed young people in Montreal. Considering that 41,000 young people under 30 have been laid off in Montreal since last year, doesn't this government realize it is destroying the heart and soul of one of the greatest cities in the world? When is it going to do something to create jobs instead of spouting political rhetoric?

Hon. Monique Vézina (Minister of State (Employment and Immigration) and Minister of State (Seniors)): Madam Speaker, I may remind the hon. member that the Canadian Jobs Strategy is part of our global strategy at the Department of Employment and Immigration. For

the current year, we have a global budget of $1.7 billion, an increase over last year's. Repeat, we intend to keep implementing community-based programs. Our philosphy, which has been applied since 1984, has proved to our satisfaction that this is the right way to do it, and that is why we will keep trying to create jobs and get through the recession. We have helped in the past, and we will continue to do so in the future.

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Acting Prime Minister. Considering the Minister responsible for Montreal has utterly failed in his task, doesn't he think it is time to give the people of Montreal jobs and some real hope, and that a first step in this direction would be to get rid of the minister who is supposed to be responsible for employment in Montreal?

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Labour and Minister of State (Transport)): Madam Speaker, once again it is clear that hon. members opposite are totally irresponsible, considering the fact that for over a year, they prevented Bill C-21 from being passed, legislation that would provide hundreds of millions of dollars for training and retraining. Today, those same members are complaining that workers are not able to adjust to the new technological jobs we have created, and I simply want to mention some recent measures taken by the federal government. We helped set up the training centre for the petrochemical industry. We helped establish the training centre for flat glass workers. We invested several million dollars in Canadair to update the stretch jet. We contributed $40 million to a—

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am sure the minister will want to continue at some other time.

* * *

[*English*]

ATLANTIC CANADA OPPORTUNITIES AGENCY

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Madam Speaker, my question is addressed to the minister responsible for ACOA. Is the minister prepared today, as he suggested he might be yesterday, to identify or otherwise characterize those 12 Enterprise Cape Breton or ACOA supported projects that are under RCMP investigation, a fact that he revealed also yesterday?

Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Minister of Public Works): Madam Speaker, I want to tell my colleague that I welcome his interest in helping the part of Canada that badly needs help, but I would hope his interest would be more constructive and less prurient.

I told him frankly in answer to a direct question that there were RCMP investigations. If I were to give him any more details, he would be the first one to condemn me for lack of giving these people and these organizations due process.

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Madam Speaker, of course I hope the minister realizes by failing to provide even minimal information, he leaves a cloud over a good many projects supported by ACOA.

My supplementary is that on May 10, 1990, when some very serious questions were raised about the ECB support for Technitread, which is also now under RCMP investigation, the minister said if there were a mistake made, he would take full responsibility for it. There have been a lot of mistakes made at ECB and at ACOA.

Is the minister now prepared to take the appropriate ministerial responsibility for those 12 RCMP investigations; for Nsc Diesel, Celcom, Universal Metals, Arrow LM, Hi Tech Woodworkers, Atlantic Defence Industries and for that salmon farm, all of which, it would seem to me, Madam Speaker, are serious mistakes?

Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Minister of Public Works): I wish my good friend would fuel his questions with less vitriol and adrenalin and little bit more logic. He must know, being a very erudite individual, that these particular instances are under investigation. They do require due process of law. As the president of ACOA pointed out yesterday, some 7,600 of these enterprises have succeeded with a great deal of economic benefit to a poor region of Canada.

If he wishes to kick the entrails of 12 that are in trouble, then that is up to him.

HOUSING

Ms. Barbara Greene (Don Valley North): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State for Housing. The Toronto *Star* recently quoted Mayor Lastman of the city of North York as saying that he has not heard form the federal government any more on the Downsview housing initiative and that it does not appear to be working on it.

Has the federal government given up on its proposal to make more affordable housing available to people at Downsview?

Hon. Alan Redway (Minister of State (Housing)): Madam Speaker, most certainly the federal government has not given up on that initiative. In fact, when the concept plan for housing on that particular site was completed, it became clear that the traffic capacity on the roads in the area was overburdened and that in order to solve that problem it was going to involve the de Havilland property.

• (1440)

Unfortunately, until we find a resolution to the ownership of Boeing for de Havilland, it is impossible to resolve the traffic problem in the area. However, talks are ongoing on a regular basis, in fact usually on a weekly basis, with the staff of the city of North York. It is very much on the go.

Ms. Barbara Greene (Don Valley North): Madam Speaker, why is five million square feet of office construction going ahead on Yonge Street but housing that is affordable cannot go ahead in Downsview?

Hon. Alan Redway (Minister of State (Housing)): Madam Speaker, again I think the hon. member appreciates that there are a number of issues involved with this particular site.

One is sewers, which obviously is an aspect that involves the Yonge Street development and commercial development. Certainly that involves the Downsview property as well, but that is not the key to the Downsview property at the moment. The key is solving the traffic problems, and that depends on what is ongoing on the ownership of Boeing for the de Havilland site.

FISHERIES

Hon. Roger C. Simmons (Burin—St. George's): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans who will be aware of the incident at his offices in Port aux Basques yesterday.

I do not ask the minister to condone the vandalism; I certainly do not, but I do ask him not to blind himself to the real issue here, which is a desperate cry for help, for some attention, from the fishermen and plant workers whose only demand of the minister is that he let them go out there and catch fish and cut it.

He knows that he can solve this problem by a stroke of the pen, by making a simple paper transaction between two adjacent zones, between 4–R and 3–PN with respect to redfish. I ask the minister now: Would he agree to do that?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Madam Speaker, maybe the hon. member does not condone these acts, and I do not either, but I would want the House to recall that last year, for example, the people in that very area were experiencing a similar problem.

This government funnelled over $3 million through the local IAS committee to look after the welfare of those people, so I do not see why it was necessary to resort to that kind of violent action yesterday to draw attention to the problem. I do not think it is necessary at all.

As for the question of whether we are going to take fish from 4–R and give it to 3–PN, he will recall that this minister gave these inshore fishermen double the quota of redfish in 4–RST.

Today I am being asked to take the fish away from Paul and give it to Pierre. No, I will not do that.

Hon. Roger C. Simmons (Burin—St. George's): Madam Speaker, first of all I say to the minister that it is not welfare these people want; it is some work.

It is his own diabolical agenda which has incited those people in the first place. He has refused for seven months to meet with them. He botched the opening of the winter fishery. He slapped on outrageous user fees at a time when they could not pay, and now he refuses to make a simple paper transaction.

Will he call off this deliberate campaign he has going against fishermen and plant workers, his cowardly intimidation and harassment of people whose only sin is that they would like to work?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Madam Speaker, it takes the tiny politician in the hon. member to try to score political points out of the misery of people. That is what he is doing.

Madam Speaker, a stroke of the pen. We are talking in Newfoundland, Labrador and all the rest of Atlantic Canada about a sustainable fishery. We have worked with these fishermen, these people; we keep working with them. They have asked us to enforce the rules. Now that the rules do not seem to fit a little tiny group, they want me to put all the rules aside.

I will not do that, and the member knows it. What he is asking me to do, what he does not want the people to acknowledge, what he does not want the people to know, is that we took the allowance.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

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PORK PRODUCERS

Hon. Ralph Ferguson (Lambton—Middlesex): Madam Speaker, in March 1987, Canadian pork producers were assured by the Prime Minister in this House of Commons that a free trade agreement with the United States would help Canadian farmers by increasing predictability and security of access of exports by the farm sector to United States markets.

Now, four years later, the United States is refusing to accept the January decision of the free trade dispute settling mechanism on Canadian pork exports.

Can the Minister for International Trade inform this House of the nature of the discussions between the Prime Minister and President Bush today on this most important matter?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Madam Speaker, the series of actions that we have taken together with Canadian pork producers in connection with pork has been an unparalleled example of success. We have been successful in the GATT panel with reference to this question. We have been successful with respect to a panel under the U.S.—Canada Free Trade Agreement.

Now, in desperation, the U.S. National Pork Producers Council has filed a petition asking United States trade representatives to establish an extraordinary challenge committee to review the panel's action. That is an act of desperation on its part. It is an extraordinary procedure the council is asking to be used which has not been used so far. It can only properly be used with respect to some misbehaviour of panel members. It is extremely unlikely, if the USTR gives permission for it to go forward, that it would be successful.

To date our record is unparalleled in the success we have had under the U.S.—Canada Free Trade Agreement in this important area.

Hon. Ralph Ferguson (Lambton—Middlesex): Madam Speaker, Canadian pork exported to the United States makes up about 3 per cent to 4 per cent of its total market, yet this harassment continues.

In 1987, Clayton Yeutter, told his colleagues that in the event of a dispute between the free trade agreement and U.S. trade remedy laws, the U.S. law shall prevail.

Can the minister assure this House that yet another panel review, article 1904 of the free trade agreement, will not be superseded by U.S. trade remedy laws?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Madam Speaker, this is a matter that started, actually back before—

Mr. Peterson: Before Confederation.

Mr. Crosbie: No, not before Confederation; before Canada received enlightenment and we took over in 1984. This is a matter that started then.

Thank heaven we have the U.S. Canada—Free Trade Agreement, so we have the process we are now going through.

I can only say that when this whole process is through, $70 million will be coming back to Canadian pork producers and the value of the U.S.—Canada FTA will be proven beyond doubt for every member of this House.

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ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

President Bush, as I am sure the Deputy Prime Minister knows, has endorsed plans to drill unlawfully for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. This is the last great tract of pristine land in the United States and is the calving ground for Canada's 180,000-strong porcupine caribou herd.

Since the United States energy secretary yesterday warned that the President will veto any attempts to protect the wildlife refuge, in particular the 10-02 lands, will the Deputy Prime Minister tell Canadians what steps he and the Prime Minister will be taking to drive home to President Bush that the drilling in the refuge will violate four international agreements with Canada and decimate one of the last great wild herds of mammals on earth?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, as the hon. member would know, the position of Canada on ANWR has been clearly stated a number of times, both from External Affairs as well as International Relations at the highest level.

Also the member should note that when the Secretary of Energy for the United States put forward his new national energy strategy, it was out of a long list of public hearings they had on how they could increase the domestic production of oil and gas. That is their position. Our position on ANWR has not changed from that stated previously.

* * *

• (1450)

HUDSON BAY MINING AND SMELTING

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Madam Speaker, my question is for the same minister. I gave him notice earlier today of this question.

The minister is aware of the Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting, which is the sixth largest source of sulphur dioxide emissions in Canada, over 250,000 tonnes in 1990, must start to modernize now in order to meet the Canadian SO_2 by 1994.

Will the minister confirm that the federal government will participate in the modernization plan through loan financing? While he is on his feet, will he also assure the communities and workers affected that the final decision will be made soon?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the courtesy he extended to me by giving me notice of this question.

The hon. member will know that there have been negotiations on HBMS for some period of time. It is in conjunction with what we are celebrating today, namely the accord that is being signed between our country and the United States. With the seven eastern provinces, including Manitoba in that configuration, we were party to reducing SO_2 emissions.

I can tell the hon. member from the federal point of view that we have concluded our negotiations. I believe the province of Manitoba has also accepted that and we have also conveyed that to HBMS. In fact, I have conveyed to the other two parties that whenever they are ready to sign the agreement we stand ready to sign it. I think we will do it literally within days if suitable dates can be found.

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CSIS

Mr. David Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Solicitor General.

Will the minister tell the House why Ryszard Paszkowski of Edmonton was sent by CSIS to Rome during the summer of 1986?

Hon. Pierre H. Cadieux (Solicitor General of Canada): Madam Speaker, I would just like to remind my hon. colleague that he tabled an Order Paper Question to that effect, I believe on March 7 or 8, and it will be replied to at an appropriate time.

Mr. David Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast): Madam Speaker, the Solicitor General should be aware that a government travel document was provided by CSIS to Paszkowski that summer. This has been documented by Richard Cleroux in his book *Official Secrets*.

My supplementary question is for the Acting Minister of Employment and Immigration. Excuse me for putting it in English.

Mr. Paszkowski's wife, Elzbieta, has recently been found, as the minister knows, to be a refugee in Canada. The minister's own department is seeking to expel him. Will the minister not intervene in this case to allow her

husband who has rendered significant services, I believe, to CSIS, to remain in this country with his wife and son?

Hon. Pierre H. Cadieux (Solicitor General of Canada): Madam Speaker, I would just like to tell my hon. friend that if he knows the answer to the question I do not see why he is asking it, assuming that the information as to that travel document which he alleges is true. I will neither deny or confirm that.

With respect to the book to which he refers, I do not think it is my responsibility to become a literary critic. With respect to Mr. Paszkowski, as my hon. friend knows, SIRC has looked into the case of Mr. Paszkowski. In its report of 1987–88. SIRC said: "We satisfied ourselves that CSIS dealt properly with Mr. Paszkowski".

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PENITENTIARIES

Mr. George S. Rideout (Moncton): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Solicitor General.

Recent events at the prison at Renous involving Allan Legere have led to questions regarding security in our prisons. Allan Legere, the convicted murderer who escaped last year, has had unauthorized and unsupervised visits, and potentially dangerous metal objects were discovered.

What is the minister doing to resolve this dangerous situation and to reassure the people of New Brunswick?

Hon. Pierre H. Cadieux (Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Legere is not presently entitled, Madam Speaker, to any contact visits.

Mr. George S. Rideout (Moncton): Madam Speaker, I am concerned about public safety and the citizens of New Brunswick are also concerned. They remember well when Legere escaped and was on the loose for six months. He is in familiar territory and he knows the guards and the people in that area.

Would the minister be willing to arrange for Legere to be moved to a special handling unit outside the Renous prison in another institution?

Hon. Pierre H. Cadieux (Solicitor General of Canada): Madam Speaker, the security measures with respect to Mr. Legere have been reviewed, and all appropriate corrections have been taken.

EL SALVADOR

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade in his capacity as Acting Secretary of State for External Affairs.

It concerns the recent election in El Salvador which according to OAS observers from Canada and elsewhere was marked by intimidation, threats and fraud.

In view of the latest allegations that the ARENA Party which controls the electoral council is trying to manipulate the election results to place the democratic convergence in fourth place despite its strong third place showing, will the minister assure the House that he will voice Canada's serious concern to the El Salvadoran authorities about this attempt to steal the apparent victory of the democratic opposition in these already very seriously flawed elections?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Madam Speaker, with reference to the legislative and municipal elections in question which were held March 10, Canada dispatched eight official observers to the elections who were serving with the Organization of American States monitoring group.

They are going to report to the OAS, and we will have an opportunity to hear their views informally once they return from El Salvador.

In addition to the eight official observers, we had an unofficial observer in the person of the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina. He was down there as well. I do not see him back as yet, but we would be pleased to hear from him when he comes back.

At the present time, based on the heap of information we have, we cannot give a definitive reply. When we receive these reports from our observers, we will then make a considered opinion on this matter.

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway): Madam Speaker, I am sure that the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina who is in the region would be pleased to speak on behalf of the Government of Canada on this question, if he is authorized to do so.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Robinson: Since January 15, when U.S. President George Bush released some $42.5 million in military aid to the brutal military authorities in El Salvador, death squads have killed and injured El Salvadorans in El Zapote and elsewhere. Troops have detained journalists

and the offices of the newspaper *Diario Latino* were destroyed.

I want to ask the acting minister: Will the Prime Minister today, in his meeting with U.S. President George Bush, urge President Bush to stop funding this bloody military regime which has been responsible for over 70,000 deaths? Will he ensure that President George Bush's new world order includes at last a commitment to peace, democracy and justice for the people of El Salvador?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Madam Speaker, I by no means accept all the alleged statements of fact made by the hon. member.

We all do know that there is a very difficult situation in El Salvador and that this has been a very tragic situation for some at least eight or ten years now.

We are pleased that the governments of El Salvador and the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front are continuing peace negotiations, which we would certainly hope and urge could be concluded.

With respect to American policy in the area, that is a matter for the United States government to decide. I believe that today the President and the Prime Minister will be devoting their main efforts to discussing what the chances and prospects are for peaceful solutions in the gulf area in the Middle East. That will be the main thrust of their talks today.

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[*Translation*]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour. In the House last week, Conservative, Liberal and New Democratic members supported my motion to include in the Canada Labour Code a provision for paid precautionary withdrawal from work for pregnant employees in federally-regulated businesses in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada.

Since the motion was introduced the Bloc Quebebois has not joined in this important debate.

My question to the minister: Can he tell us today that our concerns over that issue are under consideration and that the Canada Labour Code will be amended to promote the well-being of pregnant workers in Canada and Quebec?

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Labour and Minister of State (Transport)): Madam Speaker, I commend the member for Abitibi for his enduring concern and his relevant questions. I can assure him that since his representations we did refer the matter to a department committee made up of employers and employees. Once their report has been filed later this spring we intend to introduce the appropriate legislation in early fall.

* * *

• (1500)

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

DESIGNATION OF ALLOTTED DAY

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, I would like to designate tomorrow as an allotted day for the purpose of supply.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

PETITIONS

BALTIC STATES

Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West): I have the honour and duty, pursuant to Standing Order 36, to present a petition certified correct by the clerk of petitions. It contains 688 signatures, gathered in part by the Hamilton Baltic Crisis Committee.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to do two things; first, immediately recognize the legitimate democratically elected governments of Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia and establish diplomatic relations with them and second, demand that the Soviet Union withdraw all its military forces from the three Baltic republics.

GULF WAR

Mr. John Brewin (Victoria): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition under Standing Order 36. The petition is in respect of the gulf war which of course is now over, but it seemed to me important that the views

of those who had signed the petition be recorded in the records of this House and so I file it on their behalf. They had called for a cease-fire. I am sure that the effort they put into this, along with the effort of millions of other Canadians, has been taken into account by this House in its deliberations on this tragic war.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the honour to present a petition which outlines the undue hardships of families that are trying to bring their spouses from India. It now takes three years to bring your spouse from India through immigration procedures.

The petitioners are urging the government to devise a system whereby in a bona fide marriage the spouse would be allowed enter Canada on a visitor's visa, pending the granting of landed immigrant status.

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by a large number of people in my riding who are still hopeful that the government will come to its senses and rescind the goods and services tax.

CANADA POST

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, it is my delight to present a petition signed by almost every single resident in the great community of Westwold, British Columbia, concerning the closure of their post office and urging the government to reconsider the closure. I am pleased to see that my good friend, the minister, is here and perhaps I should pass along this petition to his usual enthusiastic self.

VIA RAIL

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): On another matter, Mr. Speaker, I have a petition on behalf of a number of residents of Kamloops, British Columbia, and some of the communities in the North Thompson Valley.

The petitioners are asking the government to reconsider the decision to cut back on the quality of VIA Rail service and to not only improve VIA Rail service by having a more first rate passenger rail system but also to reinstate the main line route that was cut through the Canadian Rockies.

PARKING

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present which has been signed by hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of taxation data centre employees in Winnipeg. They are protesting the fact the Department of National Revenue has had a policy not to charge its employees for parking where the workplace is located a long distance from public transportation routes. The Department of National Revenue has in the past decided not to charge the employees of the Winnipeg District Taxation Centre for parking for this reason. The employees at the Winnipeg District Taxation Centre have been advised that the Department of National Revenue will begin charging employees for parking even though the centre is no closer to public transportation than before.

All these petitioners are calling upon Parliament to direct the Department of National Revenue to continue to not charge its employees at the Winnipeg District Taxation Centre for parking.

You might notice, Mr. Speaker, that this petition is worded in the past tense as if the parking charges have not already become fact. The fact is that employees are being charged for their parking and this petition is presented late because it took the clerk's office several months to determine whether the petition was in order or not. Therefore, I apologize to the employees for the length of time it took to present this petition and for the fact that they are already being charged for parking. But it had nothing to do with me, Mr. Speaker, it had to do with the quite lengthy, and I believe inappropriate, delay in determining whether this petition was presentable to the House or not.

POST OFFICE

Mr. Robert E. Skelly (Comox—Alberni): Mr. Speaker, I rise under Standing Order 36 to present a petition from constituents in the community of Port Alberni on Vancouver Island. These constituents are complaining about the constant number of what they call unwanted and unfair cutbacks in the postal service in that community.

As Mr. Speaker will know, the post office has been cutting back services in my constituency, closing down rural post offices at Royston and Coombs on central Vancouver Island, and my constituents would like to see the post office restore its customer services and act as if it wanted to stay in the business. They request that Canada Post Corporation be instructed to keep existing

outlets, operate longer hours, expand revenue generating services, stop privatizing, and start increasing services to raise revenues.

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Jerry Pickard (Essex—Kent): Mr. Speaker, I rise today under Standing Order 36 to bring forward petitions asking the government to reconsider the position it has taken with GST on its printed material.

Obviously throughout history, printed material has never been taxed in this country and now, at this time, we are really hurting a lot of Canadians who are going to school and need printed material in order to educate themselves to enter the labour force.

* * *

[*Translation*]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

(Questions answered orally are indicated by an asterisk.)

Mr. Jean-Guy Hudon (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Shall all questions stand?

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. On September 27, 1990 I put motion P-29 on the Order Paper to ask the government to follow up on my request to table in the House copies of all correspondence between His Excellency and Her Majesty the Queen concerning the operation of section 26 of the Constitution Act. I also have motion P-32 dating back to October 19, 1990 and asking for copies of all letters, documents and correspondence exchanged between the Government of Canada and the Government of Quebec concerning the deployment of Canadian Forces at Kahnawake and Kanesatake.

Mr. Speaker, I have been waiting for months. Does the government intend to respond and produce these documents, yes or no? That is a very simple question.

• (1510)

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): These are Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers. We are presently on Questions on the Order Paper. The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Guy Hudon (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence): I am aware that my colleague is getting impatient. As it happens, both these motions for the production of papers are still under consideration. I might point out to my colleague that since the opening of the session we did respond to 31 of 41 such motions, an average of 77 per cent.

I know that my colleague is still waiting for action on his two motions. They are under consideration.

[*English*]

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I wanted to make a similar point in regard to Notice of Motions for the Production of Papers. Is it the wish of the Chair that I wait until that item is called before raising the point?

* * *

[*Translation*]

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Jean-Guy Hudon (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I know my colleagues opposite will not appreciate this, but I ask that the notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

[*English*]

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, on March 7, 1990, I tabled in the House a motion asking for an order of the House to issue a copy of the list of all the strip clubs and other establishments receiving funding from the Federal Business Development Bank since 1972. I want the government to answer this question, No. P-19.

Also, on item No. P-23, standing in my name, on March 28, 1990, I asked for a copy of all logs, registers and correspondence pertaining to the use of CN business cars by Mr. Brian Gallery for the years 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Speaker, I also want the government to tell us if it will answer item No. P–41 standing in my name. That is for the Canada Post Corporation to give us a list of all management personnel that have benefited from golf club memberships.

I want answers to those important questions, Mr. Speaker.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hudon: Mr. Speaker, I made a note of the representations of my colleague and I am sure the government will clarify the matter in the near future.

[*English*]

Motion No. P–19

That an Order of the House do issue for a copy of the current list of all companies, strip clubs and other similar establishments to have received funding or loans directly or indirectly from the Federal Business Development Bank since 1972.

Motion No. P–23

That an Order of the House do issue for copies of all logs, registers, correspondence and reports pertaining to the use of CN business cars by Mr. Brian O'N. Gallery in 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990.

Motion No. P–41

That an Order of the House do issue for copies of invoices or summaries of invoices outlining any or all expenses of the Canada Post Corporation in purchasing golf club memberships for its management, board of directors and employees, including the names of all persons benefiting from the expenditures in question.

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to our rules, I would ask that all three of those items, the one in relation to CN business cars, the one in relation to strip clubs that have been financed by the government and the one in the relation to golf club memberships bought for Canada Post officials with public dollars, be transferred for debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Transferred for debate.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S. O. 81—VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Mary Clancy (Halifax) moved:

That this House call upon the Prime Minister to appoint a royal commission on violence against women.

She said: I rise today in support of this motion because the women of Canada are in crisis. It is unfortunate that it took the unmitigated tragedy of December 1989 in Montreal to bring to our attention the crisis facing Canadian women in the area of violence. In my party we call most strongly for the appointment of a royal commission on violence against women.

We are not alone in this call. We are supported by our colleagues to the left in the New Democratic Party. We are also supported by any number of women's groups, nationally, regionally and provincially, some of whom I will be speaking about later in my remarks.

I am going to go at this in a rather unusual way to begin, in that I am going to talk about the reasons against a royal commission.

One of the reasons most frequently cited since various women's groups and political parties have been calling for the establishment of such a commission has been the cost. There is no question when Canada is in a recession, when cutbacks are facing us all, that we all have to be concerned with the question of costs.

The second area with relation to costs has been raised again by a number of people. The cost of a royal commission would be better spent on direct services to women in crisis, to transition houses and so on.

Indeed, if I thought that kind of money would go in direct services, the kind of money it takes to run a royal commission, I might be briefly tempted to adhere to those beliefs myself. But it would be a brief temptation. I will go into the reason I say when I speak of the reasons for a royal commission.

But let me come up against some other criticisms. Frequently we hear that the reports of royal commissions are left to die on the shelves of libraries across the country. They gather dust or they are only partially implemented. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, that is true.

Just some royal commissions that have been left to this fate are the Cooke commission on child care in Canada, the Abella commission on employment equity, the Fraser commission on pornography and prostitution, and many, many sections of Senator Florence Bird's incredible and, if I may call it this, "the grandmother of royal

commissions", the 1970 Royal Commission on the Status of Women.

Royal commissions tend right now to be a bit in disfavour because of the Spicer Commission, which is irritating many Canadians because of what they see as amorphous and fuzzy national exercises in navel gazing. But a royal commission, constituted correctly, rooted in women's experience, with built-in guarantees can create the kind of action and the kind of success that we desperately need.

First of all, a royal commission on violence against women, before it is appointed, the Prime Minister and the government should engage in a wide consultation with front-line workers, with transition house staff, with sexual assault crisis centre workers, with women's centre workers, with police in those few municipalities with programs that truly identify problems and respond appropriately; and with academics in women's studies, sociology, anthropology, criminology and various other relevant departments.

I said that a number of women's groups, nation-wide, have been calling for the appointment of a royal commission on violence against women. Some of these groups are the YWCA of Canada, various advisory councils around the country, the Canadian Research Institution for the Advancement of Women and the Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women—just to name a few. They are calling for a royal commission, always provided that it is not a way to back-burner an issue that is facing us on a daily basis and threatening the lives of women.

The mandate of a royal commission must be to hear the experience of the victims, to determine empirically the incidence of violence against women. We suspect that as yet we cannot prove empirically that violence against women crosses all boundaries—economic, social, cultural and educational.

The royal commission must seek out the causes of violence against women. Is it related to alcohol and drug abuse? Is it stress related due to economic conditions? Is it rooted in the economic dependency of women? Is it rooted in the fact that women are, in general, physically weaker than men? Is there, indeed, one lowest common denominator, or are there a variety of indicators and triggers?

Yesterday at the Subcommittee on Violence Against Women, Dr. Eileen Sanders of Carleton University's School of Journalism spoke to us on violence in the media.

• (1520)

One of the things she told us was that the traditional areas of research are inadequate to deal with this problem. In other words, the all-pervasiveness of violence, and in particular violence against women, in our society does not necessarily respond to old-style cause and effect research projects. We must look at a broader base and a broader experience of women throughout the country and of those who work with women in crisis to give us at least the beginning of the answers we need to construct the solutions.

Can we predetermine indicators of violence and can we thus educate and violence-proof our children to break what has become a vicious cycle of abuse in our society?

Ever since the Montreal massacre, women across the country, and men too, have been galvanized—academics, professionals, housewives—asking why. Why is it that our country and western society in general, indeed world society, is faced with what is a plague of violent behaviour of men toward women? Women are asking, perhaps in the saddest voices of all, how do we protect ourselves and how does society help us protect ourselves, most terribly from those we love?

Random violence in the street is terrifying, but how much more terrifying is violence against women which, like its antithesis, charity, appears to begin and flourish at home. It is a fact that in this country women are beaten and murdered primarily by their partners. One suspects, and I say again, this is the problem, suspicion is not empirical proof that the increasing violence against women by strangers, Marc Lepine, date rape, street attacks, stem from societal attitudes.

Clearly, to some extent, if women and beaten and harassed at home, and as a society we do nothing constructive to combat this, then an insidious belief that the battering of women is inconsequential becomes *de facto* a part of our communal fabric. We need desperate-

ly to shine the harsh light of reality on this dark side of our society, on this dark side of too many people's daily lives.

Again, we believe that a royal commission, travelling nation-wide, hearing evidence nation-wide, can do this where lesser initiatives cannot.

Many women committed to ending this horror say that money spent on a royal commission, as I said before, would be better spent on direct services. Let me state now that I, and my colleagues in this party, men and women, have and will continue to plead for money for services. It is a national scandal that 50 per cent of the women and their children who seek help from transition houses must be turned away. Yes, 50 per cent. That is both disgraceful and terrifying.

Remember, this is not an either/or situation. We desperately need both. We need transition houses, but we also need the research, the education and the publicity that a royal commission can engender.

We know, for example, that the province of Ontario in the last several years put on an excellent ad campaign to raise awareness of the battery of women. Hosts of women in that province, encouraged by these ads, came forward to seek assistance. They were turned away because the money, the beds, the facilities just were not there.

We also know that as yet many judges and legislators and police still do not react correctly. Every lawyer and social worker in this House knows the answer to this one. Police in general do not respond to domestic disputes as they do to other complaints. I recall one incident when a battered wife who had a court order from the Chief Justice. She called me on the phone and said her husband was banging down her kitchen door with a baseball bat, that she had the police department on the other line and they were saying to her: "How do we know you have a court order". I called them, identified myself, told them of the court order, gave them the date and all the relevant information and they still refused to come.

Fortunately, that particular incident did not end in actual physical abuse. But, I ask all members of this House to imagine the psychological abuse that took place from that encounter. Imagine the kind of faith that woman would have in our system after that took place.

Too many judges sentence when a conviction is obtained inappropriately. We cannot forget, and it is again to our national shame, that in this country in the last two years we heard one judge call a pre-school female child sexually provocative. We heard another judge state that sexual assaults on native women were less serious because the women may have been drinking or sleeping in a public place. Another judge in the province of Ontario implied that an exotic dancer, the victim of a sexual assault, had by reason of her employment invited the assault and thus gave up her right to say no.

As a nation, we must act now to stem this tide of violence. Those bright, ambitious and non-traditional young women who died so tragically at *École Polytechnique* must be memorialized, but not by white roses, white ribbons or plaques, but by remedies.

We cannot restore their lives. We cannot return them to their families, to their beginning careers, to their friends, nor can we restore the lives of the other 119 women who died in 1989 in Canada at the hands of their partners.

The other day, in questioning the Prime Minister about the economic situation facing women in this country, he responded with a list of appointments made by the federal government of women to boards, commissions, to the courts and so on. I have applauded every one of those appointments, but that was not the issue. The issue is ostensibly economic and, I believe, inextricably wrapped up with the issue of violence is the position of women in our society.

I would like to respond to the Prime Minister with a few facts of my own from the Index on Canadian Women, published in December 1990.

We already know, we have heard it *ad nauseam*, that Statistics Canada reports that women still earn only 66 cents for every dollar earned by men, that Canadian women face a higher risk of being poor than men. The National Council of Welfare reports that in 1987, 57 per cent of single mothers lived below the poverty line and that 1,515,000 Canadian women lived in poverty. That was four years ago. We were not in a recession in 1987. How much worse are those figures today?

Statistics Canada figures for 1988 show a high proportion of women, 17.2 per cent, have less than a grade nine education, and that 84 per cent of Canadian women working outside the home are employed in service

industries and concentrated in non-unionized, lower paying occupations.

In 1988, 28.2 per cent of female workers were clerical workers. In 1986, 1,001,340 clerical workers worked part-time or part-year and earned salaries that were below the national poverty level. Only 36 per cent of women covered by the Employment Equity Act earn over $27,500, compared to 80 per cent of men; 28 per cent of aboriginal women, compared to 72 per cent of aboriginal men; 38 per cent of disabled women, compared to 81 per cent of disabled men earn over this figure and 28 per cent of visible minority women, as compared to 73 per cent of visible minority men earn over this figure.

In 1989, three out of four Canadian women in prime child-bearing and raising age groups, 20 to 45, were in the labour force. Adequate child care has become less accessible rather than more accessible.

• (1530)

By 1989, there were 450,000 more pre-school children with mothers in the labour force without licensed child care than there were in 1979. In 1987, only 8 per cent of children with working mothers were cared for in licensed child care services.

One in four Canadian women are sexually abused at some time in their lives, half before they reach the age of 17. One in ten women are beaten by their male partners. In the last two years in Canada, over 100 women per year have been killed by their male partners.

Twenty years after the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, women are still not even close to being equal participants. Of the 167 recommendations made in that royal commission, only 55 have been implemented.

Last week I was accused of being negative. I guess I have to plead guilty to that. The truth is that the vast majority of Canadian women do not share in the Canadian dream. They live in poverty and work in job ghettos. They cannot move freely in our society. Every woman in this House as well as every woman watching this and every woman in this country, whether she admits it or not, is vulnerable to violence.

Project Haven and the recent initiatives announced by the Minister of National Health and Welfare are well intentioned. I have no doubt of that, but they are criminally inadequate.

The workers on the front lines are themselves overworked, underpaid and subject to burnout from the enormity of the task they are attempting to perform.

Last week in response to a question, I was as I said, accused of being negative. Again, I say I plead guilty. The violence experienced by women in Canada is inextricably tied to economics, to discrimination on the basis of sex and to the failure of all governments to take meaningful action.

Yes, the country is burdened with a deficit. Yes, we must be sound fiscal managers. Yes, we must keep our house in order financially, but a government that preaches these truisms must also remove its blinkers. If women, who make up 52 per cent of our population, cannot enjoy basic security of the person, and if their government ignores their crisis, it does not seem to me to be much of a government.

We need immediate and concrete action. Groups across this country cry out for a royal commission on violence against women. We need to find answers, solutions and a resolution of the problem. If we ignore these cries, we do not deserve the title of representatives of the people.

Hon. Mary Collins (Associate Minister of National Defence and Minister responsible for Status of Women): Mr. Speaker, I obviously know of the hon. member's interest in this subject.

I wonder if she has given any thought to ways in which provincial and territorial governments might be involved in a royal commission, being aware, as she indicated, that this is not an issue that the federal government alone can solve or deal with.

If as a result of some of the presentations she has heard at the standing committee she could give any advice in this area, it would be appreciated.

Ms. Clancy: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. minister for her question.

One of the things that I think is very interesting is taking place in my province of Nova Scotia. It has been recommended and I hope it is taking place. We have not heard definitely yet on a response.

Debbie Forsythe Smith, president of the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, has asked for a review. At the time that she asked for the review, there had been five murders with the same profile—women murdered by their partners—in under two years.

Tragically, there have been two more murders in the last month in the metropolitan area of Halifax—Dartmouth. Indeed, there was another one shortly after I spoke last week.

Deborah Forsythe Smith and her council have asked the Attorney General of Nova Scotia to set up a special review commission to look at these five murders in particular to try to find if there is a common denominator and if there are indicators that could give us some idea of how to anticipate and possibly prevent this kind of behaviour.

There was some comment by the Attorney General in Nova Scotia, but there has not yet been a final response. I would hope they would do that. I would see that as something that could feed very well into a royal commission in the sense that a royal commission, of course, does not just hold hearings, it also commissions reports and takes reports from whatever source. I would think that a report such as this in Nova Scotia would be invaluable.

I would also think that a response to the situation in Ontario, following that ad campaign, would be of great assistance as well, because a number of witnesses who have come to us at the committee talked about how particularly well done the Ontario ad campaign was. I had a very special feeling about that. A good friend of mine, an actress whom I had worked with, was one of the main actors in those ads. It was very moving, very compelling and communicated the thought well. As I say, the response from the people was overwhelming, but the facilities were not there. I would think the Ontario government could be of help.

A third response to that relates to the whole question of native women. When we had native women appearing before the committee several weeks ago, they talked about the special needs of native and northern women in this area. I think this is something to which we must be extremely sensitive and, indeed, it may well be that we discover what works for women in urban centres like Halifax, Toronto, Montreal and so on, will not work in rural Canada, will not work with native aboriginal women and will not work perhaps with immigrant women. That is why this royal commission must be rooted in women's experience to bring across, as Dr. Saunders, from Carleton, said yesterday, "a new form of research that really hits the problem".

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Halifax gave a vibrant and compelling testimony in support of the motion put forward by the official opposition, the Liberal Party of Canada, which reads:

> That this House call upon the Prime Minister to appoint a Royal Commission on Violence Against Women.

I have here, on my desk, a huge file on the subject, Mr. Speaker. I have always taken an interest in this matter. In my riding, we have the *Maison de l'Amitié*, or friendship house, a shelter for battered women, and I have to admit that, even then, one shelter does not seem to be enough. I think we would need two of them.

I was impressed by the comment made by my colleague from Halifax who stated that 50 per cent of the women and their children who seek help cannot have or are denied access to shelters. I share her concern for the serious problems facing the million or so Canadian women and children who are abused every year by a spouse. I also agree with her that, in our career as members of Parliament, we have all seen various cases of cruel and even sadistic treatment, Mr. Speaker, inflicted upon too many women and children.

I have a question to ask the hon. member because she mentioned in her speech that perhaps we should consider broadening the mandate of this royal commission to include the effects of violence in order to prevent it and involving as many Canadians, men and women, in this much needed process.

[*English*]

I received, just in the last day or so, a letter from the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario. I think she is familiar with that organization. It concerns their desire to establish a royal commission on violence against women, to which they attach a long list of groups and organizations which support this proposal.

I just want to ask the member one question. In asking for a comprehensive study on the subject of violence, does she agree that we should at least involve as many Canadians as possible and that we want to prevent violence, not just deal with its consequences? Does she agree with this group of people, the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations, that it is imperative for us to address this system?

• (1540)

Ms. Clancy: I thank my colleague, the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier, for his comments.

Indeed I agree most strongly with the Ontario women teachers association. I am happy to say that its representatives have spoken to us and have been witnesses before the subcommittee on the status of women on the topic of violence against women.

They have as well in the province of Ontario, through the good offices of Ontario teachers, come up with a number of programs in the schools. This relates as well to the minister's question. This kind of program can be of tremendous value, shared across the country.

The creation of a royal commission can solve a problem that many of the front-line workers against violence against women have told us about, that is that there is no mechanism for them to communicate with each other at the moment. If persons working in a transition house in Nova Scotia could communicate with their colleagues in British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, and so on, it would be of invaluable assistance and the data collected would be tremendous. The exchange of programs such as the kind the Ontario teachers have come up with would be of great assistance to the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, B.C. teachers, and so on and so forth.

It is the need to pull all this material together, to pull together the kind of research that is necessary to get at this all-pervasive problem, that causes women such as those in the Ontario Women Teachers Federation and the other groups I have mentioned, such as the YWCAs and so on, to call for this commission.

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Halifax for bringing this motion forward to the House of Commons. It is essential that we debate this issue.

We sit together on a subcommittee of health and welfare, the subcommittee on the status of women that is right now hearing witnesses on violence against women. We have been hearing various groups from across the country—transition home workers, teachers, some victims of violence themselves, and religious people working to provide assistance to women who are battered. We have heard from a cross-section of Canadian women on this issue.

What does the hon. friend feel is the underlying theme that we are hearing over and over again from these presentations? How would she respond to my concern about the systemic discrimination against women in our society and how that contributes toward the whole issue of violence against women?

Ms. Clancy: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby for her question.

That in a sense is the whole root and branch of the issue. We live in a society that is systemically discriminatory against women. Indeed, I look around this House right now and I count six women sitting in seats, duly elected, and I think: wow, are we ever lucky that we are here, because the odds were sure against us; all of us, no matter what party we belong to, and I think we all know it.

That is why I rhymed off all those horrific statistics that I mentioned before. The problem is that systemic discrimination against women is intrinsically economic. It is rooted in patriarchy and it is rooted, with the greatest of respect and affection to the vast majority of my male colleagues, in a lack of understanding on the part of the people who truly wield the power.

In the vast majority of cases, I think men do not really comprehend how deeply rooted discrimination against women is. It is so deeply rooted, it is so much a part of our society and the way we live, it is so utterly a part of their daily lives, that they cannot see the forest for the trees. Until those of us who are lucky enough to crash through these barriers and make our voices heard, make those voices loud enough and united enough to bring these issues home, we are still going to be voices crying in the wilderness.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I would be the last one to cut off the hon. member, but her time has expired.

Hon. Mary Collins (Associate Minister of National Defence and Minister responsible for Status of Women): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the chance to join in the debate on this issue this afternoon. It is very important that we debate an issue as fundamental to society as violence against women. It is an issue which I would hope members on all sides of the House are concerned about, care about, and are prepared to join in finding solutions.

While it is an issue that women have primarily brought to the public agenda and have brought to the public fore, it is absolutely essential that men understand and become involved in this issue. We need their co-operation and understanding, as my hon. colleague has just talked about, if we are to make some of the fundamental changes and attitudinal changes, in society which are going to enable us to one day eliminate violence against women.

Violence against women is not only physical violence when we talk about the issue at large. Physical violence is often the final result of many years or months of emotional abuse which many women suffer, whether it is in a marriage, another family situation, or with a partner with whom they are living. We have to understand that when we are talking about violence against women, we also have to include that kind of emotional, psychological abuse which many workers in this field that I have talked with say can often have more devastating long-term impacts on women because it so destroys their sense of self-esteem and self-worth that they do not find any way of getting out of those situations.

Physical abuse, yes. That is absolutely heinous in every way, but we have to find ways to address emotional abuse as well.

It is important to understand the statistics, to know just how grave this situation is across Canada. From the various studies and reports that we have been able to put together from Status of Women—and there has been a number of works done both in Canada and elsewhere—the most commonly known statistics at this time indicate that one in four women will be sexually assaulted at some time in her life, and that half of the sexual assaults will be perpetrated on women under the age of 17. That includes the issue of sexual abuse of female children, which is so appalling, and of teenage women as well.

Statistics show that one in ten women in Canada is assaulted by her husband or partner, and that half the women in Canada are afraid to go out after dark in their own neighbourhoods. Rightly or wrongly, that is the perception they have. I would imagine that all women in this House have felt that at certain times. I know I have in certain situations, certain cities that I have lived in. If I can't be as free as a man to go out and be able to participate in every aspect of society, that denies me my freedom and my equality.

We also know that one homicide in five in this country is a family violence homicide. Also, about 4 per cent of seniors now report being abused, which is a whole new issue. As violence against women was not talked about 20 years ago in the royal commission on the status of women, it is only in the last five years that the whole issue of abuse of seniors has really been talked about. That includes physical violence and also emotional abuse of seniors as well.

One study of disabled women found that almost half of disabled women had been sexually abused as children, that one in four were sexually assaulted as an adult, and that most of these women had been abused by their caretakers. We could rhyme off these statistics, but when we think of the devastation of the lives of these women behind these statistics, it gets pretty emotional as far as I am concerned. I am sure we have all known women who have been victims of violence. We have probably known the perpetrators as well in different instances.

• (1550)

My colleague mentioned aboriginal women. The statistics there are even more horrendous, some as high as eight out of ten aboriginal women have been sexually assaulted or have been physically abused at some time in their lives. And we know what that leads to.

It is not only the physical, the emotional harm that is done to women through violence. It leads to inequality. It is almost a chicken and egg situation: inequality that leads to the violence but violence then leads to inequality. It leads to the diminution of self-esteem, self-worth, and the ability of women then to get themselves out of situations. Without the kind of support that many women's organizations, shelters, and crisis lines across the country have provided, many of these women would continue to live in silence and terror. I think it has been only 18 years since the first women's shelter was opened

in Canada. They have done an enormously important and successful job, and we all applaud those efforts.

Certainly the goal of federal and provincial governments everywhere has to be to work toward the achievement of equality of all citizens in our society. I guess I perceive Canadian society, despite the dark and gloomy statistics that I have just reported on violence, as being one of the most fortunate societies around the world. When I had the opportunity last fall to chair the Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers' meeting, in recognizing of most of the countries that we were dealing with around the Commonwealth we were indeed more fortunate in this country. We had the legal mechanisms. We had more economic and social equality than even some of our closest friends in countries like Australia. Yet we know there are ways to go. How do we work toward achieving that equality?

Certainly one way is by having women here in this House of Commons as role models and being able to speak out to show women across the country that it is possible for women to be involved in the decision-making processes of this country. We want to encourage that in every possible way, as I know all my colleagues do from whatever party they represent, that we need more women in this House of Commons, in legislatures and in municipal councils who understand and can raise these issues at every level.

Our Prime Minister quoted statistics the other day about the numbers of women in various government positions. I know in a sense that those are just numbers, but they are important because they are again showing women as role models. We see that women have now gone from 37 to 83 in judicial postings and that women now are holding judgeships at the federal level within our system and are having an influence. We have seen women assuming positions of responsibility in the Public Service at the deputy minister level. Women have increased from 7 to 24 as the heads of missions at the diplomatic level. All those kinds of examples are important because they too become role models.

When we look at the kind of initiatives that have been taken over these past few years to move toward economic equality, each one of those is a step and part of the road to progress of economic equality. Some might say that it has not been fast enough but always there is balance.

We have moved forward on employment equity. We have moved forward on pay equity. We have moved forward on changes to the Unemployment Insurance Act in areas such as maternity benefits. We have moved forward indeed on family violence.

Three years ago was the first time that a federal government initiated a family violence program with $40 million. As a result of that program we are seeing a lot of the action. We are seeing a lot of activity generated across the country, which is raising the voices of women and making people aware of this issue.

I was looking at a report on the funding that has been provided in the last four years. The types of projects are fascinating: everything from workshops in Stony Rapids, Saskatchewan on the prevention of family violence to the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. Obviously that is an area where police have to become more effective in their intervention work. The Provincial Advisory Council of Newfoundland has established an inter-agency commission to create a model of co-ordinated activity against family violence. There are projects in my home province of British Columbia dealing with disabled women. There have been 600 or 700 projects funded—some for a couple of thousand dollars, some for hundreds of thousands of dollars—as we work forward toward investigating areas of research, prevention, education and support services.

Obviously more needs to be done because still violence persists. We have only just started to skim the surface in our understanding. I do not think we have a full understanding of what it is that creates or triggers a male to become the batterer or assaulter. We know that statistics show about 85 per cent of violence against women is related to those in trust and about 15 per cent to those who are unknown to the women.

What is it? Is it frustration? Is it indeed the fact that women are perceived as both physically less equal and in some ways economically or psychologically less equal? There are all those kinds of issues. We know that there is a generational component to this as well. Both the abusers and those who are victims of abuse are more likely to continue that into the next generation. We have to find ways of breaking that cycle of violence within our society.

We know there is a need to review our laws. My colleague, the Minister of Justice, today in Vancouver made some announcements about some of the initiatives she will be taking in the criminal justice system to review our laws and to work with judges, the Solicitor General and law enforcement agencies to be more effective in dealing with family violence. This is all part of the new $136 million program that my colleague, the Minister of National Health and Welfare announced two weeks ago. I know he will be talking about that a little later.

We know there has been a lot done in education. The program in Ontario was mentioned. I agree that was an excellent program. The province of Quebec has undertaken education programs, the province of British Columbia has as well. Yukon territory has just announced a fascinating new policy dealing with family violence. It is probably the most comprehensive policy statement I have seen in this country and deals with all facets of it. Those kinds of initiatives at provincial and territorial levels are very important.

We need education of our young people. The Canadian Teachers Federation project "Thumbs Down" will take into the schools programs to help children right from kindergarten all the way up to understand the root causes of violence, to deal themselves with how they might react in violent situations, to be able to say no, and to understand that violence is not acceptable in our society. That is an important part of the whole puzzle we are dealing with as well.

My federal and provincial colleagues, including myself as Minister responsible for the Status of Women, last May produced what we called The Lake Louise Declaration on Family Violence, in which we have agreed to work together to develop a national strategy. Our officials have been working on that. We are planning to bring it forward later this spring when we meet again in Newfoundland and to find ways to co-ordinate our efforts so that at the federal, provincial and territorial levels we will try not to duplicate or overlap our efforts and to see what are the gaps.

We have just recently commissioned through Status of Women Linda MacLeod, one of the foremost experts in this country on family violence, to do a review for us, a kind of a pre-study to indicate what in her opinion are the gaps in terms of research and what are the mechanisms we should be looking at to move forward.

I do not think there is any doubt in my mind or in the minds of anyone in this House that we need mechanisms to move forward in our understanding of this issue. I would ask my colleagues who sit on the subcommittee on the status of women and are examining this issue to give us their advice on the kinds of mechanisms that are most appropriate. If we are talking about a royal commission, I worked for a royal commission for four years so I have a somewhat jaundiced view in that I do not think four years is necessary to get on with some of the actions required.

We need innovative approaches, whether it is through a royal commission or other kinds of mechanisms, to reach out to women; not just sitting around hotel rooms and having regular hearings but mechanism by which we can actually find out from women what their experiences are and be able to make women feel comfortable in relaying those kinds of experiences to some kind of initiative that might help us understand the issue as well.

• (1600)

Obviously what I would like to see is something that is cost effective, that does not duplicate what is already being done, and that can help us move forward, maybe on a step-by-step basis. I would like to see something for which we do not have to wait until the end to finally have action. I would like to see us not have to set up whole new infrastructures to deal with an issue where there are perhaps some existing infrastructures through the National Advisory Council or groups like that, where we might be able to do things more effectively and perhaps from a feminist point of view and not just copy-cat what has been done in the past, but think creatively of how we can address this issue most effectively in the future.

We need a focus on research. I have met with the Canadian Association of University Teachers on some of their proposals for centres of excellence. They are working now with the Social Science and Humanities

Research Council on those. We have existing groups out there that I think we could bring together.

As I indicated, because many of the things that need to be done in terms of service delivery, fall primarily within the jurisdiction of the provinces, we obviously need their involvement, co-operation and support. There is no sense spending time and putting forward recommendations when there is no one there to pick them up and run with them. As I mentioned, the province of British Columbia has just recently set up a task force on family violence. The province of Manitoba is doing some work in that area as well, and as colleague mentioned, the province of Nova Scotia is also active in that area.

Maybe we can find a way of linking all these activities together so they are not all going off separately and ensuring that again we are not overlapping, not duplicating, but we are trying to get to the real core of the subject.

When thinking about some of the things that need to be done—and I do not pretend to be an expert; I do not imagine any of us are experts in this field— and from my own experiences of talking to women who are both victims of violence and those who work with women at the grass roots level, many of them have said to me that we really have to do more with our young people, that is the age we really have to start addressing on this issue.

I feel more needs to be done with the media. So many of the messages our children get about the values of our society and on issues of equality of men and women, or on issues of violence, come from the media. Surely there are some ways we can bring the media together, to be involved in helping us to deal with these issues.

I am sure my hon. colleagues know these same stories, and it is not only from a personal point of view and my daughter's point of view, but others that I meet, there is something that seems to happen often to young girls between the ages of 12 and 14 that somehow their sights become diminished and from that stage on there is a transition where. often their own sense of equality changes. How do we get to young women at that age, to stop that from happening? The editorial in this month's *Chatelaine* deals with that issue and I think is a very interesting comment as well.

So we have to deal with our young people if we are going to look at education and prevention. We also have to look at whether there are really effective measures that we can take to deal with abusers or potential abusers. The jury is still out. I have heard reports both ways, as to whether some of the rehabilitation programs are effective or not. Some seem to be, some do not seem to be. Again, if we are going to deal with this issue with our present population, we have to find out what it is that works, that can trigger a change in behaviour among abusers or potential abusers.

So the challenge is there. It is a challenge for us all to work on. I am delighted with the work that my colleagues are doing, the Minister of National Health and Welfare, through Indian Affairs, $36 million that will be made available for aboriginal communities to decide for themselves how they want to deal with the issue of violence within their communities, both child sexual abuse and family violence. I know they have welcomed that, and we can use these resources over the next four years to take some significant steps forward.

I also welcome other ideas and suggestions of mechanisms by which we can develop our understanding and do it effectively without stalling on the progress that needs to be made.

Neither I nor any of the women here want to be sitting here four years from now, as I am sure we all shall be, and feel that we have not made any substantial progress.

So I would ask all colleagues to join together so that we can say, as a Canadian society, no to violence against women, that it is not acceptable in our society and that we can work together to change the attitudes, the causes and put in place those measures that can truly ensure that Canada is a place where women can be truly free and truly equal and free from violence.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Shirley Maheu (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville): Mr. Speaker, family violence is a social problem. It is the outward sign of some attitudes, such as sexism, ageism, and tolerance toward violence.

No social group, no socio-economic group, no culture and no region is safe from family violence. It is a challenge to our traditional approach with regard to prevention, protection, and treatment.

Assistance programs for the victims involve several service networks and institutions. Twenty years after the last public inquiry on this issue, we must all work together, Madam Speaker, because of the complex needs and different cultural backgrounds of the victims.

[*English*]

Those words are from the government's own document on family violence. If the minister really believes that, knowing our cultural communities, our adverse and diverse cultures today, a lot of violence is propagated there, how can you say that we are prepared to just go at it without having someone study the situation? Then we may be able to shame those that need the help and the communities that have to give the help into doing something about it.

Mrs. Collins: I will respond to the hon. member and say, yes, indeed. I think it is very important for the public to understand that violence against women knows no economic bounds. Sometimes people think, well that only happens to poor women. That is not true. I know in my own region that the women who go to clinics are often professional women living with professional husbands.

It does not necessarily relate to one's socioeconomic background. Certainly in terms of the different ethnic communities in our country, one of the things we do know is that many of the women in those communities have been more afraid of coming out. Many of them have come from a culture where violence perhaps has been tolerated, are not aware that in our society it is not tolerated and are not aware of the services that are available. It has been good to see, for example, the province of Ontario's program. All of their materials are being made available in a number of languages so that they, hopefully, can get into those places in the community where women can access them.

A lot of research has been done. I would want to say to the hon. member that if she looks through the listing of studies and research that have been done in universities and by other organizations, a lot of work has been done and a lot is known. I am not sure it has all been put together and integrated in some way that enables us to be most effective. That is why, as I mentioned earlier, we have asked Linda McLeod, who is one of the experts in this field, to help us with this process over the next month or so, and we might have a better understanding at Status of Women of where we should go next. We do not want to spend money uselessly on research that has already been undertaken.

There obviously are areas where research is required and probably areas where it would not be that helpful. We have to be able to use our resources effectively to find the answers that are still unknown.

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Burnaby): It is really interesting to sit today and listen to the member for Halifax and the minister who is from my province of British Columbia.

• (1610)

As I sat here, I could not help but wonder: If the positions were reversed, if women had the majority of seats in this House of Commons and if men were only 14 per cent of the members of the House, perhaps this issue would get the full attention that it needs. I just had to say that.

I listened to the minister carefully. She talked about the chicken and egg scenario and the evidence was not clear on whether violence leads to inequality or whether it is the inequality that leads to violence. I believe very clearly that is the inequality, the sexism and the misogyny that we see in our society that extends itself to violence against women. I would like her to kind of expand on the either/or statement that she made.

The other comment that I have is that the minister talked about the 14 per cent of us who are here in this place being role models for other Canadian women. I do not want to be a role model any more. My mother had role models. She had Agnes MacPhail and Grace MacInnis. I had role models. I had Pauline Jewett and Margaret Mitchell. Darn it, it is time that we no longer look for role models, but we look for equality in society where women participate in every sector of our society on an equal and just basis.

Mrs. Collins: I think the reality is that, as young people grow up, they do need role models. That is not necessarily sexist. It is in all aspects of life. They look to adults as role models. As we know, back in the 1940s and 1950s the only roles that women were playing were homemakers. That was the kind of role that they anticipated they would play.

Men need role models, too. It would be nice to have a lot more. I know that all my hon. colleagues would work towards that end. It is still going to be a while.

In terms of which leads to which, I think there is both. I have known women who I would have perceived felt totally equal in all sorts of ways and yet, as a result of violence that was perpetrated, it was so demoralizing and created such a terrible trauma that they were not able to operate continuously in that manner.

It can have that effect individually on women as well, particularly as I mentioned, the kind of emotional abuse to which many women are subjected. A young women, through her teenage life and then enters into a marriage supposedly thinking it is all going to be wonderful, finds out that the partner is the kind of person who is constantly putting her down. Nothing is right. The house is not clean. The supper is not ready. These things may sound trivial, in a way. Finally, they just bear down on someone who is constantly being criticized.

I think one thing we tend to do in our society is criticize people too much. As young women, as teenagers they are constantly being criticized. If someone is always being criticized it is very difficult to develop one's own sense of self-worth.

I might extrapolate that to this Chamber. If we did not criticize each other as much as my hon. colleague from Rosedale said last week, maybe we could move on in a much more positive way for the improvement of all members of society as a whole.

Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Nunatsiaq): Mr. Speaker, want to make a couple of comments and put a question to the hon. member.

The disadvantage of following the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby is that she took the words right out of my mouth. I was going to say that until such time as there are more women in this House, equality will never be there.

I made a comment when I was speaking on the abortion issue earlier this year about how if men were able to conceive, we would never even discuss an abortion bill. I think it is the case that if men were on the receiving end of the majority of violence today, the laws punishing the offenders would be much stricter than they are. I think it is a shame that sometimes men who commit violence against women are not given enough time in jail to reflect on their offences.

I just wanted to ask, and this may seem like an unfair question to the member, because I am not sure whether she was as member at the time, but some years ago in the House one of the members—the party really does not matter, but it was the party that this hon. minister belongs to—one of the members committed spousal assault and was convicted of that spousal assault. However, I do not think strong enough measures were taken to ensure that this member would understand the feelings against spousal assault. I wonder whether she would be willing to entertain, and I think most people would, that a member of the House should be evicted or ousted who commits spousal assault or violence against women?

Mrs. Collins: I think there are mechanisms in the House by which the House manages its own affairs and so it would be inappropriate I think as a minister to be commenting on that.

I would like to comment on your earlier point though, because we do not have as many women in the House as we would like. We have to ensure that the men in the House understand and appreciate the issues that we were talking about. Perhaps there is a special burden on the men in the House to really take the time to make sure that they get out in their communities and visit the shelters, visit the women's centres, talk to women who are victims and show that as male members of Parliament they are as committed to dealing with this issue both in your personal behaviour and in your behaviour as a member of Parliament and are committed to coming back to the House to support us as women in our efforts to eradicate violence in Canadian society.

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, in 1989, 119 women were murdered in domestic violence. Wife battering is a national disgrace. It is epidemic. Two and a half million Canadian women are beaten by their male partners and in many ways society closes its eyes.

Just over a year ago on December 6, 1989, one man gunned down 14 young women at the *École Polytechnique* in Montreal and the country was in shock. Journalists, commentators, politicians all tried to make sense out of this horror. But few could accept the fact that he killed these young women simply because they were women, women he targeted as feminists. How many Canadians know that more women were killed by their male

partners in 1990 in Montreal than were murdered at the *École Polytechnique*?

There is an urgent need to balance programs that treat today's violence with programs that prevent future tragedy. Women and children are in danger now. Transition houses, aggressive charging practices, counselling of victims and offenders all recognize the problem, yet they are not enough. They treat the result of violence, but they do not challenge the root of violence in our society, violence against women and children.

Prevention is an overwhelming challenge. We have heard it spoken about here today on both sides of the House. It is a massive challenge for our society. But violence against women is endemic in our culture.

• (1620)

Sexism and misogyny exist in newspapers, videos, rock videos, films, newspapers, ads, virtually everywhere. The images that our society sees on a daily basis are images that include violence against women.

Violence against women is the horrible extension of sexism in our society. It is sexism and misogyny taken to its worst degree, this most horrific degree and it is increasing.

Concentration on intervention alone marginalizes the victims. We have all heard the line: They deserved it; they should have left; they should never have married a man like that—and on and on it goes.

Yet we know that it is not a marginal problem. Conservative estimates tell us that one in 10 Canadian women in Canada today are beaten by their male partners. One in four women or girls are sexually assaulted. In 1988 15 per cent of all Canadian homicide victims were women killed by their male partners.

In 1988, according to the Canadian Centre for Justice statistics, 75,921 men were charged with assault, including wife abuse.

In 1987, the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General reported 16,282 domestic assaults, and in 93.5 per cent of those assaults, those charged were male.

One of every two women and her children are turned away from transition houses in Canada because of a lack of space. Where do they go? Where do they end up? We know that the rate is even higher in some sections of this country. That is the national rate.

Women still earn on average 65 cents on every dollar that men earn, and we know that that wage gap has widened in the last two years. It was 66 cents, it has got worse. We are not making the kinds of economic gains for women that we know are so necessary and we know are part of the root of all of this problem of inequality and women's sense of powerlessness in our society.

Yet this government refuses to take strong and effective action on the issue of violence against women. Last month the government announced $136 million over four years for a family violence initiative. This means $15 million will be spent in the year 1991–92; $34 million in 1992–93; and the remainder allocated for after the term of this government ends.

But the real priorities of the government are revealed in their budget that was released a couple of weeks ago; a continuation of the cap on the Canada Assistance Plan, a decapitation of the Canada Assistance Plan, which is the federal–provincial funding mechanism that currently funds shelters for battered women, counselling for both victims and abusers, sexual assault centres, child care spaces, child welfare services. All were funded under the Canada Assistance Plan.

It seems that this government gives a drop in the bucket to the women of Canada one day and then empties the bucket a day or so later.

It is clear what is needed. We must increase shelter spaces and second-stage housing for battered women. We must provide funding to regional associations of battered women's houses so that these people can communicate and get the message out and understand what is going on in their communities and how it relates to the situation in other parts of Canada.

We need a comprehensive education program which includes mandatory gender sensitivity training for judges and for police forces and all of our judiciary.

We need flexible community-based programs for our rural areas.

We must recognize our multicultural diversity in this area. We must recognize it when we are providing programs and these programs must be developed in consultation with those communities. We must combat violence in the media. The minister spoke earlier of violence in the media. We know that the Ontario native women's association tells us that eight out of ten native women are battered. This is horrific. We must listen to native women and we must act. I acknowledge that the program introduced by the government does give an opportunity for the native people themselves to have input into that program.

I sit on the status of women subcommittee of the standing committee on health and welfare. I wish that the status of women committee were a standing committee, as it was in past Parliaments. It is not now; it is a subcommittee. We are now conducting hearings on violence against women. We have listened. We have listened to women from shelters for battered women; we have listened to women in the Canadian Teachers Association who have produced a great resource called "Thumbs Down", a classroom response toward violence against women. We have listened to the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario which has also put out a document and a newsletter outlining all of the problems and concerns. Things are happening at the educational level of young people in our society. The professional associations are taking their responsibilities seriously on the issue of violence against women and working toward dealing with it in an educational sense in the classrooms.

We talk about the statistics in the House, and all of us who have spoken today on this issue have raised the statistics. While sitting in that committee room, I heard individual women from every region of the country tell us the same things. The women who work in the transition homes virtually said the same things. When the women from British Columbia spoke, they were surprised when we told them that the women from the Atlantic region had said the same thing or that the women from Ontario had said the same thing: that they were experiencing second generation abuse of families, and that they were both experiencing the same kinds of needs and seeing the same kinds of problems.

I think virtually all of the organizations that appeared before the subcommittee called for a royal commission on violence against women. I support their call for a royal commission. I support it wholeheartedly, and the New Democratic Party supports it. We also called for a royal commission on violence against women some time ago.

It must be more than simply a public relations exercise. It cannot exist at a cost to essential services, some of the services that I have already talked about: shelters for battered women, counselling, educational services. And it most of all cannot be an excuse for lack of action.

It must be mandated to explore all aspects of violence against women, including the systemic causes of sexism in our society. It must deal with the issue of economics and the fact that women are not equal economic partners in our society, and that much of the violence against women results from this inequality. The commission must be made up of professionals and workers who deal with violence against women, who understand the issues surrounding violence against women, and it should also be made up of women who themselves have been victims of this violence. I think that the commission should be at least 50 per cent female.

I am pleased to support this call for a royal commission. I would urge the government to take this call seriously, which has grassroots support right across Canada. We do know that the Royal Commission on the Status of Women which was held some 20 years ago did serve a purpose. It pulled Canadian women together. I remember when that commission was being held, as a young woman in Vancouver, who was at home with three young children and whose own consciousness around these issues had not been raised at that point.

• (1630)

I remember hearing about this commission that was travelling across the country and the issues they were raising that were of concern to women. I think we can achieve the same kinds of educational benefits from a royal commission on violence against women.

The minister spoke of educating and encouraging males in our society, in our House of Commons, to take on this issue, to understand this issue and take some responsibility for finding a solution in our society for violence against women and children. I think that a royal commission would serve that purpose. I think it would be a wonderful educational tool. It would travel to every section of Canada and listen to women's voices, listen to the women who work in the field and educate the men in our society as well about the horrors of violence against

women and just how much, in real terms, it costs our society in every way.

Hon. Mary Collins (Associate Minister of National Defence and Minister responsible for Status of Women): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member. I know she has been a very active participant in the subcommittee dealing with this issue. As I mentioned, we will look forward to its report which I hope will give some definition to the specific areas it thinks require further study.

I just want to make one comment. The member, in her statement, indicated that the CAP payments through which much of the money flows for support of shelters had been cut. I just like to remind the hon. member that, indeed, is not correct. CAP payments have not been cut. They continue to grow. In the wealthy provinces of Ontario and Alberta and British Columbia, they continue to grow at 5 per cent, and in the other provinces continue their full growth. So, I would not see that should have any impact on the provinces' ability to continue their funding, as I would certainly encourage them to do.

The question I have for my colleague has to do with something I read in the paper this morning and I was really quite shocked. I am sure that my colleague is as well. In the NDP government in the province of Ontario, the consumer affairs minister, as I understand it, who last week posed as a "Sunshine Boy", is now purported to have an assistant who, indeed, had been charged and convicted of wife battering and is now working as a special advisor dealing with sexism in advertising.

My hon. colleague talked about advertising and the media being a very important area where we have to root out sexism, so I am wondering what advice she is giving to her colleagues at Queen's Parks, on something which I was really shocked about. Perhaps, it goes to prove the point that violence against women exists not only in every sector of society, but within every political part of society as well. I wonder if my colleague could comment on that.

Ms. Black: Mr. Speaker, the minister spoke about the Canada Assistance Plan, CAP, for the three wealthiest provinces, as she said. I would remind the minister that 46 per cent of the poor in Canada live in those three provinces.

The minister comes from the same province I do. She is familiar with the actions of the premier of British Columbia, Mr. Vander Zalm. She knows what is going on in British Columbia right now as that government disintegrates right before our very eyes. She knows what his position has been on the equality of women in society. If she is relying on the faith of Bill Vander Zalm to provide those shelters and to provide child care spaces, I would say she is sadly, sadly naive, because he is not going to do it and I think the minister knows that well.

She mentioned a situation that happened recently in Ontario where we saw the foolishness of a minister in the Ontario government posing as a "Sunshine Boy". It seemed very foolish to me. I agree with her.

The issue around his assistant or adviser, I think, is a much more serious issue. I think it was a very inappropriate appointment. I understand that Mr. Grimaldi has been removed from that position. I commend the Rae government for taking action quickly. I am not embarrassed to admit that New Democrats sometimes show poor judgement as well.

Mr. Ray Funk (Prince Albert—Churchill River): Mr. Speaker, I would like to compliment both the mover of the motion and particularly my colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby, the women's critic in our party. Certainly we have heard from all the speakers who have spoken so far of the need for the men in this Chamber and in the political system to grasp the issues that are at stake here and to get involved in these issues behind the 14 per cent of MPs who are women in this House.

Certainly the member needs to be credited by all women in our society and certainly by all of us who are interested in these issues for the role she has played not only within our caucus, but within the debate in Canada on these issues. I compliment her for making more of us aware of this issue in a much more constructive kind of way than many of us had been before.

There are two particular issues that I would like to raise with my colleague. First, she mentioned the economic factors that are involved. I would like to point out to her that in my constituency of Prince Albert—Churchill River, the federal government through the Department of Indian Affairs pays family assistance in a

community like Fond du Lac at about the level of $450 for a family of four.

Unfortunately, the economic circumstances are such that many people are on social assistance. The traditional economic base has eroded, as many people know. It is not the fault of those women and children living on that amount. The government recognized that in part and raised it another $100, I believe, to about $550 because of the isolation.

However, there has been a study which indicates that it costs $950 in those communities just to feed a family of four in accordance with the Canada food rules, and all they get is $550. They are $400 a month short and that puts all kinds of pressure on those families. It causes family breakdowns, people moving to the cities and so on. It is strictly an economic matter that we are looking at.

In those communities they certainly welcomed the new initiative on family violence in Indian communities. However, we have a serious problem in that because of isolation and historic factors of one sort or another, it is very difficult to organize in those communities. You need to have proposals; you have to be able to deal with government bureaucracy. In a lot of these cases the kind of support to women that exists in many of the other communities and urban centres does not exist for these people.

We are talking here about people who not only face a gender problem, but also a race problem and a regional problem. I invite my colleague to address that question.

Ms. Black: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and his comments, particularly the one about the purpose I have served in our caucus, perhaps, of heightening the consciousness of some of my male colleagues in my own caucus. I appreciate that.

My colleague talks about a situation for rural women and native women in our society and outlined, I think very clearly, just what some women in Canada are up against, and how difficult it is in rural areas of Canada to provide these kinds of services and to get the community together in order to do that.

I think it is very important that when we are dealing with violence against native women in our society, as I said in my remarks, native women themselves must have some control over the programs that are offered, over the way the transition home they want to start, or is started, operates.

I would point out too that economics, in my view, the fact that the gender gap in wages is widening, the fact that welfare rates in our country have not kept pace with inflation, has continued to serve to keep women down in these positions in our society.

In Vancouver there was a food bank established only for women and children. I think that is really a damning indication of what is happening to women and children in our society; a food bank simply, and only for, women and children.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions and comments are now terminated. Debate. The next two are 10 minutes, plus five minutes questions and comments.

• (1640)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Shirley Maheu (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville): Mr. Speaker, the motion before the House today compels me to speak to a subject that is painful, one that should not even be on this government's agenda in 1991 and should have ceased to exist years ago. I am referring to violence against women.

I know there are programs. I realize the federal government has just announced it will spend $136 million on measures to deal with family violence. However, I fail to understand how we could have let the situation become what it is today.

Mr. Speaker, violence against women has become almost common place. This is unacceptable. Unfortunately, respect for women is far from a foregone conclusion in any country.

Women represent half the world's population and work two thirds of all hours worked. They also constitute the largest group of poor, exploited individuals. One wonders how women an still be neglected to that extent in a world that claims to be increasingly civilized, a world that is exploring the outer edges of the universe.

Today, one would almost think technology seems more important than the basic well-being of human beings, especially human beings of the female sex.

Mr. Speaker, violence against women, which includes assault, mutilation, murder, infanticide, rape and criminal negligence, is probably the most widespread human rights issue but also the one that gets the least recognition. Why? Because it is so disturbing.

Each year in Canada, one woman out of eight at least—that is more than one million Canadian women—are abused by the man they live with. Women are victims of violence on the sole basis of their sex, and that remains a major obstacle to human growth. Unfortunately, too many women are considered as mere objects: luxury items, baby machines, domestics. If it sounds appalling, too bad! The fact remains that such is reality in this great country of ours. It is a fact of every day life for too many women.

Mr. Speaker, spousal abuse can take many forms. Women can be physically or sexually assaulted, emotionally and psychologically intimidated, degraded, deprived or exploited by their partners. Violence can leave not only visible marks on the body but also invisible emotional and psychological scars. The victim can feel terrorized, depressed, humiliated, desperate, shamed, abandoned and anxious.

Sadly, spousal abuse is an integral part of the Canadian society. It has become imperative that governments at all levels get involved to ensure the protection of Canadian women of all walks of life. They must get involved. No one must be allowed to abuse women in any way in Canada.

The federal government must relentlessly emphasize the greater welfare of the population. It must keep providing assistance to women groups, community organizations and front-line workers so that this problem can be eradicated by the end of the century.

Every woman must be allowed to play her role to the fullest in our society. Women must be allowed their dignity. The problem of spousal abuse must be dealt with urgently because, too often, it leads to family violence.

[*English*]

The campus reality is another area we must seriously look at. The use of sexist language in the classroom and educational materials, sexist articles in papers, demeaning graffiti, sexual harassment and assault are all part of a vicious circle of attitudes and actions that send the wrong message about gender relations, at the expense of women. Why is it that some examples of sexism and violence against women on Canadian campuses make it into the news? Why do so many go unreported? What does this say of our society?

In most cases, after a headline everything is forgotten. In general, professors and the administration have done nothing to prevent or respond to sexism and violence against women. Things must change.

Slowly a few institutions are establishing sexual harassment policies and committees. It is a beginning, but it is only a beginning. It will not be able to go very far without financial assistance.

Federal and provincial governments have repeatedly cut back in funding for the operation of our universities and colleges. The federal budget announced this week continued this trend by extending the freeze on transfer payments to the provinces for health and education. In an already strained system campus initiatives to better the status of women will undoubtedly be among the first to be cut.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, battered and raped women need support and medical care. Funds are lacking. The government must respond to the urgent needs of such a large number of its citizens. Violence can only breed violence. Is this the future that we want to give our youth? Is this the vision of man that we want to give our daughters? No, Mr. Speaker. We must rethink our structures and, particularly, our priorities. We must consider these women who are at the roots of this country. They must be able to live without fear, without shame.

Poverty, misery, unemployment, illiteracy, these are all evils that can only increase the anger, the assaults, the rapes. It is unacceptable. We must put social problems at the top of this government agenda. We must give back to Canadian women their position in this society.

Mr. Speaker, it is a fact that the problem cannot be solved by legislation or by a government program, but the federal government must show leadership. It must mobilize and help fund those who are ready to make changes. It must show Canadian women that it takes the

problem seriously, but particularly, that it really wants to solve it.

A Royal Commission on Violence Against Women could be a welcome gesture and a sign of goodwill from this government. It has already been 20 years. It is time to re-examine the situation today.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, this evil must disappear so that every woman can regain her dignity and live with pride.

[*English*]

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Saint-Laurent for a very thoughtful and sensitive speech on the motion before the House today, that this House call upon the Prime Minister to appoint a royal commission on violence against women.

I have a couple of questions which I think I can roll into one. A recent release of Amnesty International's report called Women on the Front Line outlines extreme violence against women's human rights. I wonder if the member could comment on whether this should be the mandate also of the royal commission, which would include discussion about the role Canada could play in the international community to combat violence against women.

Second, in speaking with a former colleague of mine from Saskatchewan, there is an increase in family violence in that province due to the horrible state of the farm economy. This is probably due to the high interest rates, the GATT issues, and all kinds of things like the weather. Many farms are going bankrupt and wife battering, child abuse and suicide are certainly on the increase in the farm community. The issue is that there is no place for women to go. Farm women and children are isolated even from their closest neighbour. There could be many miles between them. It is very difficult to keep track of the types of abuse that are going on in this situation. As I mentioned, most farmers cannot even see each other's houses and programs are not readily available for these women.

• (1650)

I am wondering if the royal commission could also look at ways to better provide services to the people of rural Canada. Will it be looking at putting in place a better system of tracking violence against women in the situation I have just asked about?

I would like a response to these questions.

Mrs. Maheu: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Nepean. When we are talking about a royal commission and about what Canada can do in the international community, I would be tempted to say that we have to start in our own community.

How can we possibly advise anyone in the international community? How can we possibly complain or criticize what is going on elsewhere when we have not been able to look at what is going on in our country?

Twenty years is a long time. Canada has changed a great deal in the last 20 years. I think we should be in a position to look at the international community as it touches violence against women, but first of all I would like us to look at our community.

I beg the ministers, since they are both here, to do something about this issue and to stop using bits and dregs of information that is out there. An in depth study has not been done with our cultural communities, and that is where a high level of violence is found.

I do not have any answers for families living in the western part of Canada, but I do know one thing. Coincidentally the member for Hamilton Mountain gave me her figures on increases in violence, in sex offences, and in assault. In 1987 the figures in just one Canadian city show 37 sexual assaults. In 1989, 536 in the same city and it is increasing. Normal assaults, which are not absolutely classified as sexual assaults, have probably increased in the same proportion.

This is why we need someone to work on this problem. Even though I realize the money has been given, we need to know where it could really be put to best use.

Mr. Rey Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, I too am delighted to speak to the motion brought forward by my colleague from Halifax.

In part the motion reads:

> That this House call upon the Prime Minister to appoint a royal commission on violence against women.

Certainly the Liberal Party gives a tremendous amount of importance to this issue, and so we have taken this initiative and challenge to government.

It is hard for me, a man, to comprehend totally the feeling of fear the night holds for women. They are conditioned from birth to be wary. They learn to recognize situations that may hold harm.

Traditionally those situations have been connected to the night. An assailant attacks a woman alone in a secluded spot, a darkened area. Now tradition is changing. There are few situations today that do not hold harm and fear for a woman.

More and more often danger comes not in the shape of a stranger, but in the form of a woman's husband, son, male friend or date. Beatings and murders of women have increased phenomenally over the past five years. Terms like date rape, which I first heard in 1984, and gender violence, last year, are now being woven into our language.

The sanctuary of the home is becoming a myth. Sixty per cent of women murdered die at the hands of their partners. Twenty-five per cent of women had been sexually assaulted and abused, half before the age of 17, as reported by the National Action Committee on the Status of Women.

What of women who choose independent living? Do they feel safe living alone? At least 4 per cent of seniors are abused—and I am sure a good proportion of them are women too—by a family member at some time.

In 1989, 119 women were murdered by fists and knives, not by guns. And 75 per cent of the assailants were known. They happened at home, as reported by the December 1990 issue of the Canadian Forum.

I have heard of cases where young native women, hoping to escape abuse in the home, have turned to pregnancy and a subsequent welfare cheque as a means of escaping their homes and abuse. In fact, women on reservations and in remote aboriginal communities suffer a level of abuse that far exceeds the national level. They have nowhere to turn, nowhere to escape their abusers.

Fifty-two per cent of disabled women have been raped, assaulted or abused. This is truly a tragic commentary on our country. At least one in ten women is assaulted by her spouse or boyfriend.

The government has countered this flood of violence with its Family Violence Initiatives Program, a program that still falls short of delivering the solutions we need.

We must know the reasons behind the aggression of some men toward women. To understand the enemy, it has been said, is the best way to disarm the enemy.

Why does one man in ten assault his female partner? Who are these brutal men? They have to be accountable. What has led them to do the things they do? What are the best ways to help the victims of violence, most importantly? What more needs to be done?

Answers must be sought for these questions. The Minister of National Health and Welfare on February 20, 1991, in announcing the Family Violence Initiative, said in his opening statement: "I appeal for concerted national action on family violence".

In the previous December, I and many more of my Liberal colleagues called upon the government to create a royal commission on violence against women. We are asked: Why is there need for this commission? Let me attempt to answer that question.

First, I believe it will help Canadians to identify fully the spectrum of the causes of this grievous problem. On an individual basis we will know whether the poverty, insufficiency of income, unemployment, and poor education are related to insufficiency of government programs. We will also know whether they have the capacity to make a living, to buy a home and whether at times of crisis, illnesses, accidents, separation and divorce they have a transitional shelter to go to. We can examine whether as a society the government has been doing its job. Has the government been doing its job, for example, in the area of pornography trade and prostitution, just to mention one, that always is promoted on the backs of women who then become victims?

• (1700)

We will be able to ascertain the true magnitude of the problem. We will even be able to ascertain the age distribution in a very accurate way. Knowing the dimension of this problem will make us able to provide the proper approach—and it will give us a sense of the true gravity of this situation. It will tell us the nature of the problem, whether it is physical, sexual assault, psychological or even financial deprivation. It will tell us where violence occurs and what magnitude of that occurs in the homes, on the streets and even on school campuses. We will be able to examine the sequelae of this problem: The

immediate and the long-term. As the critic for health and welfare, I have discussed this issue with my associate critics, the member for Hamilton Mountain and the member for Mississauga. Truly, Mr. Speaker, when we imagine the sequelae of violence against women when they survive the physical violence, they end up having problems with alcohol and drug abuse, delinquency, prostitution, mental incapacitation and even suicide. When we fully appreciate the gravity of the problem, then perhaps this government will be compelled to truly take all the necessary steps.

We will be able to provide a comprehensive approach and not the piecemeal approach, and this is another value of a royal commission.

Last, Mr. Speaker, a royal commission during its process will be able to focus public awareness on this issue, sensitize Canadians, sensitize women as to the manifestations of violence, and even sensitize the media. The history of royal commissions on many other major issues in our country has taught us that great results have emanated from them.

We need great results to emanate from this proposed royal commission. It is worth an investment, Mr. Speaker. It is worth an investment. It will be a true signal to Canadians that we are serious. It is wise and it is right and it is timely.

* * *

POINT OF ORDER

AMENDMENT TO STANDING ORDERS

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Point of order, Mr. Speaker. I would like to interrupt before the minister gets started. There have been consultations among the three parties and at approximately five o'clock I was instructed to come in the House and ask for unanimous consent for two housekeeping motions, which I think you will find have been agreed to.

If I could read the first one:

That Chapter XIII of the Standing Orders of this House be amended by including the following paragraph:

Members of Standing, Special, Joint and Legislative committees shall give 24 hour prior notice of any substantive motion to the Chairman of their respective committees, before such motion may be considered.

Point of Order

And that this Order be deemed rescinded when the House prorogues or alters the Standing Orders to cause a reorganization of committees to occur, or when the forty-ninth Report of the Striking Committee is adopted.

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, I wish to confirm that, yes, there have been discussions, almost endless discussions, for many months now. This is part of a solution that will allow us to have some of our committees resume functioning, at least between now and when one of those three events occurs. And we do support it.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, I am sure that what the government whip indicates to us is correct. However, I have not had the opportunity to consult with our own representative on this issue and I am not apprised of it. If the House concurs I will endeavour in the next few minutes to ascertain that what is proposed by the government Whip is indeed what was agreed to. And I will come back to the Whip immediately after the discourse of the next member who is scheduled to speak.

If the House concurs with that, perhaps we could hold in abeyance approval of what has been proposed by the government Whip until the next speaker has terminated his or her remarks.

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, the deputy House leader on the other side left my office 20 minutes ago and it was at the request of that party that I was to do this around five o'clock. I don't know what has gone wrong, but people have other commitments.

I wonder if he could take my word for it that in fact the wording is exact, that it has been checked, that it has been in the hands of his party for quite some hours, that the House leader was involved, that the Whip was involved, and that that was the recommendation.

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the member is doing this with all good intentions, but I cannot pretend that I have heard—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I hope that you can come to agreement outside the House and when you do come in, I will be able to listen to it.

The hon. Minister of Health and Welfare has the floor on debate.

Supply

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S. O. 81—VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Ms. Clancy (p. 18406).

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, when I came to the Department of National Health and Welfare I knew that family violence, and especially violence against women, was a serious problem in our culture, but I don't think I realized how deep and difficult a problem it would be to solve for each of us.

Many of our colleagues who have spoken in the debate before me have mentioned the ugly picture that is painted by statistics. They show that 10 per cent of women are assaulted by their male partners. We know that at least 25 per cent of girls are abused by the age of 16 and that about 60 per cent of the women murdered each year die at the hands of their partners.

These figures may well be conservative. Abused women are often too frightened to disclose the oppression they suffer. Experts estimate that the spoken or perceived threat of reprisal keeps more than half of the victims of abuse from speaking out and seeking help.

Violence against women is classic tyranny, and the tools of its perpetrators are entrapment, humiliation and intimidation. Victims of extreme cases become depersonalized, like survivors of other traumas. Efforts by victims to change the patterns of violence or to escape the offender are often met with increased threats of beatings and murder. The result is that women who have tried to escape and reorient their lives cannot be guaranteed safe haven in far too many cases.

Much of the violence against women takes place in the home. The family, the central unit of our society from which individuals gain their sense of security, compassion and self-esteem, is for many Canadian women a purgatory of rejection, manipulation and abuse. For far too many women, the family is experienced as a structure in which the supreme power of one over others is maintained through violence.

The abuse can be physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, or material. Some consequences of wife abuse, such as bruises and broken bones, are visible. Shelter workers will attest to the pitiable condition in which some of their residents arrive, maimed and disfigured, when the violence they suffer finally drives them into hiding. Less evident, though often more severe, is the emotional and psychological damage the victims of wife abuse endure, wounds that never heal; terror and depression, hopelessness and isolation.

The reluctance of victims to speak about their abuse and the refusal of others to become involved creates a conspiracy of silence which protects the abuser. For far too long Canadians have been tempted to simply look away, to accept the brutal treatment of the innocent as someone else's problem, or to say that it is something that should be dealt with behind closed doors.

It is not someone else's problem. It belongs to all of us. If we simply look the other way, we are complicit in acts of violence which leave the victims intimidated, sexually assaulted, molested, beaten, tortured and, far too frequently, dead.

The question that begs a response is: What twisted logic makes some men think that they can abuse women? The answer is elusive, but clearly social values and conventions which do not assure equal rights and status to women, children and seniors make them vulnerable to violence in the family. Traditional views which deem men to be the head of their household, demand that women honour and obey their husbands, and insist that children be seen and not heard are major factors in the cultural permission that men feel when they channel their emotions through a tunnel of violence.

• (1710)

In the past, action to protect the victims of abuse, apprehend and punish the offenders, and address the root causes of family violence has been slow to evolve.

Women's groups have long stressed the importance of protection and shelter for battered women and their children. They have taken a leading role both in developing a response to the needs of the victims and in promoting general understanding of the nature of violence itself.

Their efforts have been fruitful and tireless, since the first shelter was opened in British Columbia in 1972. We now have over 300 shelters in Canada.

The late 1970s in Canada saw widespread legislative reform of family law, particularly matrimonial property law, aided by a new cohort of feminist lawyers working toward recognition of marriage as a partnership of equals.

Among the federal responses to the problem of family violence in the 1980s was the Badgely report in 1984 which examined the adequacy of laws designed to protect the vulnerable. On the basis of that report and for the first time in this country's history the government of Canada addressed family violence as a matter of national concern in the Speech from the Throne.

[*Translation*]

In 1986, the federal government launched a $25 million five-year Child Sexual Abuse program and, two years later, a $40 million four-year Family Violence Initiative.

We built new shelters. We learned how to train people to deal with family violence. We conducted research and learned a great deal about the extent and nature of violence against women.

We funded more than 700 projects, each of which had a practical and measurable objective. Under Project Haven, for instance, which is administered by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, up to 500 new shelter units are being created for abused women and their children.

* * *

[*English*]

POINT OF ORDER

AMENDMENT TO STANDING ORDERS

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to interrupt the hon. minister. I have now consulted with my colleagues and I am pleased to offer the unanimous consent that was previously requested.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, there is a second motion that I would like to read to the House and I think there is a similar understanding:

> That, notwithstanding Standing Orders 104 and 114, the Chief Government Whip may appoint one additional Government Member to the membership of the Standing Committee of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Government Operations, by advising the Clerk of the House, in writing, before Monday March 18, 1991.
>
> This Order shall be deemed rescinded when the House prorogues or alters the Standing Orders to cause a reorganization of committees to occur or when the forty-ninth report of the Striking Committee is adopted.

I believe there is a similar understanding and I would like to make comments once we have accepted it.

Mr. Gagliano: Mr. Speaker, yes, there has been consultation and we agree with the government.

Mr. Angus: Mr. Speaker, yes, there has been consultation on this motion as well and I think it is an excellent way around the particular dilemma we have.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, it is my job to give notice to the Table and I do so now that we would like to have an organization meeting of the committee Monday at 3.30 p.m. I think it might be helpful to the members of the committee if, in the meantime, the clerk's office could make some approach to the citizen's forum about their availability because I suspect that that will be one of the items the committee would like to deal with some time next week.

I would also like to make a public commitment to the notion that the committee once up and running, obviously has a bit of a backlog, and if it met several times next week, certainly government members would be prepared to meet as frequently as necessary after the usual consultation between the three parties regarding suitable topics and witnesses.

Mr. Angus: Mr. Speaker, I actually want to rise on a point of personal privilege. Yesterday, in the heat of debate, I used some unparliamentary language which is found on the bottom of page 18327. I want to unequivocally withdraw those remarks.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): It has been withdrawn. The hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier.

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, I just want to tell my friend the government Whip that I understand and appreciate this turn of events. After yesterday's events in this House, where I was partly responsible for raising the matter, I think we have now seen that common sense and lot of understanding prevails. I am very happy that consumer and corporate affairs will be reconvened on Monday to proceed with the examination of the whole question of the Spicer commission.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Now, can we get back to debate. The hon. Minister of Health and Welfare.

* * *

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S. O. 81—VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Ms. Clancy (p.18406).

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, it is very gracious of you to recognize me again.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, the federal Women's Film Program was supported in its effort to produce and distribute films related to women's issues. The Disabled Women's Network was funded to conduct workshops with transition house staff, raising awareness about the vulnerability of women to abuse.

The Canadian Teacher's Federation was able to distribute to its member network the resource "Thumbs Down—A Classroom Response to Violence Against Women." And 56,000 Canadian physicians received a special adaptation of the Ontario Medical Association's "Reports on Wife Assault."

Today in every jurisdiction in Canada we have mechanisms to address family violence and our common efforts have led us to loudly reaffirm a central value of our society—that violence, in any form, is unacceptable. We recognize that violence in Canada is a serious, pervasive and intolerable ill. Will recognize also that it is a national problem, one that will require nothing less than a national response if we are to succeed in a significant way. This is society's problem. No law or program enacted by government can make it disappear. What government can do, however, is to provide leadership and to help to mobilize the efforts of countless individuals, agencies and organizations to make a concerted and sustained effort to stop the suffering. Last month we did just that when we announced a new Family Violence Initiative, one designed to build on the experience of the past four years and to encourage new approaches and alliances.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker, I listened earlier as my colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby mentioned in her remarks the fact that this new initiative on family violence would amount to $136 million in new funds, a figure that she dismissed as a mere drop in the bucket.

For the women who are suffering from family violence and for the others who are all too often its victims, this $136 million in new funds is important and welcomed news, indeed.

When members opposite denigrate the role of the federal government in dealing with issues related to family violence, they should be aware of the fact that through our contributions in health care, through our contributions through the Canada Assistance Plan, through direct spending we are making under the family violence program, we are spending, likely, in excess of a billion dollars a year to provide assistance to victims of family violence. That is an important contribution that is made by this Parliament and by the federal government.

I listened, but listened without success, to hear colleagues on the other side make suggestions for ways that we could be more effective in terms of targeting that money. I listened for concrete suggestions and new initiatives that could be taken and new ways in which we could assist the victims of family violence, or that we could intervene today to prevent the cycle of family violence from continuing for yet another generation.

• (1720)

What we have heard from the other side is two things: first, that we should simply be increasing the amount of money, that $136 million is trivial; and second, that instead of acting what we should be doing is studying.

I listened to my colleague and friend from Winnipeg as he gave his remarks a few minutes ago in calling for more study, as his colleagues did as well. How much more study is needed for us to recognize that all too often women and children are left in situations that are abusive because they have no place to go?

How much more study is needed before we recognize that family violence is part of a cycle that carries on from generation to generation and that it is essential for us to act now to break that cycle?

How much more study is needed before we recognize that there are problems all too often in our courts in an insensitivity to the needs of victims of family violence, or should we be acting now?

How much more study is needed before we come to the conclusion that policies in the past, that have required that women who have been abused in homes would have to lay the charges, were wrong and that police officers should be given instructions when they are called to domestic disputes that they should lay the charges? We do not need more study of that, we need action.

How much more study is needed before we are able to conclude that measures have to be taken to look at the portrayal of women and children in the media, to recognize the fact that all too often that portrayal diminishes their humanity, reduces their worth and allows them to be abused? Need we study that further, or can we act today to deal with this sort of a problem?

That is what the policy on family violence is designed to do. It is designed to build on the enormous reservoir of talent that there is in this country, on the commitment, which is growing at all levels in our society across Canada at all levels of government and throughout society, that recognizes that it is time today, not two years hence, but today for attitudes to change, for programs to be put in place, for all of us to recognize that this is society's problem and that all of us are involved. Let us not wait until later to do it, let us act now.

That is why that $136 million in new funds is so very important. That is why the other legislative initiatives that were disclosed in the Family Violence Program will be so important for Canadians as well because we can act today. We do have the data that we need to make significant progress and we will learn more. We will learn more from studies, there is no question about that, but there is no excuse for us not taking action today, action which will help to stem the suffering and the loss of life of far too many people.

The evidence is there. It is incontrovertible. It is powerful. The silent suffering of so many women across Canada implores us to take action at this level in this Parliament to provide leadership today and not years from now.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, if the strategy is to be successful it must serve as a catalyst for action, part of a series of initiatives at different levels of government and society which are needed to combat deeply rooted societal attitudes.

Consequently we undertook a massive series of consultations with provincial and territorial governments and the non-government sector. We consulted widely with all levels of government, women's groups, child advocacy organizations, senior's groups, front-line service providers, professional associations and researchers.

In June of 1989, we hosted a National Forum on Family Violence to identify major issues and suggest avenues for activity.

The result is a new program which will make available $136 million, in new funds, over the next four years, more than twice the level of funding currently committed by the federal government to address the problem of violence.

The federal strategy has three main objectives: to combat the attitudes and stereotypes that encourage and excuse this senseless violence, to ensure that the brutal people who commit these acts are called to account, and, most importantly, to provide help to the innocent victims who, all too often, are asked to bear their cruel burden in silence.

Through the initiative the Government will strengthen intervention and treatment services by training RCMP recruits, and the staffs of Correctional Services Canada

and the National Parole Board to better understand the patterns of violence faced by women.

Training materials will be developed and supported for judges, physicians, nurses and social workers—both those who appear in court and those who work on the front lines. Of major urgency, availability of housing for victims will be substantially improved. Treatment will be provided to violent and sexual offenders in all 60 federal correctional institutions.

[*English*]

Today in Vancouver my colleague, the Minister of Justice, is announcing the government's plans to review provisions of the Criminal Code, the Divorce Act and other legislation with regard to pornography, the adequacy of current bail provisions and the forcible removal of offenders from the home. This is action which should be taken now to begin this and not waiting until later.

Within my own department we will fund community projects designed to treat and prevent abuse, train physicians and social workers, collect and disseminate information and conduct research and evaluation. The national clearing house on family violence will receive an almost fourfold budgetary increase, enabling it to build upon existing resources and improve public access to its materials.

We will continue our support to the National Film Board family violence collection, a collection of videos which have been seen by 8.5 million Canadians. We are not waiting until later, this is action that needs to be taken now.

In consultation with aboriginal communities, we will train 2,000 health care and social service workers serving Indian reserves and Inuit communities, relying upon their help to develop prevention programs in over 500 communities.

Undoubtedly, the most important element of this initiative is to serve as a catalyst for all of society to mobilize its resources to pull together to deal with this issue. It is not a federal government issue; it is a national problem in which all of us—governments, the private sector, voluntary agencies and individuals—must share together. All must work together. All of us must mobilize what resources we can find to deal with the problem that is pervasive, that cuts across all demographic and geographic lines in our society and a problem which causes suffering and, in too many instances, death on the part of its innocent victims.

That is the plea that I make today to members of the House: not to put things off until later, not to say that we do not have enough information to know that this problem is pervasive or to know that there are measures we can take today to begin to bring down the level of this violence, but for us all to work with all sectors of society starting today, to mobilize those resources, to change attitudes, to begin to ensure that the human worth and dignity of every Canadian is respected and to begin to bring down that level of violence in our society and to ensure that those people who suffer the senseless violence receive the aid and assistance that they so desperately need.

By working together, we can do precisely that. No issue is more fundamental for this Parliament, no issue more demands action today than that we work together on this. Studies, yes; studies will continue. But it is essential that we commit ourselves today to acting today before more innocent victims have to suffer for our failures.

Ms. Mary Clancy (Halifax): I begin my comment with a sincere apology to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. It is quite clear that I obviously used words which the minister did not understand in my speech. I apologize for that.

• (1730)

I cannot believe that anything other than a misunderstanding could give rise to what I find to be unacceptable in the minister's tone and in his speech. I cannot believe that the members on this side of the House or, indeed, on his side of the House would denigrate the question of violence against women.

I do not think I, my colleagues in the Liberal Party or in the New Democratic Party have ever tried to take that kind of a shot at the minister. I am sure that one of us is misunderstanding the other here. If it happens to be me, then I certainly apologize.

I want to ask the minister a couple of questions. First of all, he says that this is a national problem. I could not agree more. Of course, it is a national problem. He talks about co-operation among all sectors, and I agree with that as well. I hope that means that the minister is talking to his friends in business, in the professions and in other parts and sectors of this society. I would like to

know about that because as yet, if he is doing so, he is not getting much of a response.

I would like to know what the minister thinks is the root cause or causes of violence against women. For weeks we have been sitting in the violence against women subcommittee and hearing that we do not know what the actual causes are. Yes, there are the indicators of alcoholism; yes, there are the indicators of economic stress; yes, there are indicators of dysfunctional families and so on. There are others who do not fall into these categories.

I know the minister to be an intelligent man. I know the minister to be a compassionate man. What we are calling for here is concrete action today.

I said in my speech earlier that I believe the initiatives announced several weeks ago were in good faith. I am not going to get into a numbers game with the minister, but $136 million given the cuts that came the following week is one tiny example.

Second stage housing was cut by $23.6 million. Laudable. That is one building per province if we do not count the territories. At the same time, the government cuts $411 million to government subsidized housing.

Where I come from, they call that "robbing Peter to pay Paul". I do not think it is robbing Mike to pay Perrin. At any rate, I want to know, if the minister thinks that we are not advocating action in a royal commission, what he has to say about the fact that none of his $136 million is going directly to transition houses when 50 per cent of women are turned away every year.

I want to know what he thinks about the fact that Project Haven has spent barely a third of its budget and it is almost at the end of its program life. Women's groups across the country which work in the field of abused women are complaining that they cannot access this money. When I asked this minister two weeks ago if programs for judges and police in this country would be mandatory, he would not answer me.

I want to know, today: Will they be mandatory? Those judges who go voluntarily do not need the courses. It is those who will not go. He asked for concrete suggestions, and we said: "a royal commission". I repeat that it is not either/or. We need a royal commission and we need direct services.

Come to our committee, I tell him, Mr. Speaker, through you, and hear what the front line workers are saying. Stop these pious platitudes. Stop the band-aid responses, give us real action and ask the Prime Minister to do it today.

Mr. Beatty: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member says: "Stop the band-aid response of $136 million and legislative responses in changing legislation to try to deal with this problem. Sensitize people to try to make sure that this sort of abuse does not exist any more. Have concrete action", which is to study the problem further.

I do not think that that is a very constructive suggestion to make. What we need from members participating in this debate on both sides of the House is proposals for action. Study, yes.

My colleague, the Minister of State for the Status of Women has made it clear that we will be inviting from the subcommittee on the status of women suggestions on how best to proceed in terms of further work. One of those recommendations made by the subcommittee may well deal with the question of a royal commission.

What we need today is action today, where the information is before us today as to what the problem is. There is a broad range of information on that.

Mrs. Clancy: How much money for transition houses, Perrin?

Mr. Beatty: The hon. member mentions transition houses. I am glad she did that because she has systematically, since the announcement was made a couple of weeks ago, given information that simply was not accurate.

Either already built or committed to be built are in the neighbourhood of 440 units of housing under Project Haven. If the hon. member had checked her facts she would have found that. In addition to that, some $21 million will be added to the budget of CMHC to provide for additional housing, much of it second-stage housing.

Mrs. Clancy: Second stage.

Mr. Beatty: The hon. member dismisses this again as unimportant. Where do these people go after the first two weeks that they spend in the transition house? Where do they go?

We will be putting money directly in to providing assistance to enable people to set up homes that people can go to to become re-established in the community. We will be continuing to do what we can to broaden the services available for women who suffer from this sort of abuse all too often.

Had the hon. member, before she made comments that were ill-informed and which were just plain wrong, taken the trouble to inquire of CMHC or of National Health and Welfare we would have been glad to give her that information. But this should be much more than a partisan issue, it should be an issue which transcends partisanship, and on all sides of the House there should be a commitment for us to work together today, not later but today, to deal with an issue which is causing far too many people to suffer.

The hon. member asked whether I misunderstood the comments that she made in the House. I would refer her to comments that were made by one of her colleagues who talked about the need for studies so we can set priorities on the $136 million. We do not need to put it off, we need action.

Ms. Clancy: What about the 50 per cent?

Mr. Beatty: What is important today is that we do have the information that we need to know that housing is important. We know that we need to have intervention, that offenders need treatment. We know that all too often women and children are taken out of the houses and the abuser remains behind afterward. We know, today, that the portrayal of women and children in the media all too often create the conditions in which violence is possible. We know that this is a problem which is not going to go away and that it requires that each of us commit ourselves today to working together to redress this problem before it becomes worse.

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, I, too, take offence at the tone of the minister's remarks in relation to comments and speeches that have been made in the House. I, too, agree that this is not a partisan issue. It is in fact an issue of women's lives and women's very survival in our country. It is not a partisan issue.

Women from every economic sector are battered and beaten, not just poor women. I, too, wonder if the minister listened or heard. Perhaps he listened and did not hear the comments that have been made here today, because the comments that were made gave concrete suggestions to the minister and to the government on steps that can be taken right now, immediately.

We did not just ask for research, we asked for action on this issue. When he talks about Project Haven, a program that was announced before the last election that was to provide 500 new beds in shelters for battered women, the fact is at this time, 1991, not even one-third of them have been completed and they have not all been allocated, and I have checked with CMHC.

The minister mentioned that the Minister of Justice had a press conference today. Again, it sounds like another press conference about the same initiatives. Did she announce that there will be mandatory gender-sensitivity training for the judiciary, for judges and for police officers? Did the Minister of Justice announce that in Vancouver today as the communication that I have had with her has asked her to do, as the communication of women has asked her to do? Did the Minister of Justice make that announcement today in Vancouver?

• (1740)

Mr. Beatty: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member says that this should not be a partisan issue and that perhaps I did not hear what she had to say earlier.

I did hear what she had to say earlier as she dismissed a commitment of $136 million of new funds as, in her words, a drop in the bucket or as, my colleague from Halifax repeats, peanuts.

Ms. Clancy: Peanuts.

Mr. Beatty: This, she says, is peanuts or a drop in the bucket. They dismissed over a billion dollars being put by the federal government into dealing with issues related to this sort of violence, a billion dollars a year or more than that going into the Canada Assistance Plan and EPF to assist victims of violence, in addition to the sort of money we are talking about here. That is to be dismissed.

If we are to be successful in dealing with this sort of an issue, it is important that we mobilize all of the resources at all levels of society. The federal government is showing a range of initiatives here that we have already announced. What we are doing is building on initiatives

already in place and on partnerships which have already been developed to enable us—

Ms. Clancy: You are building on sand.

Mr. Beatty: The hon. member from Halifax says that we are building on sand. We are building on sand, she says, when we are giving assistance to social workers for training to deal with issues of family violence. We are building on sand, she says, when we are giving training, for example, to police officers. There are some 500 of them going through the RCMP academy each year.

Ms. Clancy: Is it mandatory?

Mr. Beatty: We are building on sand, she says, when we are building housing units for victims of violence. We are building on sand, she says, when we give money to community groups to enable them to provide services to victims of violence.

I do not believe we are building on sand. I believe that we are building on a bedrock of co-operation which will have profound effects in improving the quality of life for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Roy-Arcelin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of this debate, the opposition has been saying the government is indifferent or seems to be indifferent to the problems facing women. Mr. Speaker, it so happens we are very much aware of what the government is doing to deal with the disastrous effects of violence against women.

Perhaps the minister could expand somewhat on the program he announced a few weeks ago, a program that in my opinion is taking great strides towards eliminating violence against women.

[*English*]

Mr. Beatty: Mr. Speaker, indeed I would be glad to do that.

What we have done is take an initiative which involves some six different departments of government. It is a designed deal at the criminal level with people who are abusers. It is designed to ensure that there are services made available to offenders to try to train them and to try to rehabilitate them. It is designed to provide assistance to people who suffer from family violence. It is designed to build partnerships with groups in the private sector, non-governmental organizations, to work together to try to change attitudes and to provide services. It is designed to activate networks at the provincial and local levels, which can be important in terms of making people more aware of when family violence occurs and how to deal with it. It is designed to build upon services through police officers, Correctional Service Canada and the National Parole Board to ensure that offenders guilty of family violence either receive the treatment that is necessary or that measures are taken to ensure that their victims are properly protected from them.

It is designed to look at issues which all too often take a woman and children who have been abused out of the home and leave the abuser still in the home, with them losing both their whole way of life and their home.

Through this concerted action we are confident that we can have an important impact on the level of violence from which far too many women in this society suffer.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by congratulating the member for Halifax on proposing this motion today.

We have gone through a period of time over recent weeks and months, in which the attention of virtually all Canadians was glued to one issue and almost nothing else. Of course I am referring to the war in the Persian Gulf. In that period of time other issues that we could have and perhaps even should have been talking about were not raised as much as they could have been.

That does not mean to say that everyone in public office or even advocacy groups did not do their jobs. Even in instances when very important issues were raised, the attention of the media and Canadians generally was focused in another direction. To a degree, raising important issues that should have received much attention was sometimes like whistling in the wind.

Our colleague from Halifax reminds us today of an important topic that indeed should have been raised in the House before and has been raised in the House before by her and others. She has been very vigilant in raising issues involving family violence, and more particularly violence against women. A few weeks ago she raised criticism involving the minister's initiative. She

has questioned the government on several occasions, and I congratulate her for that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, the subject before the House today is a sad one. I think it is appropriate that both men and women are speaking to this issue in the House today. We are talking about violence against women, but we are also talking about the violence perpetrated by men against women. Of course, in most cases when we talk about violence in this connection, we are talking about violence by men against women, and that is what we are talking about today.

I am not proud of the fact, Mr. Speaker, and think it should be repeated over and over again, in this House and elsewhere, until such time that men, both collectively and individually, realize that violence against women is unacceptable and that it must stop.

[*English*]

As late as the end of the last century, women, once married, were considered to be chattels of their husbands, a form of property. Perhaps some of that mindset is regrettably still there among some people today, treating indeed their wife or partner or significant other, however one wants to put it, as being their property.

The issue in question has been studied a lot. The minister has referred to that. However, if it has been studied so successfully and if all has been done, why is the problem still there? Why is the problem still there in the numbers and magnitude that we know that it is? Obviously we do not have all the answers. I would like to think that if the minister had all the answers he could have given us all the solutions. If any of us had all the answers we could have provided all the solutions and the problem would be gone. But it is not; the problem is still there in very large numbers.

In my previous incarnation in politics, if I may put it that way, when I was a member of the Ontario legislature, I was the social policy spokesperson for our party. We had a study by the Ontario legislature committee on social development, on violence against women. Day after day we listened to testimony from women's groups, even on occasion from battering husbands. There were days in which the evidence was virtually impossible to listen to. There were days on which I had to walk out of the committee room several times during the deliberations because it was just so awful to hear.

It is almost a decade ago. As a matter of fact, as I look now at the calendar in front of us on the clerks' table, I notice that we are only six days away from my 10th anniversary of my election to Queen's Park, March 19, 1981. It was shortly after that that we had this study. Ten years have gone by, or close to it, and yet the problem is still there.

• (1750)

I do not accept the minister's argument that the request of my colleague from Halifax is unreasonable. I do not accept his comment that we have all the answers now and that there is no need to have this royal commission.

I am paraphrasing his words earlier. He said: "We don't need to study the issue further. We can act today". If that is true, I will have to back up one day and pretend we are on March 12, 1991 and say that if we could act today, why did we not act yesterday or the day before? Presumably if as of half an hour ago the minister had all those answers that he was referring to, he must have had them for sometime. He must have had them yesterday or a week ago or at some other period of time.

I am not blaming the minister in the sense that I hold him responsible for the violence that exists. That would be unfair and untrue, but I do blame the minister for that attitude of saying that we do not need to revisit this issue again and to study it further.

I am the first one to criticize expenditures on government use or sometimes overuse of royal commissions on a variety of issues. I can say as an opposition critic on government expenditures that I certainly would not criticize the principle of having such an expenditure now. The issue is of such import that all members of the House should join together and request that royal commission by the government.

It is my hope that the government, notwithstanding the remarks only moments ago of the minister, will undertake such a study on family violence and violence against women particularly.

As I indicated to you a little earlier, Mr. Speaker, I wish to share my time with our colleague, the hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond. With that I will end my comments and I will look forward to the contribution by my colleague from Cape Breton—East

Richmond who is the former critic of this very important issue for our caucus.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Monique B. Tardif (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Supply and Services): Mr. Speaker, first I should like to remind my colleague that in the previous Parliament the government did take the first step concerning family violence.

I do not know whether he remembers that. The first step has been made. The government has decided to give priority to this matter and continue to take action.

Mr. Speaker, I must admit that I fully agree with the minister's position. Perhaps I should draw my colleague's attention to last Sunday's Martine Corriveau editorial in *Le Soleil* entitled "No more commissions of inquiry".

She was referring to the request made by the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women to have such a commission appointed. She said about this request that "the least one can say is that it lacks originality and raises suspicions".

I will not read the whole editorial, but she went on to say: "If we are to review past experiences, analyze current data, consult university research projects and explore new ways of intervening, there are procedures lest costly and probably more effective than referring the issue to an inquiry commission, royal though it might be".

We need evidence and opinions? Why not use the very simple tools available to the first human democracies, such as informal meetings, genuine citizens' forums, sectorial sessions chaired by advocacy people from various fields of activities in each county, each region, and each province?

She concluded that "the millions of dollars saved could be used to reduce the deficit, eliminating one cause of economic violence against Canadian society as a whole".

Mr. Speaker, what I want to know from my colleague is how, at a time when we seek to give priority to measures designed to reduce violence, would we proceed with a study which would only delay any action we might take to repress violence?

[*English*]

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, first of all those two initiatives are not mutually exclusive. There is no reason why Parliament cannot undertake this royal commission and at the same time continue all those those great programs that the hon. member refers to.

Finally, the member has said that she has an editorial that proves her point. I can table a similar editorial that proves the exact opposite point. This one is from the *Daily News* of Friday, March 1, 1991 entitled "We need a royal commission on violence against women". One editorial does not the truth make.

Mr. David Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, in the short time that I have I do want to be on the record in support of my colleague from Halifax who has called upon the government to commission a royal commission with regard to the violence against women.

It was approximately 15 months ago that a troubled young man, full of blind hatred and unfounded fears and armed with a semi-automatic rifle, marched into the *École Polytechnique* at the University of Montreal. The cold, insane reality of that day saw him go after young women in the hallways and classrooms of the engineering school last December 6 and trumpeting his rage brutally cut down 14 young, innocent female students.

Surely those young women, in the fleeting moments of their lives, must have felt a fear that men my age and perhaps your age, Mr. Speaker, cannot fully appreciate or understand.

It is the fear that a woman feels when she is walking from her in a dark and lonely underground parking garage and hears the hollow sound of footsteps close behind. It is the fear a woman feels when late at night her husband or boyfriend comes home drunk, angry, full of violence and unrepentant rage. It is the fear a woman feels when she is walking alone on a quiet sidewalk in the chilly early evening and sees her own shadow cast by the street lights being overtaken by someone else's presence. It is a fear that seizes you in the stomach and it is a fear marked by terror and by tears.

But violence against women is much more, much more than a lone gunman stalking the hallways of a school or a rapist lurking in the shadows of a quiet street. Violence against women occurs everywhere: at the work place, in the home and on the street. It can occur unfortunately at any time.

The attacker can be wearing jeans and a tee-shirt or outfitted in a dark grey flannel suit. Sometimes the abuse is between a husband and a wife and sometimes it is the corporate executive who earns $80,000 a year.

I will give an example. There is the man who picked up his wife of 32 years at the restaurant where she had worked and said he had to take her to a lawyer's office to sign the divorce papers. Instead, he took her to an isolated field, killed her and then he killed himself.

There is the young woman, the young mother and her little boy. I defended individuals such as these. They were both very much alone, getting ready to move out after five months of living in a shelter for battered women. You can picture it, Mr. Speaker. The room is filled almost to the ceiling with green plastic garbage bags that contain their clothes and other belongings. But they have courage, confidence in a new start and growing hope for a better life.

• (1800)

Finally, in those two moments that I have, sometimes the abuse is rape.

It is the 16-year old girl, just an average person, a so-so athlete and a mediocre student but friendly and outgoing. She loves being with her friends, listening to a few tunes and partying on the weekend. But one Friday night she is out at a party and the parents are not at home. What starts out as a handful of young people hanging out in the family room, gathered around the stereo, turns into a crowd of over 100 teenagers and young adults. There is beer, hard liquor and cheap wine.

The 16-year old girl has agreed to have a drink, and the drinks keep coming. In the early morning hours she is dragged upstairs to a bedroom by three or four of the older boys, boys she does not go to school with, boys she does not even know. She does not know what is happening to her. She is raped and she passes out. She is left all alone in a strange room until sometime later in the day when she can find her own way home.

It happens, Mr. Speaker. It happens all too often.

When I see the list of organizations in this country that have called for a royal commission on violence against women, from the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women—and I want to table this list with my remarks—I cannot see any justification in any government, regardless of one's partisan political affiliation, for not having a royal commission which can thoroughly discuss the issues and, more important, Mr. Speaker, as I am sure you would agree as a father and a husband, and I as a father of two girls, would want to know the real causes of family violence against women.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): It being after six o'clock, it is my duty to inform the House that pursuant to Standing Order 81(17) proceedings on the motion have expired.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at eleven o'clock, pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

The House adjourned at 6:02 p.m.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, March 14, 1991

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION

FOURTEENTH REPORT ON ACTIVITIES OF CANADIAN SECTION OF AIPLF

Hon. Andrée Champagne (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34, I have the honour to table in the House, in both official languages, the fourteenth report on the activities of the Canadian section of the International Assembly of French-speaking Parliamentarians.

This report concerns the meeting of the AIPLF executive, held in Delémont, Switzerland, in the canton of the Jura, on February 7 and 8 this year.

REPORT ON OFFICIAL VISIT OF PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION TO CUBA

Mr. Charles DeBlois (Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34, I have the honour to table in the House, in both official languages, the report on the official visit of a parliamentary delegation to Cuba from February 3 to February 10, 1991.

Mr. Speaker, I may add that this was an opportunity to establish closer ties between Cuban and Canadian parliamentarians, to consider new opportunities for bilateral trade exchanges and, especially, to obtain family reunification for a Canadian citizen of Cuban origin.

As leader of the delegation I had the privilege of arguing this case, and I am proud of the results, which have vindicated our stand on human rights.

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

TENTH REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE

Mr. Don Blenkarn (Mississauga South): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the tenth report of the Standing Committee on Finance in both official languages. The report is in connection with Bill C-97, an act to provide borrowing authority. The report is without amendment.

[*Translation*]

BILL C-85—TABLING OF REPORT OF LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

Mr. Guy Ricard (Laval West): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Legislative Committee on Bill C-85, an Act to provide for certain matters respecting official languages, employees' pensions and labour relations in connection with the transfer of certain airports. This report, Mr. Speaker, is tabled without amendments.

* * *

[*English*]

PETITIONS

GASOLINE ADDITIVES

Hon. Ralph Ferguson (Lambton—Middlesex): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present almost 500 names on petitions from people across southwestern Ontario who are asking this government to implement legislation banning the use of MMT in Canada because it appears to have a health impact on the children of this nation and other people who work closely in the automotive sector.

Also, this petition would encourage the use of ethanol, which would create a market for approximately five to eight million bushels of grain which we have here in Canada and can easily supply. It also has another impact in that it reduces dramatically the hydrocarbon emissions into the atmosphere and assists in stopping the global warming of this planet.

[*Translation*]

CANADA POST

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by constituents in Ottawa—Vanier, to the effect that Canada Post's decision to close Branch No. 23 located at 580 Rideau Street, Ottawa, will inconvenience all customers. It will make things much harder for all the pensioners who live right next door. They will be deprived of a service that is essential to their needs.

The undersigned are asking for a review of this decision. Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray and call upon Parliament to ask Canada Post to review its decision to close the branch.

Mr. Speaker, there are hundreds of families living in this area, mostly senior citizens who would greatly appreciate a favourable decision as a result of this petition.

• (1110)

[*English*]

WHARFS AND HARBOURS

Ms. Catherine Callbeck (Malpeque): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table this petition in the House today, signed by many constituents from my riding.

It urges the federal government to fulfil its duty to provide proper maintenance of our wharfs and harbours, many of which are in a deplorable, unsafe condition and require major repairs.

I join with these constituents in urging the federal government to evaluate the state of wharfs and harbours, proceed with the necessary maintenance and repair, and ensure the future safety of the fishery of Prince Edward Island.

URANIUM MINING

Mr. Ray Funk (Prince Albert—Churchill River): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present petitions signed by people from many communities in the provinces of Saskatchewan, Alberta, Quebec and Ontario.

The petitioners recall the regulatory meltdown which led to the spill of 2,000 litres of contaminated radioactive waste at Wollaston Lake in the fall of 1989. They repeat the call for an independent, comprehensive public inquiry into the whole uranium mining industry.

They are happy to note that AECB has recommended that an ERP panel be struck and they hope that pending a full scale inquiry that the ERP panel proceed immediately.

[*Translation*]

PARLIAMENT HILL

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, I wish to table, pursuant to Standing Order 36, a petition from citizens of Lamorandière, Despinassy, Rochebaucourt, Lac Castagnier, all in Abitibi, who insist that the government of Canada drop its plans for the development of Parliament Hill, which would cost $68 million and involve building a parking garage and a shopping concourse under the Parliament of Canada, and that the government recognize the need for preserving the natural environment and historical character of the Parliament Buildings and Parliament Hill.

[*English*]

VIA RAIL

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure, indeed, an honour to present a petition on behalf of a number of constituents of mine from Kamloops, British Columbia.

The petitioners point out their concerns about the government's treatment of VIA Rail service throughout Canada. They are complaining about the government's decision to curtail VIA Rail service through the southern route of the line between Calgary and Kamloops. They suggest a whole set of reasons why this would not only be important in terms of providing passenger rail service, but also environmentally would be the most appropriate way to move large numbers of people, to say nothing about the tourism industry.

They are asking the government to reconsider the decision to close that line.

* * *

[*Translation*]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Rob Nicholson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Shall all the questions be allowed to stand? Agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S. O. 81—RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Mr. David Berger (Saint-Henri—Westmount) moved:

That this House condemn the government for failing to honour the Prime Minister's promise to "double Canada's spending commitment to research and development".

Mr. Dingwall: Mr. Speaker, if the Chair will permit, we intend to proceed today with ten and five minute speeches. I am sure members would agree with that.

Mr. Danis: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government, of course we have no objections to that.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the New Democratic Party we too agree that this would be an appropriate way to continue for the day. It would simply be a decision of each of the political parties whether they decide to use that option or not.

An hon. member: Advise the Chair.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I presume that the lead off speaker will take 20 minutes or 10?

An hon. member: Ten minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. David Berger (Saint-Henri—Westmount): Mr. Speaker, the motion before us today reads, and I quote:

That this House condemn the Government for failing to honour the Prime Minister's promise to "double Canada's spending commitment to research and development".

Seven years ago next week, on March 22, 1984, the Prime Minister, speaking before the Montreal Chamber of Commerce, promised, and I quote: "—to double the collective national effort in the field of research and development during our first mandate".

He added, and I quote: "Through this effort, we expect to create hundreds of thousands of new jobs and increase overall sales by several billions of dollars each year".

It is not often, Mr. Speaker, that we, Liberals, agree with the Prime Minister's ideas. However, I can say flat out that we agree totally with those he expressed seven years ago about the importance of increased investment in research and development. Therefore, it is only logical that, today, we condemn the government and the Prime Minister for not delivering on this promise. We remember that, in his book entitled *Where I Stand*, the Prime Minister stated, and I quote: "Research and development, and the resulting innovations, are the lifeblood of a successful economy and country". The Prime Minister believed that, if the percentage of gross national product allocated to research and development were increased by a mere 1 per cent, we could create in Canada one million new jobs and $20 billion in additional sales of manufactured products.

We know what has happened since 1984: Spendings for research and development, instead of increasing, decreased by 1.4 per cent to 1.3 per cent of the gross national product. That was due to a reduction in the overall support to the research and development effort in Canada, and I can give you examples of that.

First, the Conservative government cut back on the support to industrial research and development. For instance, first-rate purchasing programs have been cancelled and the National Research Council Industrial Research Assistance Program is always starved for funds.

Second, the government reduced post-secondary education transfer payments and vocational training appropriations.

Third, the government went after Canada's foremost research agency—the National Research Council—and cut down the budget for research projects on environment and alternate energy sources.

Fourth, it cut in half the budget of the Science Council of Canada.

Fifth, intent on promoting university research, the government created the Centres of Excellence Program, yet at the same time it froze the funding of the main source of financial support for Canadian university research, the federal grants councils. The Prime Minis-

ter did not follow the recommendations of his own national advisory council which had advocated doubling the appropriations of grants councils.

Sixth, health care research was the latest victim of conservative restraints, including programs on health care research, health promotion, prevention of diseases—cancer, for one—as well as labour injuries and accidents.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker, I anticipate that in their remarks today members of the government—and I see that the Minister for Science is here— will down-play the significance of research and development. They will say that research and development is a measure of input, that doing research and development does not necessarily lead to jobs and sales.

It is true that there is not as direct a link between R and D and jobs and sales, as the Prime Minister led people to believe in his remarks some seven years ago. Investment in research and development is needed but not sufficient for jobs and sales. It is also true that a company is not likely to increase sales without doing research and development. That becomes more and more so with advanced technology, goods and services. In theory, a bad firm can spend money on R and D and get nothing from it. Yet all successful firms spend a lot on research and development and get a lot from it.

• (1120)

Of course, Canada's major competitors routinely spend twice as much as Canada does on their R and D investments. Are they all stupid? Are they throwing billions of dollars away for nothing? The new products, all the technological improvements that we see every day have to come from somewhere, and that is from research and development.

Increasing spending on R and D is part and parcel of developing in Canada a research and development culture or a culture which values knowledge and education, and which would place top priority on developing Canada's human resources. Developing an R and D culture means giving Canadians the opportunities they deserve to attain their potential, to have meaningful choices for a variety of kinds of employment without having to leave Canada to pursue a rewarding career in science or in research.

In the budget the finance minister announced that the government will launch, and I quote: "a national effort to build a new partnership for prosperity". As a first step he said, and again I quote: "We will release a discussion paper in the spring to help focus public debate about the problems we face and the development of solutions". The Minister of Finance said that "more needs to be done to assure our future prosperity. We need to look hard at the quality of our investments and infrastructure, machinery and equipment, training and education, and research and technology". "There are signs", the Minister of Finance says, "that in some areas, such as private sector research and development and training, we are not doing enough".

My reaction on hearing these remarks of the Minister of Finance was, this is news to the Minister of Finance. For 10 years now members of Parliament have heard from countless sources that we are falling behind in all the areas that he identified in his budget speech two weeks ago. From university teachers, presidents and students, from business executives and workers, union leaders and from the government's own advisory committees the case has been made eloquently and consistently and now seven years after the government took office it proposes to focus public debate on these questions.

Where has the government been for the past seven years? Has it not been the government's responsibility to take action in these areas, to show leadership, to develop the kind of research and development culture that I said earlier values knowledge, education and the development of our human resources?

The debate the government proposes to engage Canadians in coming months is an admission of failure, an admission that we have lost seven years when we should have taken steps to ensure that all Canadians receive quality education and that Canadians businesses do enough R and D.

John Polanyi, the University of Toronto chemist who in 1986 won the Nobel Prize for Chemistry, said shortly after being awarded that prestigious prize, and I quote:

> Speaking from the perspective of someone who's been famous for almost 24 hours, I have found that good research is a combination of good luck, good colleagues, good students and adequate facilities.

The first, he said, comes from God; the rest from a university system properly supported by the government. Polanyi concluded:

> I wonder whether we aren't relying rather more heavily on God these days than on government.

Canadians need a government that will do its share.

Hon. William C. Winegard (Minister for Science): Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but make a couple of quick comments here.

My hon. friend has said that funding for university research in Canada has decreased. He knows that is not so. He knows in fact that the funding to the granting councils has increased every year. I will give him some figures later on just to refresh his memory.

He talked very briefly about Established Programs Financing. I remind him that it was his government in 1977 that changed the formula so that EPF was transferred to the provinces without any conditions whatsoever, where it could be used for roads, sewers or goodness knows what. It did not have to be used for health care and it did not have to be used for university or post-secondary education. It was not our government that threw the baby out with the bath water, it was his. He has got us into this situation now where the provinces have complete *carte blanche* to do what they want. They also have complete *carte blanche* to support the system for which they have the responsibility. It is time they began to do that.

I am glad that my hon. friend is learning that we need to support industrial research in this country. I will give him more figures on that this morning. I might ask him what in heaven's name his government did over all the years it was in power to support, promote and encourage industrial research in Canada. If there is anything, it has been hard for me to find.

Mr. Berger: Mr. Speaker, it is now seven years since this government took office and it is time that it started accepting responsibility for the economic circumstances which this country finds itself in now.

The minister said that funding for the granting councils has increased. He can try to fool people with figures, but I would remind him that there is only one appropriate way to look at the figures for the budgets of the granting councils and that is to determine what percentage of our gross domestic product funding for the granting councils represents. He knows that that percentage has gone down, that funding for the granting councils, as a percentage of gross domestic product, has declined since 1984, and that is in constant dollars. The buying power, in other words, of funding for university research has gone down since 1984.

If the minister travels, as I know he does, to universities across this country, he knows that university researchers cannot keep up with inflation with the meagre stipends that this government has accorded them.

The minister says that our government transferred money to the provinces without any conditions in 1977. That is, of course, what the provinces asked for. But I would remind the minister that the Liberal government commissioned a study of the problems with post-secondary education funding, which we recognized as early as 1981, three or four years after the current EPF arrangement was established.

Al Johnson tabled a report in 1984 which this government has chosen not to act upon. Therefore, it is time again, as I said earlier, that this government took responsibility for the circumstances that we find ourselves in. It is now seven years since it took office and I think it is time that this government stopped telling people about the history of this country prior to 1984 and present to Canadians a program to deal with our problems today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I regret the hon. member's time has expired. Questions and comments have expired.

Mr. Jim Peterson (Willowdale): Mr. Speaker, in 1984, the Prime Minister promised Canadians that he would undertake to double Canada's level of research and development.

• (1130)

This promise was reiterated at Halifax when he spoke to a Conservative gathering on June 19, 1989. He said to all Canadians that "Canada's place in the world is not guaranteed; either we meet the challenge of competitiveness and ride the crest of the technology wave into the 21st century, or we exhaust ourselves in the rip-tide of history, fading inexorably backward."

Beautiful words. I commend the Prime Minister on his eloquence, but we are here today to hold his feet to the fire. What is his promise? We have heard it. What has he done? The facts show just the opposite.

When the Conservative government took over running Canada in 1984, our level of R and D was 1.42 per cent of the gross domestic product. Every year, under his stewardship, it has fallen so that today it is at 1.28 per cent of gross domestic product. We are at less than one-half the level of all our major competitors.

[*Translation*]

For example, let us look at what they did to the National Research Council Canada, NRCC. Since 1984 the federal government has reduced its NRCC appropriations by 12 per cent, or more than $5.7 million. In constant dollars this reduction would amount to roughly 48 per cent.

Last year the government appointed Pierre Perron President of the National Research Council. When he appeared before our committee at that time I asked him whether he thought his role as head of Canada's premier research and development agency was to lead the scientific community or to do the government's bidding. He was miffed, he said, so I had to rephrase my question: Well, Mr. Perron, do you think your role as president should be to fight against the government's NRC cut-backs? He replied: No, I cannot do that.

That is what I call doing the government's biding without question. And just a few days ago, Mr. Speaker, we learned that sixty-odd important employees had to resign. The NRC spirit has been flattened by this government.

And that is not all. Is the government really intent on promoting science and technology? Mr. Speaker, budget increases for science and technology amount to a mere 3 per cent. That is much less than the inflation rate and it spells fewer grants and less support for the NRC.

With respect to education in Canada we have only 90 scientists and researchers per 100,000 inhabitants. That compares with 140 in Britain, 150 in West Germany, 240 in Japan, and 280 in the United States. As to federal transfers to the provinces for health and education between 1986 and 1995, the cut-backs of this government will translate into a $40.1 billion loss for the provinces.

This has now become a serious issue. Even the Minister of Finance acknowledged in his budget that it is a matter of competitiveness for Canada. The *World Economic Forum* has shown that Canada lags far behind in terms of international competitiveness—down from fourth to fifth rank last year. —In research and development we are sixth among 24 industrialized countries, and that explains why we have so many bankruptcies in Canada, why our country is being de-industrialized.

Over the past 26 months Canada lost 277,000 manufacturing jobs, a frightening figure which accounts for 13 per cent of all jobs in the manufacturing sector. There is a direct link between this government's lack of support and the vanishing jobs in that major sector.

In the few minutes I have left I should like to comment on the recommendations of the Committee on Industry, Science and Technology. The report was drafted and endorsed by all three parties, and government members made up the majority of the committee. Here are some of the recommendations. We should raise the level of research and development. But this government has done nothing. In three years we were to double the budgets of three research councils, namely the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, the Social Sciences and Humanitys Research Council of Canada, and the Medical Research Council of Canada. The recommendation was to double appropriations over three years. What did they do in the budget? They limited government support to 3 per cent, which amounts to a loss in constant dollars.

The Science Council of Canada budget was to be brought up to the previous level of $5 million, but the SCC will have to make do with only $3.2 million. Our recommendation was an immediate boost to $100 million for IRAP—Industrial Research Assistance Program—but the budget has been kept down to only $85 million.

The committee recommended that the federal government reduce the renewal rate of these programs and staff for industry. We can see what they did with the National Research Council Canada. And then the government took $55 million off the total industry, science and technology budget.

Mr. Speaker, de-industrialization is creating a major problem. The only way to create sound manufacturing industries is to reverse these trends and double our efforts for science and technology and research and

development. The government is headed in the wrong direction, it needs to be set straight!

• (1140)

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a comment, and I would like the hon. member for Saint-Henri—Westmount to stay in the House and listen to what I have to say. I also have a question for the hon. member. Earlier, I heard him say "for seven years". But he forgot something. Why didn't he say "eight or nine years"? I will tell you why, Mr. Speaker.

I have a newspaper article here, dated September 30, 1987—that was during the past seven years—and the heading says the Liberals lost Canadians billions of dollars. This information came from Kenneth Dye, Auditor General of Canada, who said that because of the political situation, the previous Liberal government caused taxpayers to lose billions of dollars, for no good reason, and he was referring to scientific research. The program set up by Marc Lalonde with a budget of $200 million in 1983-84 went so far over budget that costs skyrocketed to $3.9 billion. The Liberals lost this country billions of dollars. That is my comment. Out of those $3.9 billion, $1.9 billion were misused. they even gave money to a guy in Victoria, a mechanic, to do scientific research on data processing. He used the money to go to China and write a book on break dancing!

I have another comment to make, Mr. Speaker. I heard the hon. member for Willowdale say the government is giving nothing. I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, but the latest Budget, and the news was out several months ago, provides that the federal government will set up a mining research centre in Val-d'Or, in the Abitibi, at a cost of $14,830,000 over five years. In today's paper, since he often refers to newspaper articles, the people of Abitibi thanked the Canadian government for establishing and starting up a research laboratory specialized in fragmentation. This means $15 million for a research centre to help the mining industry in our area, so it is not just in the large urban centres. You must know about this. My question is as follows: What do you think of the $3.9 billion that were lost in 1984?

Mr. Jim Peterson (Willowdale): Mr. Speaker, it is not my job to defend the actions of the previous Liberal government. However, it is a fact that since 1965, Canada has been losing its competitive position throughout the world.

Mr. Saint-Julien: The robbery of the century didn't make a lasting impression!

Mr. Peterson: I meant that during the past decades, we, as Canadians, whether it was the Liberal government or the Conservative government, have missed opportunities.

Mr. Saint-Julien: It was the Liberals!

Mr. Peterson: Maybe there were a few problems in 1984, when we tried to establish programs to encourage the private sector to do more research and development. I admit, there were some problems with our tax programs. However, the minister at the time is to be commended for having tried to do something about one of our country's biggest economic problems.

You have been the government for seven years now. Since you were elected, the level of research and development has gone down, down, down. You must acknowledge your responsibility. In seven years, you had plenty of time to keep the promise made by your Prime Minister, a promise that was well received by all Canadians because they knew it was necessary for Canada to have more.

[*English*]

Hon. William C. Winegard (Minister for Science): Mr. Speaker, like my colleagues across the way but for quite different reasons, I am sure, I am delighted to participate in this debate today.

Hon. members of the Liberal party are quite right when they say that science and technology are crucial to the future of the Canadian economy. That is a message that cannot be repeated often enough. It is a truism, but one that I and many of my colleagues have been crossing the country to deliver. Nothing could please me more than to see it discussed in the House today.

We take very seriously our commitment to science and technology. At a time when we have had to cut back on government operations in order to fight a debt that will now reach almost $400 billion, the federal government has increased its R and D spending from $2.5 billion in 1984 to an estimated $3.2 billion in 1990. That is an increase of 28 per cent, while the government at the

same time has been under expenditure restraint trying to bring the economy of this country under control.

Total federal science and technology expenditures amounted to approximately $5.5 billion in 1990–91. Those expenditures on science and technology have increased in real terms by 8 per cent since 1984, by an average above inflation of 1.1 per cent each year since taking office. That is not too bad.

Our spending on science and technology grew from 11.1 per cent of all discretionary spending in 1984–85 to 12.3 per cent in 1990–91. That is the true indication of the priority that the government awards to spending on science and technology. This, I might add, is in contrast to the record of the previous government.

I would suggest to this House that these figures demonstrate a strong federal commitment to science and technology in Canada.

Hon. members opposite would like us to do more. We would all like to do more, certainly I would, but the strength of the Canadian economy does not depend solely upon science and technology.

Canada's performance in research and development does not take place in some sterilized atmosphere in some test tube. It takes place in a real world which is influenced by all kinds of important factors. The strength of the economy depends upon the availability of capital, the accessibility of international markets, the value of our dollar, and the general climate for business in the country. We cannot separate science and technology from any of those components.

Each of those factors is strongly influenced by the public debt in Canada, a debt that has been growing since 1970 and a debt that we must get under control.

As the Minister of Finance said in his budget speech a couple of weeks ago, "the interest on the debt alone this year is going to be $43 billion". Just compare that to what we are able to spend in terms of science and technology. The amount we spend in interest payments is eight times what we can afford to pay for all the federal R and D and related science activities.

Think of what we could do with that $43 billion for the granting councils, for the National Research Council, more for big science and little science, for small business involved in the leading edge of the high technology revolution, and more scholarships to young people—all of the things that members of this House want to do, but we cannot do them in the range we wish unless we also take steps to control government spending.

I have lots of favourite programs, as has every member of this House, of the things we might like to do, but we cannot do them if we cannot pay down the debt. We cannot do them if we are spending $43 billion a year just to pay the interest on the debt.

• (1150)

In contrast to some of my colleagues on the other side of the House, I congratulate the finance minister for his budget. He has set us on a real course of fiscal responsibility. He has set us on a course where we will be able down the road to do all the things we want to do. In terms of science and technology, we have always had preferential treatment in every budget that this government has brought down; not as much as I would have liked, but we have always had top priority. I believe that is as it should be.

If finance ministers a decade ago had used fiscal restraint but at the same time had delivered a priority to science and technology, we would be in far better shape today. There is no question about that. We have to tighten our belts, but we recognize the critical role that science and technology plays in the economy.

The recent budget placed expenditure controls on many programs. My colleagues opposite scoff that science and technology, beginning in 1992–93, will receive increases of 3 per cent. When I look at what has happened to other government programs and the way we have to exercise that restraint, I know the Minister of Finance has given us a top priority. That is important. If members opposite would look at the situation realistically, they would agree that the government has done quite well in terms of science and technology operating in these difficult times.

People should know that the Government of Canada by itself cannot change the attitude of industry in terms of promoting more research and development. We cannot shoulder the financial burden. It has to be shouldered by Canadian industry; it has to be shouldered with the provinces, with the universities. When hon. members opposite refer to GERD, gross expenditures

on research and development over GDP—and I heard them on many occasions—we have to be very precise in our analysis of the problem. It is not what governments spend, because we compare with most of our competitors in terms of what governments spend. It is what industry in Canada has not found itself able to spend, and that is where we lose out with respect to other countries.

Canada's ratio of gross domestic expenditure on research and development to GDP is 1.35. The ratio in the United States is 2.86, and in Japan it is 2.72. It is an interesting figure to have and points out once again where the funding must come from, where the impetus must come from, if we are going to move forward. I agree with hon. members, and always have, that this is a disturbing situation. But the way to improve the ratio is not to pour more Government of Canada money into science and technology; it is to encourage industry to do more, to devise programs that will allow them to do more.

Incidentally, concentrating on the GERD is in fact only looking with one eye at what industrial people need in this country. It is equally important to concentrate on the amount of technology inflow that we need, as well as the R and D that we need. It is useful to open both eyes and look at both sides of this question.

We compare favourably in terms of civil expenditures. We are about the middle of the pack in terms of public sector spending on research and development. We spend more as a percentage of GDP than does the United States or Britain in terms of civil research; less than France, Sweden and the Netherlands; and about the same as Japan and Italy. Where we fall behind is in our private sector.

When we look at the ratio between industrial and public sector civil R and D we notice once again that Canadian research and development is very heavily dependent upon taxpayers' dollars. That has to change. The ratio in Japan between taxpayers' dollars and industrial dollars is something like 4.38; in France, 1.38; and in United States, 3.13. We have all these figures.

Sweden, in spite of its reputation as a socialist nation, is well ahead of Canada in terms of private sector spending in research and development. Its ratio is 2.49. Again, it points out what we have to do in Canada: increase the amount of industrial research. That is the challenge and it is clear.

Mr. Funk: Elect a socialist government.

Mr. Winegard: We will not get into that today. We must encourage more private sector investment in research and development.

The difference between my colleagues opposite and the government is that we are not just going to say if the private sector increases the amount of research and development, everybody has to increase it by *x* per cent. We do not know whether that is appropriate or not. We do not know whether some sectors would be far better off to spend their money on technology inflow to adopt and adapt new technologies rather than invest significantly in R and D.

In our opinion there is only one way to go, and that is to do the analysis of the Canadian economy sector by sector and see what the problems are, why they do not invest in R and D, or indeed even if they should. That is one of the contracts we have given to the Science Council of Canada. We expect some of those results will be with us over the next few months.

The solution, as I have said, is not to replace private sector spending with public spending. That has been the record of our country now for 25 years. It does not work, and it is not going to work. We must get the private sector involved.

What can the government do to encourage more private sector R and D? For one thing maybe not generally known—and it certainly would not be known to some of my colleagues opposite—we have created one of the most favourable tax regimes in the world for private sector R and D. We do not say that. A recent Conference Board of Canada study put Canada's support for R and D through the tax system ahead of that of the United States, Britain, Japan, Korea, France, Italy, Sweden, West Germany and Australia. Australia's is probably very close to our own.

Canada's tax system for research and development consists of two main features. First, the ability to write off fully R and D current capital expenditures in the year the costs occur. Second, R and D tax credits are used either to reduce a company's federal income tax liability or they are refunded in cash. The system helps start-up companies, particularly the small companies, get going. That is what we have done.

Canada's tax system—and the latest figures I have are for 1988—was responsible for $764 million in tax credits. That is a substantial contribution to $3.4 billion invested by business that particular year. What is more, 65 per cent of the claims came from small and medium sized businesses, which is the kind of business we are hoping to promote.

Indeed, we have even met with the industries, sector by sector, again to ask: "Does the income tax system work well for you? Is the R and D system working well? What problems do you have? " We have sat down again with Revenue Canada and worked it out sector by sector to see what we could do.

Those things take time. They are not things that are on the front page of the newspaper, but they are the things that will make Canadian industry grow and that is why we are doing them.

Look at the initiatives that we have launched. I do not need to repeat the networks of centres of excellence; 500 researchers at 35 universities and 37 other research bodies all involved in these networks across Canada. That is the way to promote the interaction we need, $244 million to 15 networks. That is a significant amount. The strategic technologies program to promote networks and alliances are being led by industry itself. Forty of these alliance projects are now in place; 13 of them in advanced industrial materials, 20 in biotechnology, seven in the information technologies.

• (1200)

The Canada scholarship program is a massive acknowledgement that young men and women should be studying science and engineering today. That initiative came from the Government of Canada through the National Advisory Board on Science and Technology.

I want to take a moment to talk about the National Advisory Board on Science and Technology. It has been very influential in setting the science and technology policy for Canada since it was formed in 1987 with the Prime Minister in the chair. NABST is really responsible for the networks of centres of excellence. It is the one which came up with this idea.

NABST was really behind the Canada scholarship program and particularly the concept of allowing or insisting that 50 per cent of the scholarships go to women. NABST recognized that we are not going to resolve the people problem of Canada unless we can somehow encourage and recruit more young women to science and engineering. NABST was the one which made that recommendation.

It was NABST that was behind the $1.4 billion to science and technology announced two or three years ago. In recent days, the National Advisory Board on Science and Technology has presented to the Prime Minister, and he was in the chair, the financing of industrial innovation, human resources development, and science, technology, innovation and national prosperity. Those recommendations had a significant influence upon the finance minister and the government's commitment to look again at the whole concept of an agenda for prosperity, using innovation and research and development.

I wanted to get those words in on the National Advisory Board because many of the members will be retiring from NABST after serving for three or four years. I wanted to acknowledge publicly their influence, not only upon government programs, but their influence upon government policy. They have had this constant interaction with the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance and the ministers of our department.

Let me conclude on a subject that has always been discussed in the House, and I think all members are very interested in it, and that is women in science and engineering. We heard from my hon. colleagues this morning how we had to do more about the people situation in Canada and we had to change attitudes. I have just a few things to add. Half of the Canada scholarships go to women. Corporate members, institutions and industries are now beginning to support mentor clubs and additional corporate funding for other kinds of scholarships, all hooked into the Canada scholarship program.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, recently the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council have made some interesting innovations. NSERC's policies are intended to encourage women to pursue graduate studies and research and to encourage universities to hire more women as faculty members. In the last competition they had so many good applicants by encouraging women to take faculty positions, that instead of offering 10 fellowships, they offered 20. They just had to do it because the applications were so good.

We have 200 new undergraduate student research awards by NSERC and just a couple of months ago the National Research Council announced that they have in fact a new summer program for women to work in their laboratories across Canada that will stimulate once again the interest of young men and young women in these things. They will go back to their own high schools. They will tell their colleagues and their young friends and their sisters and their brothers of the importance of science and technology.

We have done something about these things. We have had a large program. We have not stood idly by.

Mr. David Berger (Saint-Henri—Westmount): Mr. Speaker, I have difficulty containing my anger when I hear the Minister for Science equivocate on the subject of R and D and come up with a zillion excuses to explain why his government, and he as a minister, has failed to increase R and D spending in Canada.

I never said, and no member of my party ever said that the federal government could solve this problem by throwing money at it. What we want from this government is a strategy to encourage Canadian industry to increase its spending on R and D. The minister refers to the deficit and the debt. I would suggest to him that to reduce the deficit, an appropriate balance is needed between raising taxes, cutting spending and increased growth.

I would suggest this government has been singularly unsuccessful in achieving the objectives it set for itself, not only with respect to R and D, which is the subject we are debating here today, but also with respect to reducing the deficit. This minister has the gall to stand up and give us lectures about the importance of controlling the deficit and the debt.

The Minister of Finance, in his first budget some six years ago, forecast that he would reduce the deficit to $18 billion by the end of the decade. Where is the deficit this year? It is forecast in the latest budget to be $30.5 billion. So the Minister of Finance missed the mark by the small sum of $12.5 billion, and this minister has the nerve to stand up here and tell us that reducing the deficit is something that his government knows something about.

The minister studiously avoided the subject of the debate. I wonder whether he even picked up the Order Paper and looked at it. The subject of the debate today is a motion to condemn the government for failing to honour the Prime Minister's promise, and I quote: "to double Canada's spending commitment to research and development."

That should be a matter of some importance to the Minister for Science. But he did not even refer to it during the course of his speech. Why not? Why was it important to the Prime Minister seven years ago when he made that speech, and why is it so unimportant to the minister today that it does not even bear mentioning in his speech? I would remind him that the Prime Minister said also that increasing spending on research and development by just 1 per cent would create some one million jobs in Canada and $20 billion in additional sales of manufactured products. I would suggest that in 1984 the Prime Minister had some idea that R and D might permit the economy to grow and therefore reduce the deficit and debt. But that is a matter which has been thrown out the window by this government.

I would suggest to the minister that he ought to do more than simply berate the private sector for its failures, which is what he has taken to doing like his predecessors. Berating the private sector is the sum total of the efforts of this government to increase R and D spending. It is an admission of failure by the minister. It is abject failure and he should be ashamed of himself.

• (1210)

Mr. Winegard: Mr. Speaker, I find it very interesting that my friend across the way would say we have made no effort. Look at the programs we have put in place.

Maybe what he is talking about is this. Maybe he wants an effort such as they had when he was in power. Maybe he wants a scientific tax credit system that bleeds the system.

There are two ways to do things. It can be done that way, where the only people who make any money are the money shufflers, or it can be done the way we have done it, that is by changing the tax system so that industry is actually encouraged to do more.

I remind the hon. member that since 1984, industrial spending on R and D has increased by 73 per cent. That is better than anything the Liberals were able to do. All they did was to put in tax schemes that made sure no research and development was ever done.

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Mr. Speaker, I have listened with considerable interest to these exchanges.

I have to say that the hon. minister is a man who came to this place with considerable respect from the scientific community of this country. I think those of us who were involved in science welcomed his appointment because we thought that he would be an advocate for science.

We did not expect him to play games with figures in order to demonstrate a point that cannot be made. For example, he attacked the Liberal record, which is worthy of attack, and said that industrial expenditures have increased since 1984 by 73 per cent. I would ask him: "How does that compare to the growth between 1975 and 1982?" In the absence of comparison those figures mean nothing.

He insists on saying that there have been increased expenditures by government on research and development, and on science and technology. Yet he knows bloody well that the figures he has been providing do not represent a significant increase in expenditure.

He has a right to defend the policies of the government. I wish he would defend research and development, but he has made his choice. I should think that a former president of a university would show sufficient intellectual honesty in defending his position and his government so that we can have a clear understanding of where he really does stand.

Mr. Winegard: Mr. Speaker, one of the things you learn as president of a university—my colleague might learn a little bit from this—is that it is also necessary to deal with reality.

In fact, the reality is that what this Minister for Science has been able to do with all of my colleagues on this side of the House is ensure that in the last year the granting councils received the highest increase of any part of the Government of Canada. In this current year, they received approximately a 4.8 per cent increase and in the finance minister's budget, they received approximately 3 per cent. Again, this is the highest increase available.

If the hon. member thinks that happened because the people on this side of the House do not care about science, he is quite wrong. We care about it. We have put in whatever money is available. It is discretionary funding, as I have said.

The hon. member across the way may not care about simple things like budgets, but presidents of universities have to worry about things like that. When discretionary funding can be increased from 11 per cent to 12 per cent, that is a significant shift in dollars. It is more than the Liberals have ever been able to do, and I doubt if my hon. friend, who should perhaps go back to teaching biology, would do any better either.

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not respond to the latter statements of the minister, who utterly failed to respond to what I would have thought was an extraordinarily provocative statement. I said that the way he uses his figures belies his university experience because they represent, in the manner in which he uses them, intellectual dishonesty. His answer to that was, that I should go back to heading a biology department, a biology department that had a balanced budget for the first time when I became head of the department and had a balanced budget thereafter.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. McCurdy: And an expanding department at that. I made my case without playing with figures.

We are here to consider a motion that would condemn the government for its failure to fulfil the promise of the Prime Minister, made in 1983, that he would double the rate of national expenditures on research and development by the end of his first term.

If there is anything that is transparently clear in all this world, it is a promise that has not been kept. In fact, as others have noted, the national expenditures on research and development have, in fact, fallen, tumbled since this government came into office. That is indisputably clear.

It is not that the hon. minister, if listened to carefully, seemed to dilute the importance of the gross expenditures in research and development. I think we got a hint that the government is deserting its previous position. But we ought to take note of the fact that virtually anyone who has commented on research and development in this country, including the house committee on industry, science and technology, has identified 2.5 per cent of GDP as an appropriate target for national expenditures and research and development.

Indeed, on my suggestion that committee was quite specific. It said that we should achieve approximately 2 per cent by the year 2000 and 2.5 per cent by the year 2005. This will still leave us behind Sweden, Germany, the United States and Japan.

It is important to understand that what we are talking about is a fundamental requirement for Canadian economic development, for our capacity to produce wealth, for our capacity to produce jobs. A certain kind of job. A job with high wages, high salaries. The kind of wealth that will enable us to sustain our social programs. I say that because the hon. Minister for Science is so facile in blaming this government's failure on the deficit.

If there is anything that anybody by now ought to begin to realize it is that the deficit is not just a question of interest rates. It is not just a question of profligate expenditures by this or any previous government. It is a problem essentially created by our incapacity to generate the kind of wealth that we must generate.

So if we are going to ultimately deal with the deficit, it is not going to be by the helter-skelter cutting of programs left and right, and it is certainly not going to be in the absence of reasonable decisions about appropriate expenditures in areas that ultimately will contribute to Canada's capacity to produce that wealth in a knowledge and technology based economy.

The minister has said, and rightly said, that this is not a problem that has been precipitated by this government. It is not a situation that can be blamed exclusively on it. The fact of the matter is that in the early years of the Trudeau government, 1968, the percentage of our gross domestic product that was spent on research and development was in fact 1.4 per cent.

• (1220)

By the 1970s the Liberal government had allowed that to drop to 0.9 per cent.

I am not talking in abstract terms of statistics, down statistics, I am talking about a full knowledge of the situation in this country with respect to science. There is no one who was in the universities during the late 1960s and 1970s who does not recognize the utter failure of Liberal policy in the area of science. It was the almost overwhelming preoccupation of everyone. Several specific scientific organizations were formed in order to do something about a situation that was made bad by the Liberals but which has been made still worse by this government.

If you look back to 1979, to extend this example, the Conservative government at the time, under the present Secretary of State for External Affairs, did at least undertake to approve a five-year program of assured funding for the granting council, a decision that was completely annulled when the next Liberal government came into office.

We have a situation where a Liberal government promised in 1980 that it would increase GERD, that is gross expenditure on research and development, to 1.5 per cent, but by 1984 it was sitting at 1.4 per cent. But it has fallen since. It has fallen under the leadership of this government.

Every time the question is posed in this House the minister says: "Well, yes, that's true, but it is industry's fault". There is no question that there is a fault in industry, but what kind of leadership is it when expenditures by government do not increase or if they stay steady over that period of time? When in fact this happened, as that percentage that GERD has fallen, the percentage executed by industry, and paid for by industry, has increased. The minister knows that.

It follows, therefore, quite logically, that this government's contribution must have fallen. He will tell you that, for example, the government expenditures on science and technology have increased since this government has been in office from $4.083 billion to $5.450 billion.

He says that is an immense change, an immense increase, and we are all supposed to shudder at the sheer commitment and bravado of this government in pursuing the mission of increasing research and development.

My calculations have that at a 33 per cent increase and over the same period of time the CPI has increased by 35 per cent. My God, fantastic. Are we not all impressed? No, we are not. No, we should not be impressed.

If we look at almost every area in which there is any role for the government, this government has not done what it ought to do.

When this government came into office, we had the lowest percentage of scientists and engineers per thousand in the labour force of virtually any of the OECD countries. That is unchanged.

Let us talk about education. What is the situation at our universities? Our universities are in a state of deterioration because this government's contribution to post-secondary education has decreased.

Mr. Thacker: It's still higher than inflation.

Mr. McCurdy: It is not higher than inflation, sir, I am sorry.

Let us look at what has happened with respect to the GDP between 1978-79 and 1987-88, during which period the GDP increased by 127 per cent. In the meantime, expenditures on university libraries increased by only 93 per cent by comparison. Physical plant expenditures increased by only 81 per cent, capital expenditures by 97 per cent, instruction by 103 per cent.

We have a situation in which the universities are suffering, and meanwhile we have the Established Programs Financing levels being cut at the same time. What has been the situation there? If the EPF formula had not been changed, and had it not been subjected to the six and five formula that was imposed by the Liberals, the EPF payments would have been $7 billion by now.

Mr. Thacker: And the deficit would be 70 billion.

Mr. McCurdy: Even with the six and five it would have been $6.7 billion by now. And, in fact, in 1991 it turns out to be $5.78 billion. On top of that, they are going to cut university expenditures by another $3.8 billion between now and 1996-97.

We have all herd the discussion about the cutback and elimination of cash transfer payments. If one looks at the contribution of the federal government to the research function of the universities—which is really the subject for discussion now—higher education expenditure per researcher in Canada is $60,000 per annum; in the United States, it is $140,000 per annum.

The percentage of the gross domestic product that is spent on the granting councils has fallen from .12 per cent to .1 per cent.

If we could turn to the issue of government-executed research, we have the sorry tale—which all of us in the Ottawa area had an opportunity to hear last night on CBC—where approximately 80 NRC scientists have accepted early retirement. What are they really doing? These are people looking for life jackets to save themselves from what they see to be a sinking ship. And this minister has the gall to tell us that he is doing the best he can, that 3 per cent increases or 5 per cent increases amount to a significant improvement in government's role.

Of course, he returns to that usual song and dance, that it is industry that is failing.

This is the government that has allowed a fantastic increase in the rate of foreign ownership of Canadian industry. And yet his own National Advisory Board on Science and Technology has pointed out that one of the most significant failures in the Canadian economy to achieve a reasonable level of research and development is precisely attributable to the fact that such a high proportion of Canadian industry is foreign owned and does not do research here. Yet they continue to improve and encourage and in no respect prevent this increasing takeover of Canadian industry.

To top that all off, this minister should have understood as others have understood that there are certain kinds of measures that one can take to improve our research and development levels in this country, to encourage industry to do so, such as procurement and other things. The free trade agreement has eliminated some of those mechanisms, as he very well knows, just as the free trade agreement has encouraged the takeover of precisely those industries where science and technology, research and development, can make the greatest contribution to Canada.

• (1230)

He claims that he has fought hard for research and development in this government. If he has fought so hard, why has he not achieved what all members of the committee on industry, science and technology thought could be achieved? Why relatively minor changes in priorities?

Let's take the NRC once more, whose complement of scientists has been cut by about 250 since this government has come into office, whose budget has been cut commensurately, which institution has been so demoralized that it may likely become irrelevant if the efforts of

this government are allowed to continue. It was a year ago that its president, monsieur Perron, submitted—and not too many are supposed to know about this—a tentative five-year plan that asked for $250 million in additional funding over five years. Of that amount, $125 million was supposed to go to IRAP. What did they get? The whole of the NRC got $50 million.

We heard a former executive scientist at the NRC on radio last night condemning the actions of this government in having caused such a dispirited complement of scientists that, as I said, they are trying to leave. But he has done such a great job.

That report made a number of other recommendations that could easily have been responded to and effectively responded to by a science minister who was an advocate for research and development for science and technology rather than an apologist for government. It is about time that we had advocacy. It is about time that we had somebody who is going to stand up, as those of us on this side are standing up, for not only research and development as something worthy in itself but something which is fundamental to the future of this country. When he says that they have had tax incentives which have been so generous, maybe it is time to talk about focusing those tax incentives to produce useful activities within the context of national economic priorities rather than giving great sums of taxpayers' money to those who are not adding to our capacity to increase wealth.

The business luncheon, the Dome cabin, the real estate speculation, the foreign investment, all contribute not a thing to Canada's capacity to grow.

Mr. Speaker, I think you would agree with me that there is reasonable concern throughout the leadership in this country in the industrial sector, in the academic sector, in the political sector, about the deindustrialization of this country. With that deindustrialization, we have the descientification of this country. And it will become worse. Unless we address the needs for research and development in industry, in academia and in government, unless we do something about the constant underfunding of a deteriorating university system, unless we do something about the fact that we are graduating fewer and fewer scientists and engineers than we have in a decade, then we are going to see all potential for production of wealth through knowledge fleeing to the United States while the minister insists that the Minister of Finance is doing a good job even while he causes the deindustrialization of this country.

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Mr. Speaker, I rise because the member who has just spoken and I come from the same part of the country. I must say that I welcome his speech. I think he has expressed his views in his usual articulate fashion. But what is particularly remarkable about his speech is that it is so inconsistent with the stands that are regularly taken by his party. His party is the one that has consistently over the years engaged in deep, profound and vicious attacks on the Canadian private sector. They have never differentiated between foreign ownership and Canadian ownership. The fact is that if it comes from the private sector, it is simply out exploiting the workers. If it comes from the private sector, it is engaged in activity which is exporting jobs. Never does the member's party ever give any thought that if you are going to spend money on research and development, it must be spent on a basis that is world-wide.

Why is it that the Japanese and the Germans have done so well? It is because they operate an international market, a market that this member's party would have Canadian companies issue. I find it completely inconsistent to understand this member talking about R and D when he would have us live within the narrow borders of our own country as opposed to giving Canadians the competence to take on the world.

The second point that I would make to the hon. member is how can he stand up and talk about what government should do when it is very clear that if the private sector is going to pursue R and D, it will only do so on the basis of confidence in government policies—that means, governments that do what they say they will do—when he belongs to a party that in the province of Ontario has consistently broken every election promise that it made.

Education, they promised us great things in education. The member talks about education. Yet in the province of Ontario the government of Bob Rae is not doing what it said. The government of Bob Rae said that it would do great things for the environment, the basis of all new technological development. The government of Bob Rae has broken every promise, and no one can have anything. The government of Bob Rae in Ontario is not investing the way it said, or the way the private sector requires, or the way Canadians require from the most important

economic province in the country in terms of research and development.

The member stands here in the House representing a political party that has broken its word, that is destroying the economic system of what was once the motor of the Canadian economy. My only question to the member is that his party stands for a destruction of the economic system and I do not understand how within that basis he can talk about research and development, because research and development operates with a combination of government, the universities and the private sector. That is where jobs are coming from.

The member represents a party that will create yesterday's jobs, but not tomorrow's.

Mr. McCurdy: Mr. Speaker, that is from a gentleman who has produced so many foreign jobs in his own enterprise.

The member talks about the broken promises of the Ontario government. I did not notice him mentioning the secret $2.5 billion deficit that his party left to that government. But the rest of what he says is so bizarrely out to lunch that I find it almost impossible to respond to him.

He said that we would not open this country to foreign markets.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Order, the hon. House leader for the opposition.

Mr. Dingwall: Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, I may facilitate the Chair and the hon. member that if he is not able to respond to my colleague in his assertions, I would dearly love to take the floor and perhaps provide further information so that my colleague will then have an opportunity to respond.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): That is not a point of order.

Mr. McCurdy: If the hon. member, who has a slightly more than casual relationship to my home city, has not expressed himself clearly enough to be responded to, well then I do not think that we should now accord anybody else an opportunity to clarify it.

If the hon. member had ever come home, then he would have had an occasion on any number of occasions to see precisely what this member and therefore what this party considers is the fundamental of economic development. He will not have heard me say or this party say that we should not compete on the international markets. What he will have heard us say, as I think he might have said on occasion, that the free trade agreement that this government negotiated ties our hands with respect to developing that kind of competitiveness that would allow Canada to compete in the open market.

This I have said. It has not been any Liberal in Windsor who led the construction of an economic development strategy in that city. There was no Liberal who was involved in leading it. This New Democrat was involved in it. If he wants some lessons on how to improve the economy, how to use research and development, how to encourage a community to prepare itself in international competition, I am prepared to do it, but he must first correct his ignorance about where I and my party stand.

• (1240)

Hon. William C. Winegard (Minister for Science): Mr. Speaker, I do not think I will comment on just exactly who is out to lunch here. There has been enough of it.

I would like to make a comment about my friend talking about generating wealth. Like my friend from the Liberal Party, I too find this quite surprising coming from a member of the NDP. This is a party that wants to tax away anything called profits. This is the party that says it is a nasty word.

Of course the hon. member is absolutely correct. This country must generate more wealth but, at the same time, to ignore the expenditure side of that equation is foolhardy. One generates wealth by looking at how industry can thrive, how it can make profits, and therefore how much research and development it is able to do. The tax regime in this country, which we changed, has been established so that R and D is given very favourable treatment.

Is it not interesting that my colleague just does not seem to want to acknowledge that? In terms of the practice of the R and D tax credits, I have already said that we have gone out sector by sector and looked at how it is working. In the sector, the one my colleague from the Windsor area is so interested in, we have been discussing this with the automotive industry and meeting

with Revenue Canada to iron out some of the wrinkles that might be there. Those are the important things to do.

My colleague says that industry has done more, that the ratio is increasing and that is a terrible thing. I do not know what he would expect. If industry does more R and D, then of course the percentage that is done by government is going to be lower as the percentage done by industry increases.

An hon. member: Where?

Mr. Winegard: It is in *Hansard*, sir; I will show your comments to you.

In the public sector in Canada, .60 GDP is what government does; .5 GDP in Japan. On the industrial side in Canada it is around .7 GDP. So we get a ratio. Of course, as it changes, the government ratio is going to go down. In Japan it is 2.05 GDP. Of course the ratio is quite different. I do not know, but it is simple arithmetic. If we do relatively less on one side than the other, which is what the whole policy is designed to promote, it seems to me that what my hon. friend misses is that the policy is working, hence the numbers that he has put down on the Order Paper here today. Of course it is working.

Mr. McCurdy: Mr. Speaker, I provoked both the Liberals and the Conservatives into intellectual dishonesty.

First of all, I have never said, you will never hear me say, nobody will ever hear me say, and nobody can claim to have heard me say that profits were in and of themselves bad things. There is a word for an expression such as the minister's that is so contradictory to the truth.

The minister then goes on with another classical example of the games he plays. He claims that I condemned the increased contribution of industry. He knows very well that what I was doing was stating a simple statistical fact, that if the GERD goes down as a percentage of GDP and industry's contribution goes up then the government's contribution must be going down.

What is bad about it is that the debate is about the fact that this government promised to increase the gross expenditures on research and development, and it is doing it by cutting government expenditures. That is a hell of a way to meet a goal established by a Prime Minister.

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Etobicoke North): Mr. Speaker, we have before us a motion which draws the attention of this House and indeed of the people of Canada to a subject of prime concern.

There is no question that Canadians are deeply concerned about our ability to compete internationally in an increasingly global economy. The success of our efforts in greater international competition will depend of course in large measure on our ability to be more productive, particularly in the areas of research and development and in the training and retraining of our work force.

The increasing interdependence in the world means that all industrialized countries place increasing emphasis on research and development, on science and technology in the broadest sense, and indeed on the quality of education of their people.

In Canada we no longer have the possibility of hoping to achieve greater global competitiveness through reliance on our resource industries, industries which for many generations provided Canadians with a high standard of living, but which can no longer provide that level of living to Canadians. We are increasingly challenged by a global economy and by the higher technologies that emerge from such a global marketplace.

If Canada were to engage in protectionism there would be no solution to the questions of our future prosperity. The route we must go is of course to engage fully in the liberalized global trading economy. To do that, we must equip ourselves with the necessary higher technologies and improved human skills which will enhance our comparative advantages and our competitiveness.

The only way to increase our international competitiveness, as I mentioned a moment ago, is through improved productivity. In the high technology sector opportunities for increased productivity are the greatest. Quite obviously Canada should move aggressively into such areas especially as the Third World takes on the simpler forms of manufacturing and mass production. The impetus is there for Canada to engage in higher technology manufacturing and production processes.

It is past time in Canada that we gave more attention to the need for science and technology and for research and development. The current government, when it came to office in 1984, set itself a priority to define a new science and technology strategy. I am sure all Canadians would join me in regretting that, despite the high flown

statements of that period, the government did not make the progress it had set for itself.

Through a consultative process, a process which I am sure all of us would endorse, the government of the day did attempt to identify where it is that we could best develop science based innovation in the Canadian economy. However, since setting itself that goal, it has not provided the incentives, the tax incentives in particular, that could have helped to make a reality of that policy initiative.

• (1250)

The centres for excellence which the government committed itself to establishing have not flourished. The networking of university, government and industry laboratories has not proceeded in anything like the way that it has proceeded in the countries with which Canada competes in the global markets to which I referred a moment ago. Canada, on the contrary, continues to fund and conduct its research and development at low levels.

For example, in recent years merely 100 companies accounted for 75 per cent of Canadian industrial research and development, with only 10 companies accounting for 40 per cent of that total. The situation in essence has not improved. The vast majority of Canadian businesses still does not conduct any research and development.

In those circumstances I would ask how it is that we think in Canada that we can keep up with state of the art technologies which are being developed among our principal trade partners.

I want to quote in that context a statement by the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research, which three years ago noted:

> Canada's—capacity to perform in industry strategic applied research—is appallingly weak—A strong capacity to perform long-term applied research is essential as part of our industrial structure, if strategic market opportunities are to be identified by industry and pursued through sound programs of investments keyed to all the elements in the chain of innovation.

That was the judgment of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research some three years ago. There is certainly no reason today to challenge that judgment. In fact, there is every reason to believe the situation has not improved, despite the fact that the reduction in trade barriers including those in the United States—Canada Free Trade Agreement, make it all the more imperative that Canada's research and development capacities be fostered.

I am not one who would advocate that we merely throw money at science and technology. No such simplistic answer would meet Canadian circumstances. There is already some degree of research and development support in our country, although it is relatively low, but it really is the market success of the research upon which we should concentrate and industry should be encouraged to address.

Our traditional comparative advantage in resource industries, which I noted a few moments ago, may have made Canadian industry and indeed the Canadian government rather complacent, but certainly the time for complacency is long since passed, especially in light of the global trade liberalization which I have already touched upon.

It seems to me that the efforts of the government should in general be to develop a broad consensus on the need to improve our scientific and technological base and to identify and capitalize on strategic market opportunities. We should promote industrial consortia, groupings of industrial companies that can augment our capacity for long-term applied research. That too is an area where government incentive could be of great importance.

Equally important, the linkages among industry, university and government to train specialists and to aid in technology transfer could certainly be fostered through the increased privatization of government funded research. Such a policy, I might add, has been in the forefront of the recommendations of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce for sometime, as well as in the case of universities, and yet we have seen little action on the part of this government in that direction.

I would also suggest that we should expand the availability of private equity capital to finance smaller technology based companies. We should look again at the way in which we finance R and D through tax incentives and tax credits.

If this government were to pursue those policies, we would today have a much stronger research and development based industry with which to compete with others.

Hon. William C. Winegard (Minister for Science): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague on the other side for his as always very thoughtful comments about this issue.

He mentioned the Canadian Institute of Advanced Research and its preoccupation—and it is a good one—with the lack of pre-competitive research in Canada.

That is where we hurt. That is where we are having our difficulty. It is hard to get Canadian industries to co-operate with each other in that area. I like to mention the Sony-Philips consortium which did all of the pre-competitive research for the compact disc. Then, when they realized they could in fact have a product, they went their own separate ways again.

It has been hard to get Canadian companies to accept that kind of philosophy, that kind of co-operation. That is why the networks of centres of excellence were established, to see if we could not bring those units together somehow.

The Strategic Technologies Program responds to some extent to my colleague's concern about industrial consortia. In that program we will provide 50 per cent of the funding for pre-competitive research, either in advanced industrial materials, the biotechnologies or the information technologies. It is a move in the direction that my friend has been talking about.

I think in terms of funding for start-ups and that kind of thing. I hope, when the latest National Advisory Board on Science and Technology reports are released within the next few weeks, that he would be kind enough to give me his personal comments on the issue of financing, which one of those reports does address in some detail. I know his interest and I know his expertise. I would be very grateful for his personal comments when we are able to deliver those reports to him.

Mr. MacLaren: I should be pleased, Mr. Speaker, to respond to the minister's kind suggestion. I certainly shall take the occasion to offer a few comments.

However, let me say at once that I recognize, as I believe he does, that part of the difficulty in this broad area of research and development has been the degree to which foreign ownership has marked the manufacturing industry in particular.

We could, I suppose, engage in a debate today about the merits of previous governments' policies about promoting or indeed discouraging Canadian investment in Canada. However, the time is so limited I think I shall resist that temptation and merely suggest that any government action, and I hope the government would share this view, should be on the supply side, that it would and provide the circumstances through education, through tax incentives and other devices to encourage greater private sector activity. The government would not itself reach in, designate or select specific corporations where some funding might be thought to be of assistance. That would be of course a direct intervention on the part of the government.

I would instead urge this government to look again at its budgetary policies with regard to promoting the circumstances which can give rise to the enhanced growth of R and D in our country.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): It being one o'clock, I do now leave the chair until two o'clock this day.

The House took recess at 1 p.m.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 31

[*English*]

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Mary Clancy (Halifax): Mr. Speaker, the entire country has become more aware of the crisis problem of violence against women. Indeed, yesterday we debated the need for a royal commission.

For the past few months, the subcommittee on the status of women has been hearing testimony on the terrible and terrifying subject. But it is clear that not all legislators are as concerned with or as sensitive to this issue as we might wish. I refer to Ontario's Minister of Consumer and Corporate Relations, sunshine boy extra-

ordinaire, who has hired as his adviser on sexism a man convicted of assaulting his common law spouse.

Premier Rae's office said that Mr. Grimaldi has made his penance. While no one disagrees, I ask: "Is this the message that Bob Rae and the New Democrats want to send?"

This appointment is no joke. It is an affront to the women of Canada. Mr. Kormos and his cavorting demeans himself, his government and the profession of politics.

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CANADA POST

Mr. Cid Samson (Timmins—Chapleau): Mr. Speaker, according to a Decima poll released this week, 90 per cent of rural Canadians are satisfied with the results of Canada Post's rural conversion program.

Yet people are complaining of a reduction of service in towns like Dubuc in Saskatchewan where one person wrote to Canada Post saying: "We have no counter service at all on Mondays. Any emergency mailings have to be taken out of town even though we used to have counter service Monday through Saturday".

A person from Claremont, Ontario sent a letter to us to protest the closure of their post office. She says: "You just have not seen this the way the average Canadian resident does. We want our post office". These letters and many others in the same vein were also sent to the minister's office, but it seems he has chosen to ignore them.

The minister should know that polls do not always reflect reality, except maybe when it comes to evaluating the popularity of his party. But this is one exception.

* * *

[*Translation*]

TIBET

Mr. Maurice Tremblay (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, last Monday, I had the honour of addressing a group of Tibetan Canadians to celebrate the 1959 uprising in Lhassa.

It is true to say that the government of Canada does not recognize Tibet, but it is also true to point out that no Canadian government did since 1959.

However, I want to remind the Tibetan community that the government of Canada cares greatly for their fellow countrymen and women and did not hesitate to condemn the Chinese government in the UN, through the Canadian ambassador, Mr. Yves Fortier, who told the UN Human Rights Commission last November, and I quote:

> We will continue criticizing the Chinese government for its breaches in the field of human rights. By proclaiming the concern of the people of Canada for the respect of basic human rights in China, we are not trying to isolate that country. We believe that we are encouraging China, by keeping it in contact with ideas from abroad, to start up again the reform process launched ten years ago.

We are hoping, Mr. Speaker, that this would allow Tibet to regain freedom.

* * *

INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF CANADA

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, we had an opportunity, yesterday, to hear what the President of the United States had to say about the political status of Canada and particularly the exaggerated interpretation given by the Prime Minister of Canada.

I think that, if it was unacceptable for De Gaulle to come and state his views of the Canadian and Quebec political environment in the 1960s, it is equally unacceptable for the President of the United States to interfere today in the internal affairs of Canada.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we hope that the President of the United States will have seen through the Prime Minister and, in the future, apply a strict non-interference policy regarding Canadian internal affairs.

* * *

[*English*]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester): Mr. Speaker, in my riding, we are very proud to have a higher than average population of veterans.

We are naturally pleased at the positive attitude taken by the Minister of Veterans Affairs last week when he indicated that services to veterans and their families will not be affected by the budget and spending restraints. The minister is confident that his staff and officials can meet the fiscal restraint as an opportunity and management challenge. Just as private industry has been required to cut its cloth to fit today's competitive times, so

the Public Service is more than capable of adjusting to the new realism.

The Department of Veterans Affairs plays a very important role in Cumberland—Colchester, and I appreciate the minister's firm stand and the support of his department.

* * *

INDUSTRY

Ms. Albina Guarnieri (Mississauga East): Canada's only fax machine manufacturer, the Widecom Group of Mississauga, has recently been recognized by the Guinness Book of Records for developing the world's largest facsimile machine.

This new product will allow for the first time the transmission of blueprints, engineering drawings and other oversized documents. Three years of privately funded research by Widecom will create many new jobs in Mississauga and help the Canadian economy when manufacturing escalates to meet foreign demand.

This government should learn from high technology companies like Widecom and reverse its decision to cap funding to science and technology and post-secondary education. The future of Canada should be given more credit.

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[*Translation*]

CANADA-U.S. AIR QUALITY ACCORD

Mr. Yvon Côté (Richmond—Wolfe): Mr. Speaker, for more than ten years, the whole eastern part of Canada, particularly the Eastern Townships in Quebec, have been plagued with the very serious problem of acid rains. The maple groves of Tingwick, Ham-Nord and Disraeli, in my beautiful riding of Richmond—Wolfe are economically very important for farmers and producers. The same can be said about deciduous and coniferous forests that are unfortunately suffering also from those acid rains.

The signing of a treaty between Mr. Mulroney and Mr. Bush in Ottawa yesterday fortunately ensures our environment will be saved and preserved since the treaty lays down precise rules regarding maximum levels of emissions. It also forces both parties to cooperate closely in environmental planning.

That is a tremendous gain for Quebec as well as the riding of Richmond—Wolfe, and it took only five years to achieve, while previous governments sat and did nothing about that for ten years.

* * *

NEWFOUNDLAND FISHERMEN

Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso): Mr. Speaker, nobody can support acts of vandalism like those that were perpetrated last Tuesday in Port-aux-Basques. But we have to understand the nub of the problems that led Newfoundland fishermen to resort to such measures.

Those fishermen are in a wedge, Mr. Speaker. While large foreign factory ships swallow up our fish stocks, their quotas are cut. High interest rates and new taxes increase their production costs.

And above that, the Minister of Fisheries is imposing this new burden on them: a wharf suveillance program for which the fishermen will have to pay themselves.

Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland fishermen see their standard of living taking a plunge and the Minister of Fisheries is slapping them in the face. That is why they are angry. If the Minister wants to avoid any more violence, he will have to stop ignoring the demands of the fishermen and start listening to them.

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CANADA-U.S. AIR QUALITY ACCORD

Mr. Jean-Marc Robitaille (Terrebonne): Mr. Speaker, two days ago I was pleased to mention in this House the good news with respect to the decontamination of different sites in Quebec because of the initiative taken by our government. But today, Mr. Speaker, we have one more reason to be happy since the Prime Minister and the President of the United States, Mr. Bush, have signed yesterday the long-awaited agreement on acid rain control and air quality.

Mr. Speaker, that is another of our government's tangible achievements in the environmental area. And that was made possible for both countries thanks to the dedication and never ending work of the Prime Minister, Mr. Brian Mulroney, who has been so determined as to

put forward an agreement that will benefit both our countries as well as future generations.

In the name of the people of my riding, I want to pay him a tribute today and I urge all members of this House to do the same because that is an important achievement for all Canadian men and women. Congratulations, Mr. Prime Minister!

* * *

[*English*]

MEDICARE

Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North): After Michael Wilson's budget comes the deluge, Mr. Speaker. For Canadians depending on medicare, this has meant a deluge of proposed user fees, deinsuring of medical services, closure of hospital beds, and lay-offs of health personnel. Yesterday the Tory Nova Scotia minister of health suggested charging an annual premium for all Nova Scotians using medicare, similar to the premiums now levied by the Tory provinces of B.C. and Alberta.

• (1410)

This user fee would be in addition to the higher charges for such services as prescription drugs and children's dental care. All of these charges and fee increases flow directly from the five-year freeze on federal contributions to provincial medicare plans.

When asked how he will protect Canadians from the growing erosion of medical services, the minister of health and welfare always mentions the Canada Health Act. Nothing in that act stops the provinces from charging premiums, laying off health personnel, closing hospital beds or taking away services.

What the minister is really saying to low and middle income Canadians who depend on medicare is: "Let them eat cake".

* * *

SEAN O'SULLIVAN

Mr. Geoff Scott (Hamilton—Wentworth): Mr. Speaker, I wish to draw to the attention of the House a very important and, for me, a most sentimental occasion which will take place on Parliament Hill next Monday, March 18.

Many on all sides of the House will remember with fondness the late Sean O'Sullivan, who was my predecessor as MP for Hamilton—Wentworth and, indeed, one of the youngest and finest members of Parliament ever to grace this Chamber.

Sean resigned his seat in 1977 and dared to become a priest with great distinction. He was appointed a member of the Order of Canada.

God took Father Sean from us in March 1989 at the age of 37 after a long battle with leukemia.

This House will commemorate Sean in a formal way. We passed a resolution in November 1990 that a sitting room at the Wellington Street entrance to the East Block be set aside as a meditation place for people of all faiths. This room, to all those who enter it, will forever be a reminder of God's special friend, Father Sean O'Sullivan.

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CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Mr. Speaker, on Monday in my riding of Dartmouth at CFB Shearwater I had the pleasure of welcoming home some of the first of the Canadian men and women returning from the Persian Gulf.

These troops, from various Canadian forces bases, returned after proudly contributing to the successful efforts of freeing Kuwait from the oppression of Saddam Hussein.

These brave Canadian men and women are a model of strength and courage which all Canadians should greatly admire and respect. They placed their lives on the line in the name of Canada to preserve freedom and democracy, life and liberty, peace and humanity.

The remainder of their colleagues serving on the *Terra Nova*, the *Athabaskan*, and the *Protecteur* is steaming back toward Canada. I know, Mr. Speaker, that when their ships arrive in Halifax harbour, they will be witness to the gratitude and thanksgiving of all Canadians as tens of thousands of Nova Scotians will line the shores of Halifax harbour to say thank you and welcome home.

They have served us well but, more so, have caused us to reflect on how fortunate we all are to live in this great country, Canada. For their service and their example we say thank you and wish them a safe and speedy trip home.

AIR QUALITY ACCORD

Mr. Brian O'Kurley (Elk Island): Mr. Speaker, sustainable development, one of the most important issues in Canada and around the world, focuses on balancing economic concerns with environmental concerns.

In the pursuit of the goal of sustainable development, Canada's Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and American President George Bush signed the historic Canada–U.S. air quality accord.

This agreement sends an important signal to the world and demonstrates that a key element in achieving sustainable development is a determined spirit of co-operation, not only between countries but also between various levels of government, industry, the scientific community, and the public.

If we are to continue to address successfully the needs of our society, then we must work together to ensure that environmental goals are responsibly pursued in our efforts to meet the ever-increasing economic challenges.

Let us work together for a cleaner environment and a better quality of life for all Canadians.

* * *

HEALTH

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean): Mr. Speaker, a woman in New York was just awarded $4.5 million after a jury ruled that a toxic substance released from the foam covering of a Meme breast implant caused cancer in that woman. They were amazed that a product which contains a known carcinogen would be implanted in women.

Canadian women are not protected from this. Since last April I have twice raised this issue in the House with the minister of health. I asked that he remove the product from the market until it was proven to be safe. He accused me of fearmongering.

The FDA in the U.S. has recently taken steps which would implement the strict regulation of breast implants. They will have to prove the safety and effectiveness of implants before they are allowed on the market.

This is similar to measures which are included in a private members' bill which I have introduced in this House.

The minister of health must listen and take steps to ensure that women in this country are protected, and to ensure that Canada does not become a dumping ground for implants ruled unsafe in the United States.

* * *

MINISTER OF CONSUMER AND COMMERCIAL RELATIONS

Mrs. Edna Anderson (Simcoe Centre): Mr. Speaker, I was shocked to learn that the provincial minister responsible for sexism in advertising appeared as a sunshine boy in a widely circulated Toronto newspaper.

As if that wasn't bad enough, I have since learned that the same minister saw fit to hire his close friend, a convicted wife beater, as his policy adviser on sexism in advertising.

As a woman, I am concerned that someone with such questionable credentials should be given any responsibility for women's issues. It also speaks volumes about the provincial minister who has shown such poor judgment on both counts.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*English*]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER INDUSTRY

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. On Tuesday the Prime Minister refused to answer a specific question about whether he would be telling President Bush that Canada is now dropping its 15 per cent tax on softwood lumber exports.

Given the length of the photographic opportunity and the meetings between the President and the Prime Minister yesterday, I would like to ask the Prime Minister whether, in fact, he informed the President that we will be dropping this tax which penalizes Canadian lumber exports.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I regret that my hon. friend was offended by the

length of the photographic opportunity. It was to accommodate the growing number of Liberal members of Parliament who wanted to have their pictures taken with the President. I was happy to arrange it.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the right hon. Prime Minister could answer the question.

Mr. Mulroney: No, he didn't ask for you, Paul.

Apart from the signing of the acid rain treaty, which this Parliament has sought for over a decade and which I think brings honour to all members of Parliament who fought for it, we also dealt extensively with a number of important bilateral issues including the softwood lumber issue.

The Minister for International Trade continues to consult with the provinces that are affected by it, and once all of the provinces have agreed to a common approach, then I will follow through on the very productive meeting I had with President Bush last night in regard to this, preparing him for the positions that we hope will emerge from the consultations of the minister.

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, indeed, Canadians were pleased that the Prime Minister was finally photographed signing the agreement which he announced in a similar photographic experience about a year ago.

In a second question specifically related to some bilateral issues that have not been settled, I would like to ask the Prime Minister this. In light of the fact that the Canadian Lumbermen's Association has stated that the combination of the high dollar policy of this government, combined with the 15 per cent lumber tax, has led to rampant mill closures and has created a situation which is the worst since the "dirty thirties", I would like to ask the Prime Minister whether he discussed this issue very specifically with the President of the United States, and whether he put a deadline on when Canada intends to withdraw this tax which is penalizing our own industry.

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I am sure hon. members know there is an intensive consultation under way here in Canada with respect to this question between myself and ministers and premiers of provinces that are involved in the question of softwood lumber exports to the United States.

That process of consultation should soon be concluded.

There is opposition, as the hon. Acting Leader of the Opposition should know. There is opposition in the Atlantic provinces to our even taking this matter up with the United States. I am meeting tomorrow morning with ministers from the Liberal government of New Brunswick, who are, as one example, opposed to our taking this issue up with the United States at all. When we have these matters resolved, if we can get the consensus in Canada, we will certainly be proceeding. In the meantime, we are going to finish our consultations before we engage the United States directly on the matter.

• (1420)

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, once again, given the fact that it was not the Minister for International Trade but the Prime Minister who spent at least a full working day with the President yesterday, during which he should have had an opportunity to discuss this issue, I would like to ask the Prime Minister—

[*Translation*]

My third question is for the Prime Minister. Given the fact that thousands of jobs have been eliminated by his high dollar policy and the 15 per cent tax on our lumber exports, I would like to ask him whether he is ready to announce today that he will cancel the export tax on lumber to give workers in that industry a chance to go back to work?

[*English*]

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, the government is not going to announce today any such thing. There is a process of consultation under way between the government, provincial governments and the industry in this country. There is no 100 per cent consensus on what action should be taken.

I would make this point, that if the then Liberal Government of Ontario had been more co-operative by implementing some measures with respect to the situation in Ontario, our case might have been easier. Nevertheless, we think there have been certain fundamental changes since the MOU went into effect. The time has now come for it to be removed.

I have no doubt that the government will decide on a course of action involving consultations with the U.S. presently, but the first thing we are going to do is finish our consultations with the interested parties in Canada.

* * *

[*Translation*]

MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

Mr. John Manley (Ottawa South): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Acting Minister of Finance.

The budget is forecasting that unemployment will remain at 10 per cent during 1992 and 1993. According to Laurent Thibault, the outgoing president of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, half of the manufacturing jobs lost because of the recession will be lost for good.

What kind of help are the minister and the government going to give to people thrown out of work, not until next summer or next fall, but forever?

[*English*]

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Mr. Speaker, to respond to the hon. member, who asks about the level of manufacturing activity in our economy, he should know, first of all, from reading the Royal Bank report at the end of 1990, that the manufacturing base of the Canadian economy is 9.6 per cent ahead of where it was at the end of 1982. That is still there. We have a stronger manufacturing economy than we did at that time.

Even more important, we had record investments in capital and new machinery and equipment in 1988 and 1989. All of this was put in place thanks to the prospect of the free trade agreement and, of course, the experience of the free trade agreement.

As a result of all this, we have a good base for the future if we can continue to get interest rates down and bring inflation down, and that is what the new budget was meant to do.

Mr. John Manley (Ottawa South): Mr. Speaker, comparisons to 1982 do not do anything for the 1.5 million Canadians who are out of work today.

My supplementary question is for the Prime Minister. Given the fact that in the last two weeks both his Minister of Finance and the Governor of the Bank of Canada have admitted that they pursued the wrong policies prior to the last election and that Canadians are now paying the price for that, will he assure us that he will take the first step necessary to promote economic recovery in Canada and give us a new Minister of Finance who an be trusted to handle this economic crisis?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, first of all, my hon. friend will understand if I take exception the interpretation that he has placed on statements made by the Minister of Finance and the Governor of the Bank of Canada. An accurate reading will indicate that that is not the statement, as he has reported it, that was made. That being said, I think there is general acknowledgement in this House and certainly across the country that Michael Wilson is probably one of the finest ministers of finance—

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Mulroney: You notice that I said "one of the finest ministers of finance", the other being seated not very far from me right here.

* * *

BUSINESS COUNCIL ON NATIONAL ISSUES

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. The finance minister said yesterday in the House that the Business Council on National Issues that commissioned a study on competitiveness was actually a government-initiated partnership with the BCNI and other groups.

These reports on this very important study could in fact have an impact on the national unity debate. Yet I understand that it will be in fact the Business Council on National Issues which decides what will be released and when it will be released.

My question to the Prime Minister is this. The government has given $400,000 to the Business Council on National Issues for research purposes. I ask the government if today it will commit to spending the same amount of funding for research for other groups which might have a similar interest, not only in competitiveness, but in the national unity debate, such as aboriginal people, the ethnocultural community and small business?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada gives grants from time to time to organizations. It has given millions of dollars to the Canadian Labour Congress over the years in grants and for specific purposes to other organizations.

I am not acquainted with all of the details of this. It would not strike me as being inappropriate that there would be a study on competitiveness done jointly with the Business Council on National Issues. That strikes me as being more appropriate than with perhaps an aboriginal group. The aboriginal groups receive grants for perhaps other purposes.

If my hon. friend, in respect of the question which she raised which dealt with international competitiveness and enhancing Canada's productivity, is making a request for a grant to a specific organization to conduct such a study, we would be happy to look at it.

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is to the Prime Minister. Will there be just, fair and even-handed treatment for all groups which have an interest in the future of this country?

Last week the Prime Minister's chief constitutional adviser met at Meech Lake to discuss a number of papers commissioned by the Business Council on National Issues and done by distinguished academics across Canada. Two days ago, the Prime Minister, in this House in response to a question that I asked as to whether he would have similar meetings held with aboriginal groups, ethnocultural groups and other such interest groups, agreed that he would do so. I understand that the Prime Minister has received a written request from the Ethnocultural Council and the Assembly of First Nations for such meetings.

My question for the Prime Minister is this. Given his very positive response on Tuesday, can he tell this House when those meetings will be held and who will be involved in those meetings?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, in an earlier question my hon. friend suggested that the meeting that had taken place at Meech Lake, of academics and people interested in the Constitution, was somehow directly or indirectly associated with the BCNI. That is not the case. It was a consultation conducted by the Government of Canada of groups totally unrelated to the BCNI. I indicated to my friend that if she had any ideas or if anyone else was interested in a consultation that we would be happy to oblige.

The member seems to be more aware of my correspondence than I am. She indicates that I have received a letter from the Ethnocultural Council. I will be happy to look at it and let her know. I am struck by the fact that the leader is on her feet today asking for more grants to bodies and last week she was on her feet saying that Spicer was too expensive.

• (1430)

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I think the Prime Minister is missing the point. The national unity debate belongs to everyone in Canada, not just the corporate community and everyone must have equal access to resources and to the expertise and time of the Prime Minister's office. Canadians deserve that.

[*Translation*]

This week, the government voted against our motion which would have opened up the constitutional process.

This government is saying that it wants an open process. This coming summer, provincial and territorial commissions as well as the committees and groups appointed by the government will have finished their work.

I am asking the Prime Minister whether he can guarantee us that all this work will not result in a federal-provincial conference or in bilateral negotiations, but rather in a real people's forum, like a constituent assembly or convention.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the NDP motion that was debated in this House would place the Canadian government, the Parliament of Canada, in an unacceptable strait jacket in terms of future negotiations and consultations.

The hon. member knows it, and that was the aim of the motion, which is not a very noble goal. The leader of the New Democratic Party will have to recognize that.

As to her fundamental question, I mentioned several times— I don't know whether she has been traumatized, but every time she gets up she talks about the corporate elite.

[*English*]

What about the big labour elite? Why is the hon. member so traumatized by the corporate elite and so comfortable with big labour rules?

* * *

SOFTWOOD LUMBER INDUSTRY

Mr. Bob Wood (Nipissing): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade. The minister told us today that he is trying to seek a consensus among the provincial premiers on the surtax on softwood lumber exports. He has said some provinces, notably New Brunswick, are against approaching the Americans.

The question I would like to ask is, what is the position of the federal government and what is the minister advising his provincial counterparts?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, the position of the government and my position is that matters have changed since 1986 when the countervail duty case was launched. There have been considerable changes since then. Several provinces have instituted new stumpage charges in their provinces, such as British Columbia and Quebec. There have been significant changes in the industry. Our dollar has appreciated 19.4 per cent. Our share of the U.S. market has dropped from 33 per cent to 27 per cent. So there have been very considerable changes.

Anyone who examines this question impartially and rationally will agree, I am sure, that the time has come for the memorandum of understanding to be done away with. However, we are not necessarily dealing with people who are rational or impartial. We are dealing with people like the hon. gentleman opposite. Therefore, it is not going to be easy to accomplish this. We have to assess the risks and the possible benefits, which we are now in the process of doing.

Mr. Bob Wood (Nipissing): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is to the same minister.

The 15 per cent surtax coupled with a high dollar policy have caused close to 100,000 job losses in the forestry industry. The minister has said that he wants to renegotiate the agreement, but the American Congress has said that it would not. Can the minister tell us what the government will do if the Americans refuse to negotiate? Will the government take some firm action on behalf of the tens of thousands who have already lost their jobs in the forestry industry?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, the memorandum of understanding with reference to softwood lumber is not the only matter that has affected the softwood lumber industry. When we decide upon a course of action, I want the provinces—or most of them—supportive of that course of action. When I am out in front leading the charge down in Washington, I do not want them suddenly disappearing behind my back. That is the purpose of this consultation; to make sure we are united and agreed on the course of action we are going to follow through, no matter how tough it might be.

* * *

[*Translation*]

POVERTY

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, with an unemployment rate of over 14 per cent and retail sales that dropped 20 per cent this month, Montreal has become the unemployment capital of Canada. With unemployment comes poverty. So much so that this year, 53,000 families are obliged to go to the Sun Youth Food Bank. This is a disgrace, and it also very sad. I therefore want to ask the Prime Minister what kind of programs the government is going to set up in Montreal to help these families get out of the poverty cycle and store their dignity?

Hon. Marcel Danis (Minister of State (Youth), Minister of State (Fitness and Amateur Sport) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I agree the economic situation in Montreal is difficult. We realize this and we sympathize with the people who are in this situation. However, it must be said that the government has done a great deal since 1984 for the Montreal area. We have invested hundreds of millions of dollars, and I could name a number of examples for the benefit of the hon. member for Mount Royal. Recently, the Minister of Science and Technology invested $112 million in one of the poorest areas in Montreal, and I am referring to the southwest. And we also set up a training centre for petrochemical workers in East Montreal. Since 1985, we have created 83,000 jobs in Montreal, and that is better than the previous Liberal government which lost 4,000.

[*English*]

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): The ex-psychiatric people, the single parent families, the poor and the elderly are not interested in being statistics. These are human beings who are lining up at these food banks and need to be fed.

[*Translation*]

Even in my own riding of Mount Royal, a food bank and food aid are needed. Formerly, Multicaf used to distribute about 30 baskets per month. Now we are up to 350 baskets per month. This is a terrible human catastrophe. My supplementary is directed to the Prime Minister. In a country where we have a food surplus, I would like to know whether he is prepared to help food banks fill their shelves. And if not, who is going to feed the poor in our communities in Montreal?

Hon. Marcel Danis (Minister of State (Youth), Minister of State (Fitness and Amateur Sport) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member when she says there are many poor people in Montreal. However, my colleague should also realize that since 1984, we helped 760,000 people in Canada rise above the poverty line. This is cold comfort for the people who are still living in poverty, but nevertheless, one-third of these people—the hon. member refered to children as well—one-third of those 760,000 people who are no longer living below the poverty line are children. So we have made progress in a number of other areas. In Montreal, for instance, the Space Agency has created jobs. The Liberal party tried to kill the petrochemical industry in Montreal but the Prime Minister rescued it. It is true Montreal has problems, but this Conservative government has done a lot for Montreal.

* * *

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. On November 18, 1987, the Prime Minister and President Reagan signed an agreement on Great Lakes water quality, which adopted zero discharge of persistent toxic substances into the Great Lakes.

The principles of that agreement have never been enforced and the horrible effects of toxics are now seen on fish, wildlife and human health.

• (1440)

In fact there have been only seven pollution prosecutions in all of Canada under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act since 1988.

Would the minister explain why the government plans now to enforce zero discharge of toxics only in Lake Superior? Will that not turn other water bodies in Canada into toxic waste dumps?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague opposite that the government has acted very aggressively in terms of cleaning up the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River basin.

We are making progress both in the Great Lakes and in the St. Lawrence River with programs that total some $260 million. We will be moving in the very near future with the U.S. on a joint agreement in terms of further clean-up operations in the Great Lakes. We are moving very firmly to meet the commitment that we have made for the virtual elimination of toxic chemicals by the year 2000. We still maintain that we will move to zero discharge down the road.

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, as of today, only seven of Canada's provinces are part of the national acid rain reduction program, while all the United States is covered by the 1990 U.S. clean air legislation, both National CAP and National Reduction Program.

Would the minister explain why last November 27 he said that the agreement of the three western provinces was necessary to make yesterday's acid rain accord fly?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the answer is very simple.

I met all the members of the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment in Victoria. We discussed the issue thoroughly, and I got the agreement of all provinces to meet the goals of limiting emissions as we have stated in the agreement yesterday.

LAND CLAIMS

Ms. Ethel Blondin (Western Arctic): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Acting Minister of Justice.

Members will know that the crisis which erupted last summer in Kanesatake and Kahnawake resulted basically over a land dispute. When the minister realized that this disputed land was destined to become a golf course, why did the minister not exercise his or her authority and bring in an immediate moratorium on the development of any land in dispute?

Hon. Pierre H. Cadieux (Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, if I may, as my hon. colleague probably remembers, at the time of the dispute there had been negotiations with respect to that particular land in Oka.

The negotiations had been going on for about two years. As a former Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development at the time, I had appointed negotiators to do that. Negotiations at the time were suspended by the new chief and council that had just been elected at that time.

Ms. Ethel Blondin (Western Arctic): Mr. Speaker, my question goes unanswered.

Basically, the acting minister will know that indeed the Government of Canada has myriad statutes available to it, providing expropriation powers that could have been exercised to diffuse the situation.

Having said that, testimony received last night from an environmental group provided unprecedented evidence that the land in question has historical environmental significance. This is supported by a petition of 1,200 names.

If this group considers it to be of such value that it would equal the status of a world heritage site, why then would the minister not exercise his or her authority and put on a moratorium?

Hon. Pierre H. Cadieux (Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, again I think everybody would agree here. The hon. member in particular should agree to the proposition that best way to settle land claims issues in this country is at the negotiating table.

If the band and council had come to the negotiating table, as we were prepared to be there for over a year, it might have been settled then and would be settled now.

* * *

[*Translation*]

THE CONSTITUTION

Mr. Douglas Young (Acadie—Bathurst): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. Last June the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick unanimously adopted legislation to enshrine the principles of Bill 88 which acknowledges the equality of both official linguistic communities in New Brunswick. I would like to ask the Prime Minister whether the government intends to ask the Parliament of Canada to adopt this amendment to our Constitution?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the hon. member will recall that the constitutional agreement signed by the First Ministers in June 1990, when that legislation was adopted in New Brunswick, provided for two amendments to Bill 88.

One bilateral amendment provided for the enshrinement of the principle of equality of both linguistic communities in New Brunswick and the role of the provincial government as protector and promoter of that characteristic. As the hon. member will recall, the second amendment was to protect the contents of Bill 88 by preventing amendments without the unanimous agreement of the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick and of the federal Parliament.

Now since the second amendment, linked to the first, died with the Meech Lake failure, any over-all approach to the Bill 88 solution died right along with it. What the Governments of Canada and New Brunswick should do now would be to get together and consider the best way to achieve our common goal—Canada's and New Brunswick's—of enshrining Bill 88 in the Canadian Constitution.

Mr. Douglas Young (Acadie—Bathurst): Mr. Speaker, I just want to ask the Prime Minister this: Is the Prime Minister of Canada, through the minister who just answered, saying no to the Premier of New Brunswick who is asking, on behalf of Acadians from his province,

for the entrenchment of Bill 88, as passed unanimously by the New Brunswick Legislative Assembly, an essential Act for the survival of Acadians in Canada, under the present circumstances.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): On the contrary, Mr. Speaker. I told the Premier of New Brunswick that we also wanted to see the rights of Acadians entrenched. That is one of the reasons why it was so important for all legislative assemblies to approve the Meech Lake Accord, because the entrenchment of those rights was directly related to this project. But unfortunately, it is also one of the reasons why the rights of an important majority, the Acadian people, were affected by all this.

As the minister just said, I have met the Premier of New Brunswick and we are working together to find means, and even constitutional means, to entrench and better protect the vital rights of the Acadians and French-speaking residents of New Brunswick.

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[*English*]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER INDUSTRY

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester): I have a question for the Minister for International Trade, and I want to assure him that I am entirely rational and certainly impartial.

I want to point out to him that there are two sides to every story, and some members today have called for the government to drop the 15 per cent tax on softwood lumber. In Atlantic Canada we are very much opposed to such an action because it could have very damaging effects on an area of Canada that has really been an innocent bystander throughout this whole argument.

We seek the consensus of all the provinces or I understand you do. I want to ensure that all those provinces included all the Atlantic provinces, that you do not risk any countervail action through these negotiations and consider the concerns of Atlantic Canada in this very important issue.

Some hon. members: What is your question?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, this is certainly the first rational question I have had today.

The fact we have to keep in mind is that 90 per cent of softwood lumber exports to the United States, valued at $2.6 billion in 1990, came basically from two major producing provinces, British Columbia and Quebec, and their concerns have to be paid close attention to by us.

I am aware of the views particularly of the industry and Governments of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

• (1450)

We have had three consultations with them. I will meet again tomorrow with the New Brunswick minister responsible for forestry and the acting minister of commerce and technology.

Everyone's views will be kept in mind, but there is one salient fact: 90 per cent of the softwood lumber exports, valued at $2.6 billion, are from these two provinces, British Columbia and Quebec. We simply cannot ignore their interests which are being seriously affected in this case.

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ACOA

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Solicitor General.

Back on December 30 *The Ottawa Citizen* reported that CB Chemicals, a company that received $13 million in support from ACOA and the Government of Nova Scotia, was under RCMP investigation.

My question to the Solicitor General is simply this: Could he tell us whether CB Chemicals is one of those 12 companies that the Minister of Public Works cited as being under RCMP investigation?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I am the acting minister for ACOA today, in the absence of my desk-mate.

I think the minister responsible for ACOA gave an excellent answer yesterday when he said that he was not going to give the names of any of the firms in question that might be at the present time investigated by the RCMP.

There were 12. In over half the cases, seven cases, the matters complained about were caught at the officials' level before any funding whatsoever was made or disbursed by ACOA. Most of the cases are old news. They were known a year or a year and a half ago.

I think the House should remember that 7,600 applications have been approved by ACOA since 1987, with $600 million committed and $1.8 billion leverage to the private sector, creating over 20,000 jobs.

When the hon. gentleman carps and brings this up in an attempt to embarrass the government or to embarrass individuals, he should keep that in mind.

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Mr. Speaker, I will be very straightforward. I think the government does enough to embarrass itself.

My question is really very simple. If the Royal Canadian Mounted Police provide press releases by which we find out, for example, that Technitread is under RCMP investigation, then why can't the government come clean about those 12 RCMP investigations set out by the minister himself in the House of Commons, rather than wait for press releases from the RCMP?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, not only is the question very simple but so is the hon. member.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the hon. minister could answer the question.

Mr. Crosbie: All right, I will say that the hon. member is very complicated, Mr. Speaker.

With respect to this issue, some months ago the minister responsible for ACOA took the initiative with respect to the Enterprise Cape Breton operation to appoint a commissioner or a person to look into the operations of Enterprise Cape Breton, in the person of a Mr. Tony Brait.

There is no attempt to hide that there has been difficulty in certain instances in Atlantic Canada, but these are a very small proportion of the 7,600 applications. One wonders why the hon. member is carrying on a vendetta against Atlantic Canada with these questions.

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FARM CREDIT CORPORATION

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Acting Minister of Agriculture.

In 1985, after a reduction in commercial interest rates, the Minister of Agriculture reduced the interest on Farm Credit Corporation loans from 14 per cent to 12.75 per cent.

Given recent reductions in interest rates, will the Minister of Agriculture now announce the same thing for the period of high interest rates that we just finished?

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister of State (Grains and Oilseeds)): Mr. Speaker, the Farm Credit Corporation is a Crown corporation and a good one. It regularly lends money to farmers. It has to compete on the commercial market.

As interest rates go up, unfortunately it charges more. As interest rates come down, it will be charging less. The Farm Credit Corporation will be judging that itself and making announcements accordingly.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): If that logic is so wrong today, why was it so right in 1985?

[*Translation*]

Back to the Prime Minister. I would like to ask him the following: The farm industry needs the assistance of this government and the Prime Minister. A precedent was set in 1985. Since his minister is unwilling to take action, will the Prime Minister announce today a reduction in interest rates on existing Farm Credit Corporation loans? If not, could he tell us why, since he did it in 1985?

[*English*]

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister of State (Grains and Oilseeds)): Mr. Speaker, that member was not around in 1981 and 1982 when the Farm Credit Corporation was forced to charge interest rates way above what we have now.

I happen to have been a farmer and a member then and know what kind of damage the policies of that government did to the agricultural community. We are still trying to recover from them.

* * *

TRADE

Mr. Jim Peterson (Willowdale): Mr. Speaker, the Minister for International Trade is quoted in *Maclean's* magazine: "Most of the auto parts work in Canada is not

highly skilled. That kind of work will be done in Mexico or it will be done somewhere like Mexico, other than in Canada".

Is this why the minister is rushing hell-bent into a free trade agreement with Mexico?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to discover that the hon. gentleman reads *Maclean's* magazine.

If he looked at the transcript of the reporter who conducted the interview he would see exactly what I said. I said that with respect to low value-added and less skilled work in the auto parts industry, that is a matter where we cannot stop competition from lower wage countries such as Mexico and many others being extremely effective.

We are interested in the higher value added, skilled end of the industry, and there Canada can compete just as the auto parts manufacturers say they can. There we will compete and there we will be very competitive under free trade. With free trade we are globally competitive, and there is nothing to be afraid of if you have any faith in the auto parts industry or in Canada.

Mr. Jim Peterson (Willowdale): Mr. Speaker, auto parts manufacturers of Canada do not agree with the minister. According to their letter, the auto parts industry is in the vanguard of high technology in Canada's manufacturing base in terms of automation, robotics, and other technologies. They say: "Your comments are unacceptable to us. Your comments are criticizing the technological skills base of not only the 75,000 auto parts manufacturers in Canada, but the 300,000 other related workers in related industries".

Will the minister take back his statements? Will he start fighting on behalf of Canadian jobs and workers rather than just dismissing them with the stroke of a pen?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, these are the gravest accusations since Emile Zola.

Members of the auto parts industry just wrote me a letter. Apparently they sent the hon. gentleman a copy, because they read the same article as the hon. member and have drawn the same wrong conclusion as the hon. member. I never said what they say I have said, or you said I said. I never said it, as I just explained a few minutes ago.

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ARMS SALES

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

Yesterday the United States President appeared to dump cold water on the idea of a global summit on arms sales, an idea which had support on all sides of the House.

The United States and other countries in fact are already lining up to sell arms to the Middle East, despite the admonition of the Prime Minister to the contrary.

Can the Prime Minister report to the House on this aspect of his talks yesterday with President Bush? Is the global summit dead? Are there alternatives that the government would have in mind if in fact the idea is a goner?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I am sure that President Bush, were he here, would want me to correct the misstatement in the prefatory remarks of my hon. friend. He did not throw cold water on it.

• (1500)

As the minister of trade suggests, it is important to read the transcript. Here is what he said. "I am not sure exactly what the proper structure is for this, but clearly that idea"—namely the one that Canada put forward—"may, indeed, have some merit".

Pursuant to this, we began the process of examining it last night. The Secretary of State for External Affairs met with eight heads of government, I believe, throughout the region in the last number of days. All of them believe that it had some merit. The President is going to examine it today with President Mitterrand and over the weekend with Prime Minister Major, and slowly but surely, hopefully the idea will advance.

We think it is a good one. We put it forward vigorously on behalf of Canada. I indicated the contradiction, of the five permanent members of the Security Council persist in large, vast arms sales to the countries in the region, and then are perplexed by the fact that some members in the region decide to use them to wage war against innocent members. This does not make any sense. We

believe the Canadian position is a consistent and a reasonably thoughtful one. After a period of reflection, others will subscribe to it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Richelieu now has the floor. One question only, please.

* * *

TELEVISION NETWORKS

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the hon. Minister of Communications. The sale of TV Quatre-Saisons and CFCF is raising serious concern in the Quebec television circles. There are two potential buyers competing, namely Intermédia and Global. It seems, however, that Global's offer contains a clause calling for the creation of yet another televison station in Montreal, the Global Network, which would cause the further splitting of an already insufficient advertising revenue base. Considering several television stations in Quebec are already in deficit, is the Minister ready to commit to defending the interests of the television workers presently working in Montreal and, thus, protecting the quality of programming in the province?

Hon. Marcel Masse (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, I too learned through the papers that offers were made to CFCF, Mr. Pouliot and Quatre-Saisons. I want to point out to the hon. member that any such agreement must be approved by the CRTC and that it will go through the usual channels.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker: I should advise the House that I have a question of privilege from the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce.

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PRIVILEGE

COMMENTS DURING QUESTION PERIOD

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Labour, when asked what the government would do about the 14.3 per cent unemployment rate in Montreal, the highest municipal rate in Canada, did not answer the question, but said, and I quote from page 18397 of *Hansard*:

> —we should make allowances for the hon. member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville who may not have all the facts, but we cannot make the same allowances for the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce who has been sitting in this House as a Liberal member for 25 years.

He went on to say:

> Before 1984—during the last 17 or 18 years the Liberals were in power in this country, Montreal lost not 100, not 200, but 4,000 jobs.

Between the election of a Liberal government in 1965 and the election of a Conservative government in 1979, a period of 14 years, when I was a member of this House and a member of the government, the average rate of unemployment in Canada was 6 per cent, and in Montreal it was 6.7 per cent, and thousands of new jobs were created, a record never matched by this Conservative government.

Mr. Speaker: I have looked at the exchange in *Hansard*. I also have examined carefully the notice which was given according to the rules by the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce.

I think I have to indicate to the hon. member that there may very well be an argument between himself and the minister and others. But I have to say that it is not a question of privilege.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

WEEKLY STATEMENT

Mr. David Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pose the weekly question to the government House leader. Could he indicate to the House what the business will be for tomorrow, Monday, Tuesday and the rest of the next week?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I would like to formally designate tomorrow as an allotted day for supply.

It would be my intention at this time to designate next Monday as an allotted day as well. I would like to keep open the possibility of discussions with respect to that date, but that is the intention at this time.

On Tuesday, March 19, I plan to call report stage and third reading of Bill C-97, the borrowing bill and, hopefully, complete both stages by the end of that day.

I would like to carry on with the discussions between House leaders to see how we might most effectively and efficiently decide on business for the remainder of next week.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order with my hon. friend the government House leader, I wonder if I could seek clarification on the point regarding the eventual introduction of legislation to impose the tax on cigarette products.

When the budget was tabled on February 26 a ways and means motion was also tabled. We have yet to have the final two days of the budget debate. My hon. friend will know that until those two days of debate take place the Standing Orders make it impossible to introduce the ways and means motion which would then give legal authority to collect the tax on cigarettes.

I suppose one could always make the case that at the moment the government lacks the legal authority for the collection of this tax but I would like to say that since it has already been introduced perhaps we should talk about ways and means of facilitating the passage of this bill.

Could my friend give some indication as to whether or not he plans to bring in that legislation soon.

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows in fact there are ample legal precedents to collect the tax at the time indicated in the ways and means motion during a budget. I know that from experience having, while in opposition, challenged the government's right to collect taxes on the basis of a ways and means motion. It wasted a lot of time and money on legal opinions which confirmed that, in fact, all that is necessary is that at some point legislation be brought forward to change the law. That needs to be preceded by adoption of the ways and means motion.

The hon. member is right, it can be done after the approval of the general motion attached to a budget. Of course should events intervene such as prorogation, none of that applies and it becomes academic.

It is in regard to discussions such as that that I look forward to discussing our plans for future deliberations in this House with my hon. friend and the House leader of the Liberal Party.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, perhaps my hon. friend has misunderstood the point I was making.

Technically, I agree with him based on terms of past precedents, but retailers have been collecting this tax and consumers have been paying the tax in good faith based on the announcement of the Minister of Finance during the budget presentation. Yet the government does not seem to be delivering in good faith, in terms of their initiative, legislation that would clearly authorize the collection of this tax.

I am simply saying to my friend that I look forward to facilitating this discussion so that we can react in the same good faith that consumers and retailers are showing.

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, the point I was making is that it is not merely good faith. I do not think there is an option available to consumers in that regard.

I appreciate the offer of the hon. member to facilitate the passage of the budget bills. There will be that budget bill, plus one or two others coming from the budget and I look forward to our discussions to find a way in which we can facilitate the passage of those bills as early as possible.

My seatmate, the Minister of Finance, informed me yesterday that the draughtsmen are beavering away and in short order should have those bills available for first reading.

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the government House leader. He is talking about some delays as a result of the government draughtspersons not being ready to introduce legislation. However, prior to the House sitting in mid-February, the Minister of Finance had draft legislation on the northern tax benefits. He circulated not only the legislation, but he also circulated the regulations. However, that legislation which he circulated across this country has never been introduced into the House of Commons.

• (1510)

Since the Minister of Finance felt capable of circulating this legislation far and wide, could the government House leader indicate why Canadians who are now able, as a result of the government's announcement last December, to claim for at least a partial northern tax benefit; why they have to sit and wait for their rebates and any money that is owing to them by the federal government, and why they have to wait and wait when this legislation was presumably written, since the government can circulate it.

This is the third week in a row that I have asked this question. Why has the government not introduced that legislation into the House?

Mr. Andre: The hon. member is right; this is the third week in a row. And for the third week in a row let me say that just as soon as his party is ready to discuss and co-operate in getting legislation passed, we are ready to proceed.

It is absurd for the hon. member to imply that this program, which was brought forward by this government, which we recognize as beneficial to northerners—we did it deliberately—that somehow we would be wanting to drag our feet on it. That is absurd. Of course we want to proceed with it.

We have some other matters. We are running into time difficulties. I am looking forward to profitable discussions, which I hope we can have soon, to find a way to expedite the treatment of that bill and others.

Mr. Murphy: Again, to remind the government House leader, there has not been a request from the government to the opposition parties to move on the northern tax benefit legislation. It is awfully hard for us to respond if we are not asked to.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S.O. 81—RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Berger (p. 18439).

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The hon. member for Ottawa West will have 10 minutes plus 5 minutes questions and comments.

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): It is my pleasure to rise today and speak on this motion, bringing to the attention of Canadians promises of the Prime Minister with respect to research and technology in Canada, and the abysmal failure on the delivery of those promises.

I would like to begin by talking about the fundamental importance I see of investment in science research and technology, particularly at this stage in our history.

Canada went through a period where exploration was extremely important to our development as a nation. At that time the new frontiers were the frontiers of geography, climate and distance. We mastered those and we conquered those and we created a country. Now we are heading into the 21st century and the frontiers are no longer physical frontiers but the frontiers of the human mind and spirit.

That is what science is all about; it is launching off on those marvellous explorations, not knowing necessarily exactly where and when we will get to where we are going, but knowing that inevitably tremendous and new discoveries will be made.

It is in those discoveries by the human mind of the way the world functions that the prosperity of any nation rests in the coming century.

The failure of the government to recognize this has done irreparable damage to the Canadian economy, which is only now beginning to be felt and which will become even deeper and more prolonged as time goes on.

I want to go to the promises made by the Prime Minister in 1984 when he was still leader of the opposition. He promised Canadians a spending commitment on research and development during the first mandate of his government. He promised lower interest rates. He promised the development of job training and the development of trade.

I will come specifically to the abysmal failure to keep the commitment on research and development in a moment. I do want to talk about lower interest rates. We know that one of the reasons we have the huge debt and deficit we have now is because of the high interest rate policy of this government. We know that rather than the development of job training we have had major slashes to funding for job training and development. We have had massive cuts to post-secondary education.

He promised the development of trade. In the days since that promise, Canada's trade surplus has dropped dramatically. Our trade in high technology is in a deficit position. We have a competitiveness with our major trading partners that is less than it was 10 years ago. We now rank last, or second last, in eight of the ten economic indicators in science and technology used by the OECD. R and D spending has declined.

Our competitiveness has been reduced, not increased. The only thing we are trading and exporting more than we were before is jobs.

The government has failed to deal with poverty, which is a major impediment to education and to the improvement of the talent and the use of talent of our young people.

Going specifically to research and development, I want to go over what is a rather sorry history of this government and a total abandonment of the Prime Minister's promise. It has been a reversal of the progress towards improved research and development in this country. It goes well beyond simply the fact that funding to research and development has been decimated. It goes well beyond blaming the private sector for not doing the job that is the job of the public sector, namely, protecting the national interests and protecting the national wealth of knowledge and the foundation of progress in technology.

As the minister himself has said, "Our competitors increase their research and development, when times get bad. They know the answer is to look for new ways." Why is the minister out there admonishing the private sector to increase R and D when times are bad, while he stands in this House and says we have to cut research and development; that we have to cut science when times are bad? The same lesson applies for the government that applies for our competitors, the same lesson the minister wants to deliver to the private sector.

The National Research Council, a hallmark, the envy of the international community in progress in science and innovation, has been subject to savage attacks repeatedly over seven years. We have had a downsizing program in the public service that has left scientists spending half their time doing their own clerical work. Who, with a grain of economic common sense, would save money on a $25,000 a year clerical position, to have a scientist earning $65,000 a year do clerical work half the time?

We have companies specializing in research being sold off or bought off by foreign interests, further reducing the ability of the private sector to build the intellectual wealth of this country. We have the loss of Connaught Labs. We have the loss of Lumonics. We have young people refusing to go into science. Only 20 per cent of admissions to university are in science. They see no future, because this government has said there is no future. Twenty per cent of the National Research Council now has either been shoved out the door or bought off.

The minister had the temerity today to talk about women in science. Increasing the number of women in science is a useful and important strategy because we know that we have fewer young people coming into the labour market at all levels and that we are going to face a severe shortage at all levels of the labour market. One way of overcoming the shortages is to ensure that women, as well as men, develop their talents to the fullest.

What does this government do to women scientists? Less than 25 per cent of its professional scientists are women, and most of them are in short-term positions. They are renewed and renewed, but they are never hired as full-time permanent employees. Very few women scientists ever retire from the Government of Canada because they get fed up and they leave.

• (1520)

All the words the minister may have about attracting women into science are not going to work until women see career opportunities in government science, and career opportunities in the private sector in science. Until then we will be wasting our money.

We are losing opportunities to be world leaders in environmental technology. The NSERC told us years ago that this was a major trading and growth opportunity for the Government of Canada, and yet this government—in the midst of the global warming crisis—has decimated, literally, from $500 million to $50 million what we spend on alternative energy and on conservation of fossil fuels.

Instead of pursuing all options to show the world new ways of using energy and of prospering without destroying the very air we breathe, the government has cut out the energy sector at the environmental secretariat and it has cut the energy division at the National Research Council. Now it is scrambling to restore some symbolic but insignificant remnant of both of those important divisions that existed and were thriving just seven short years ago.

I could list a litany of cuts to environmentally important programs. While the world is desperate for good environmental technology to preserve the very ability of this planet to survive and thrive, not only are we failing to perform a useful function in the world through the development of our environmental technology but we

are missing a major economic opportunity to make Canada a world leader in many environmental areas.

The government talks about the deficit and the debt, and I like to talk about the human deficit.

We would not have a debt and a deficit if we did not have 10.5 per cent of our people unemployed. If we had people earning and contributing to the economy instead of requiring support from the economy, if we had people with purchasing power in their pockets creating jobs for other Canadians by the purchase of goods and services, we would have a healthy economy. If we were investing in the education of our young people, if we were investing in the kind of science and technology that gives us new opportunities in the world and gives us an opportunity to reverse our deficit in the export of high technology, then we might start to work our way out of this difficult economic situation.

But that is not the way of this government. The way of this government is to destroy, to cut, to squander opportunities. That is what has been happening in science and technology, in research and development in this country now for seven years.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I regret the hon. member's time has expired.

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, I was so interested to hear what my hon. colleague was saying—she makes such good common sense, something that seems to be lacking from the members opposite—that I would like to ask her if she would continue with her observation, specifically as it relates to the cuts which have a terrible impact, and perhaps the implications of the loss of application of the Lortie report. We have had so much rhetoric in this room since this morning from the government side.

Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, you would allow her to continue and explain why the government has, in particular, ignored its own advisory board science and technology recommendations, which was to double the funding to the granting council so that it could really do a task, and we could stop listening to all the rhetoric which adds up to nearly nothing in the long term.

I wonder if you would allow my colleague to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Yes. The hon. member for Ottawa West has three minutes.

Mrs. Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to continue. I am sure the member is aware, but I am sure many government members are not aware that the government has indeed ignored the advice of NSERC, the National Science Engineering Research Council. It has ignored the advice of its own advisory board which was set up by the Prime Minister with great fanfare. It has, in fact, cut funding to the granting councils, and that means that university research and private sector research are suffering.

Having cut the floor out from under research in the private and academic sectors, it has proceeded pell-mell to cut out research in government as well leaving Canada with virtually no foundation.

I will mention one particular area that is of great concern; that is, the government even cut Canada's ability to have people participating on international standards councils. It is now telling people who volunteer their services to sit on international boards looking at international scientific and technical standards to pay their own way to get to these international meetings. That has cut Canada's participation dramatically.

While the minister sits there and talks about international trade, we are not even at the bargaining table when standards are being set for the products, goods and technology that we want to export. Does that make any sense?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member who just sat down a question.

What is her solution to these problems? We have heard a long list of complaints. We know that provincial Liberal governments are doing exactly the same thing that we are doing because they do not have money any more than we have. We know that we have a deficit of $30.6 billion despite the restrictions we put in to try to stop the increase in spending. There is still a deficit of $30.6 billion.

For example, this year beginning April 1, we are going to have to pay $43.2 billion in interest. That is the first item that will come out of the budget, 35.5 cents for every dollar of revenue. What is the point of the hon.

member opposite just giving us a repetitious list of areas in which spending is being restricted? We cannot spend as we would like to spend, and we all know this is the case.

I would like to know what the solutions of the hon. member and the party that she represents are. Since 1984, I have never once heard in the House any member of the Liberal Party give us the solution to this dilemma. It would be in the same dilemma would it be here. It would be in even a worse dilemma with all the spending commitments it has made since.

What does it see as a solution to the fact that midway through this year, we are going to have a national debt of over $400 billion? We spent $43.2 billion in interest. We transferred $36.7 billion to the provinces. What are the member's answers to that?

I do not want to hear about the fact that there is not enough money for standards councils or to send people away. We know that. Our own departments are being gutted and restricted, et cetera to try to keep the deficit down, not to zero but to $30.6 billion. Why give us a litany of complaints? Let's hear where the solutions are.

Mrs. Catterall: Mr. Speaker, we have had seven years of empty promises, slashes in spending, cuts in science of valuable personnel, cuts in programs, damage to the unemployed, and a transferring of costs to the provinces so that they are strangling because this government will not meet its commitments to international programs.

We have not seen one iota of reduction to the national debt. We see only increases to the deficit. Is it not about time to stop delivering empty promises and to start delivering debt reduction?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions and comments are now terminated. Debate.

Mr. Bruce Halliday (Oxford): Mr. Speaker, I am certainly pleased to participate in the debate this afternoon.

I will not be as fiery as my colleague, the minister from Newfoundland, but I will do my bit to perhaps antagonize some of my colleagues opposite as they are trying to do to us.

When a member comes into the House, he usually brings with him several interests or hobby horses that he may have. When I came into the House back in 1974, 16 years or more ago, I was like that as well. One of those interests was science and technology, and research and development. Mr. Speaker, you will not be offended if I suggest that you, Sir, along with two others in the House this afternoon are old-timers here. You, Sir, the Minister of National Health and Welfare and the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce will remember, but other members will not recall the policy of the then Liberal government regarding science and technology. When I listened to the member for Ottawa West try to criticize us, it was unfortunate that she had not taken a little time to read about the history of science and technology as it relates to the House of Commons and the various governments over the last couple of decades.

• (1530)

The truth of the matter is that roughly 15 or 16 years ago I sat in the House here and listened to the then minister of science and technology. I believe he was at that time the member for Westmount. He indicated to the House when we were challenging him from the opposition, that really we did not have to spend much money on science and technology. That was a waste of money. We should be just buying our research and development and our science and technology from neighbouring countries like the U.S.A. or U.K. or Germany, where they were doing that. They would do it for us and we could acquire it from them. That was the official position of the Liberal Party at that time.

The other interesting thing, to take you a little bit back in history, that you will recall yourself, Mr. Speaker, is that at that time if you were interested in science and technology and you wanted to question the minister, the estimates did not come before any standing committee on that at all. Where they went at that time was to a committee known as the committee on miscellaneous estimates. That was a waste paper basket of all sorts of little things.

That was the priority that the government at that time gave to science and technology. Estimates at that time were referred to the miscellaneous estimates committee. There were three or four of us in the opposition who thought that was not good enough for science and technology, that we should be doing better. We tried to prevail upon the government of that day to create a

standing committee, but no such luck. Nothing happened.

It was not, Sir, and I will remind you, until 1984 when our present government came into power that a standing committee on science and technology was established. The Conservative Party recognized the importance of science and technology. We now have that committee. I believe you will recall, Mr. Speaker, that the original chairman, if my memory is correct, was Dr. Bill Tupper, who sat here from one of the ridings in the Ottawa region, a very renowned scientist in Canada and a lecturer at the university. He sat as the first chairman of that committee and I had the privilege of sitting on that committee.

I think it is imperative that we bring to mind the past history before we start criticizing too much the present government. As the Minister for International Trade has pointed out, there are very trying circumstances at the present time and in spite of those circumstances, we are managing to increase our contribution to science and technology, albeit we would like to do it a little bit faster.

There are a number of areas that one could talk about in a debate such as this, but I would like to put a little emphasis on the area of the Canada Scholarship Program. The motion we have before us today in the House does not even mention perhaps the most crucial aspect of research and development and science and technology, and that is people. I think we have to remind ourselves that when we speak of research and development, and we speak of science and technology, we cannot afford to lose sight of that vital ingredient in the equation. That ingredient is indeed people. We are talking here of the highly qualified men and women who need to drive this remarkable technological revolution forward from the present time.

There have been recent studies done, including those done by our own Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council which have shown that Canada faces a crisis situation with a shortage of highly qualified scientists and engineers. Here we are talking about people. The proportion of students who now enter science and engineering has remained relatively constant at about 20 per cent over this past decade. I think that was alluded to by the member for Ottawa West. It has not grown actually in response to the needs that are out there at the present time.

Though we may be only second to the United States in the number of post-secondary school graduates as a percentage of the work force, we do have a low rate of scientists and engineers. That is the problem that we as a government have identified over the last six years and are now trying to correct.

Moreover, the Economic Council of Canada has predicted that the technological content of all jobs, not just the scientists and engineering jobs but all jobs, are going to increase. The requirement is going to increase down the road and we will, therefore, need an even higher proportion of scientists and engineers in the work force than we have had over the past decade.

There is no doubt that we are committed to valuing scientific and engineering achievements and to providing appropriate recognition and rewards for contributions in these fields in order to attract students into it. It is this kind of remuneration and reward system for the science and engineering professions which has never been on par with some of the other professions such as the legal and medical professions. As a society, we have to take some blame for that.

It seems to us that the key, if we are going to reach our young people, these young women and men in our elementary schools and high schools, we have to make it attractive for them. We need to make them aware of how science and technology affect their lives. We need to get them excited about science and technology and we need to encourage them to pursue the wide range of career opportunities that exist in these fields.

I am proud to say that our government is playing a leadership role in this regard and we have done so under a number of initiatives, an important one of which is the Canada Scholarship Program, which is an excellent example of one of those initiatives.

When the Prime Minister launched the Canada Scholarship Program some three years ago, he spoke then about the bright minds and about the commitment of our government to ensuring that the talents of these young Canadians would be appropriately recognized and rewarded.

This program is now entering its third year. It represents an $80 million investment, which is a significant amount of money, over five years by the Government of Canada in its continuing commitment to excellence in scientific and engineering education.

Based on outstanding academic performance, first-year students at the post-secondary level enrolled in science and engineering related disciplines are eligible to receive $2,000 a year for up to four years for a total of $8,000. We have now, over the course of the last three years, been able to help some 6,200 scholars, who are benefiting from what is offered under this Canada Scholarship Program.

One of the interesting things is that we are also getting industry involved. That has been alluded to by my friend from Ottawa West. For example, the Ballard Power Systems of Victoria and the Corel Systems here in Ottawa, among others, are funding the Canada Scholars Frontrunners Project which will be of some significance. The DuPont Company-Governor General's Canada Scholarship in Environmental Engineering also has to be recognized. Canadian Marconi is supporting the creation of Canada Scholars Mentor Clubs. The Nova Corporation of Alberta is funding special scholarship awards for Canada scholars.

Other corporations such as GE Canada, SCIEX Inc., MDS Health Group, DuPont Canada, Merck Frosst Canada, Rio Algom Ltd., Pan Canadian Petroleum and Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting are all involved from the private sector in trying to help out in this area.

But without a doubt, the success of these programs depends on the scholars themselves and their motivation and the ability that we have to encourage them to get into this field of endeavour, which is so crucial for our future competitive position in world affairs.

It is this Canada Scholarship Program which now stands as a glowing example of our government's ongoing effort to foster excellence in science and engineering education here in Canada. Combined with initiatives such as the science and technology public awareness campaign and the National Networks of Centres of Excellence, it represents an unprecedented federal commitment.

I conclude by suggesting that it is a commitment that I am indeed proud to talk about this afternoon and it is a commitment that will ensure a competitive Canada and a prosperous and rewarding future for our young people.

Mr. Joe Comuzzi (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): I compliment my colleague and friend on that very fine talk on research and development, but there are some questions that we have on this side of the House that cause us a great deal of concern and seemed not to be properly addressed in this budget with the expenditures of money.

• (1540)

Let me just relate some facts. I am so glad that the Minister for International Trade has decided to stay with us because I think these facts reflect something about what he had to say to our previous speaker.

It is a little known fact in Canada today that the largest single industry is forestry. It is larger than either the automobile or the petroleum industries in Canada. Forestry in Canada employs over 8 per cent of our Canadian labour force and it supports over 900,000 forestry manufacturing and service jobs.

One out of every seven manufacturing dollars in Canada is related directly to this industry, and it contributes more than $17 billion to Canada's net trade balance. Forestry accounts for close to $2.5 billion in trade within our country alone.

Government policy does not reflect the importance of this industry to over 300 communities in Canada that are dependent solely on the forestry industry for their sole survival. It does not reflect this industry's contribution to the national economy and its treatment toward more than 30 single industry towns in northern Ontario alone, the area I represent.

With that background, let us consider the remarks the Minister for International Trade made just a few moments ago and discuss what the forestry industry is doing for our country and the lack of public expenditures to this most vital of all industries. Looking at the forecasts for 1990 and 1991 in the budgetary expenditures, $53 million was spent last year in that area. In the estimates for 1991 and 1992 that has been reduced by almost $20 million. It is now down to $33,900,000, a drop of $20 million which certainly does not reflect the tremendous importance of this vital industry in Canada.

Perhaps I may just address the comments made by the Minister for International Trade. One of the things that can be done—and it is so vital and does not cost our

country one penny—is the elimination of the 15 per cent export tax that was placed in 1986 on the softwood lumber exports to the United States.

We have been asking the government to remove that tax because of its unfairness to the people in small communities in this country. It is not going to cost Canadians anything. It is just a simple determination that the 15 per cent tax on the softwood lumber industry in Canada, particularly in British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario, has imposed personal anguish and suffering on people who are involved in these single industry towns. It can be eliminated by eliminating that unfair tax and letting these people in these industries in these towns compete with the Americans on a level playing field.

Mr. Halliday: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to this, although it is a little bit off the topic of science and technology and research and development. I have a bit of a personal interest in the subject area of forestry, having worked one summer in the area of Thunder Bay—Nipigon. Having cut pulp up there, I have quite a bit of sympathy for the work that goes on in that area.

I am also concerned about science and technology in the forestry area. There is no doubt that we need to spend money there. I had occasion to meet with a Russian scientist a little over a year ago in Moscow and subsequently here in Canada, who is working very diligently on a scheme that will eliminate waste products that currently come from our forest product manufacturing plants here in Canada, whereby pulp would be produced without any waste product of significance at all. I agree that there is room for further study.

As to the tax on softwood lumber, I suppose the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Nipigon should probably speak with his colleagues from New Brunswick. He might get a little different slant on that tax from them. I appreciate the needs of our lumbering industry and the forest industry.

I am pleased to say also, from the point of view of the private sector and as one who is interested in disabled and handicapped people, that members of the union in the forestry sector and the management of those same plants are now working together to try to help injured workers and reintegrate them into the work place.

Those workers and those management people in the forestry sector deserve credit for the work they are doing, which I think is of great importance to Canada.

I share the member's concern about this tax problem. It is a difficult one. But the Prime Minister, as we heard this afternoon, is addressing that problem with the President of the U.S.A. himself. I hope we will see a resolution that will satisfy all sides.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions and comments are now terminated.

Before recognizing the hon. member for Portage—Interlake, it is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Kent—Bankruptcy; the hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona—Housing; the hon. member for Ottawa West—The Environment.

Mr. Felix Holtmann (Portage—Interlake): Mr. Speaker, like many of my colleagues who are participating in this debate this afternoon, I welcome the opportunity to review the opposition motion and its suggestion that the Prime Minister failed in honouring a commitment to double Canada's spending commitment to research and development.

An hon. member: Could you repeat that?

Mr. Holtmann: If the members opposite have a hard time hearing, maybe they should plug in their hearing aids. I think I have made myself fairly clear.

Let us examine the statement. Perhaps the exact doubling of these expenditures, which they have a complaint about, is the problem. We have heard this afternoon from my colleagues who just spoke, the member for Oxford and the Minister for International Trade, and in fact the Prime Minister. I can assure all members in this House that from the perspective of one area of Canada, the one I come from, our Prime Minister is light-years ahead of anything that has ever previously been accomplished by any leader of this country, probably Conservatives included, in focusing on science and technology.

Let us recognize that fact. Our Prime Minister made this one of his projects. He made some commitments for funding. Although the argument has been made that they have not been totally achieved according to what he said in 1984 or previously, I think the example that he has

given and the leadership role he has played have focused attention on this particular area of concern to Canadians.

I do not think anyone in the seats opposite can argue otherwise. They may sit and laugh, but what other Prime Minister can they mention who has taken such a tremendous initiative and a leadership role? I do not think they should sit in their places and laugh at it. Certainly Mr. Trudeau didn't, certainly the right hon. member for Vancouver Quadra didn't, certainly Mr. Pearson didn't, and quite possibly they might say that for nine months neither did the right hon. member for Yellowhead.

I do not think using this particular style of discussing the issues of science and technology will really indicate that we have not gone far enough. I suppose members on this side will suggest that maybe we should have gone further. But this party, under its leadership, has not gone out in any reckless way to throw money at projects, because we have always used that as a consideration point.

I would like to say, if I may, that if we look at some of the things that have happened as a result of the leadership of our Prime Minister, we see that a lot of things have happened to our young people as well. My children in school have science fairs, and I really believe that a focus on science and technology is occurring in the schools. They have taken it upon themselves from the educators and a direction, not just from the Prime Minister but from a lot of the scientific leaders in our country, to focus attention on the importance of the changes in technology and bring it to the attention of the young people.

As I said, my children in school do a lot of things differently than when I went to school some 20 years ago. Science fairs are really an "in" thing, and I think my colleagues opposite will probably have noticed that change as well.

• (1550)

That is drawing attention, maybe not with big dollars, to create an awareness in young people so that when they reach maturity and have completed their scholastic activities, they will see the importance of science, change, and technology and why we should continue this research, this important part of the development of our country.

As a farmer, although not active in recent years but in former years, I know that the importance of technological change in agriculture is fantastic and phenomenal. Canadian companies and researchers in universities are very often in the forefront of the technological change we are talking about.

Let us look at the production of wheat. We may argue and the opposition may argue that the farmers are not getting enough money for that wheat. Through the technology and science that has been applied to this very important part of agriculture, not just within Canada but around the world, scientists in Canada are producing wheat that doubles production compared to what we had in the late 1930s and 1940s. Consequently we are helping to feed the world.

That research has not stopped. It continues even in the oilseed crops. Canada is a leader in the production of a canola meal that has fewer impurities than in the beginning. This crop, through Canadian science and technology, has been developed into what is almost a perfect crop.

An hon. member: What about hog research?

Mr. Holtmann: My colleague suggested that I talk a bit about hog research. He is absolutely right. The technology in the production of better quality pork has made Canada's pork among the very best in the world. This is a result of research done at universities. A lot of people do not realize that we are now producing a hog that grows faster with greater feed conversion and less fat. This kind of research continues because the average consumer and everyone in this room do not like to eat as much fat. Because of such things as cholesterol it is not the healthy food we once thought it was.

It is also important to the farmer to produce a hog at less cost; in other words, feed efficiency, the ability to convert roughage and feed into meat, into protein. There have been tremendous steps forward in agricultural research. This is continuing, and I think we owe a great debt to the many scientists who are working on such projects.

Cuts to projects in terms of funding concern those on all sides of the House, but we have to balance that with what is available and what are the priorities. These are difficult decisions. No one will deny that it is not an easy decision to cut a project on which scientists in this country are doing research. It would not matter if members opposite were sitting on this side of the House.

From time to time those decisions have to be made and I have experienced that.

It is important to look at the technological change and transfer that is going on. I think the fact that the Prime Minister has focused so much of his personal time on this particular endeavour is, consider him as you may, the most positive thing that a Prime Minister has done in this country for years.

Science is important to us and we should look at other countries. The best thing to do is compare. My colleagues opposite see what has happened since the war in the great countries of Japan and Germany, as well as in some other countries such as that great giant to the south of us, the United States. I was an international exporter as well as a farmer before coming here and know that these countries consider Canada to be doing tremendous advance work in many fields important to Canadians and to Canadian business people.

We should consider those few facts alone and consider where we ought to be going. Sometimes we look at a country like Germany and say: "How is it able to come out with this fantastic Mercedes Benz?" Lately we have seen the latest research and technology going into the Lexus car from Japan and the energies private companies have used, not the government so much but private companies.

I believe that in our efforts to continue that scientific research and technology sometimes we ought to give more assistance to the companies as maybe a tax write-off, which I am sure they get anyway, if their research is going to lead to better productivity, more efficient products and ones that Canadians can help work to build and manufacture, where we shine.

We do shine in agriculture, but I think we also shine now as a country in bringing this awareness to our youth. The young people are doing so much more. I think that whole attitude will bring them into the sciences at university. It is a future they can depend on because we need a lot more scientists. I am happy to say that one of my sons is looking into computer science. I am very proud of him because he sees a future in it. There is lots of opportunity if we keep letting our young people know that they exist and that we support them.

Mr. Fred J. Mifflin (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Portage—Interlake for his interesting presentation. I took into perspective what he said about the reputation he alluded to that Canada has in agricultural research. I would accept that because I do recognize his expertise in the field of agriculture. I had some personal experience on the trip that we had together. Certainly as somebody who has knowledge of the fishing industry, I was impressed with his knowledge.

Probably where we stand on this issue could depend on where we sit with respect to how selective we want to be. I will accept that Canada has leadership in technology, research and development in the agriculture field, and I would like to relate that to the fishing industry. I would like to bring to the member's attention that Canada is the world's largest leading fish exporter. I was at a conference about three years ago where it was suggested that Canada's fisheries, from the scientific viewpoint and scientific research, are now where Europe's were 15 years ago.

I really have to reflect on what the fishing industry could be doing without this technological lag, what the predictions would be with respect to the northern cod and other areas of scientific information, knowledge and indeed research that I would have to recognize have been addressed to a certain extent in the Atlantic Fish Adjustment Program.

The fact remains that certainly we are the largest exporter in the world and I think a leading authority because of our geography, our three coasts and our continental shelf. Areas of excellence and centres of excellence could well be developed.

I am going to speak in a few moments on this subject. I do not want to take up any more of the hon. member's time. I would like him to reflect that there are certain areas we really could be improving in and they are key areas as far as I am concerned.

Mr. Holtmann: Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge my hon. colleague from Bonavista—Trinity—Conception and I have had a small association in looking at different parts of the country once on a short visit. I cherished the exchange of views that he and I had.

I can only agree with his statement that there are many areas of importance with respect to the advancements of technology. I will just give him a brief example of what he has said with regard to fish. Believe me, I represent an area, for some who do not know, that has 1,200 commercial fishermen producing something like $40 million worth of fish products in the heart of this

country, on the prairies of Canada, through the Freshwater Fish Corporation.

• (1600)

While I was campaigning in Gimli in 1984, I was met by a street vendor who was selling some crab sticks. These were made in Japan. They were not made of crabmeat, but they tasted so much like crabmeat that the chap was doing very well.

I thought to myself, in the middle of fishing country and in the heart of the continent, here we have a Japanese technology that has produced a very palatable product and something that I would buy. We have a long way to go to match the technology that exists throughout the world in some countries in developing products. We should be making the crab sticks, possibly with fish caught in Lake Winnipeg and selling them to Japan.

I concur with what he points out. There are many areas where a lot of work needs to be done to bring this kind of technology forward and find new technology.

I agree that there are many areas with which he and I probably have no association or understanding. They are very highly technical. I am associated with reviewing telecommunications with the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture. The technology is changing so quickly that there are not too many in this room who can understand how it operates. But there are people who can assist us in recognizing the importance of technology being allowed to continue within the means of Canada's ability to pay.

I think that is really my point. I rest my case.

Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Nunatsiaq):

[*Editor's Note: Member spoke in Inuktitut.*]

Mr. Speaker, I will focus today on environmental research, on oil spill research and its importance to Canada, particularly to the northern part of this country.

In June 1989, the Prime Minister commissioned a special review of Canada's capacity to respond to marine spills of oil and other hazardous material. That review, known as the Public Review Panel on Tanker Safety and Marine Spills Response Capability made its final report to the government last October.

I had the pleasure of making a submission to that panel in September 1989. The panel's report called *Protecting our Waters* is a devastating critique of Canada's current ability to prevent or respond effectively to oil spills. I will quote from the report:

> The capacity to respond effectively to a spill of any significant magnitude does not presently exist anywhere in Canada.

The panel had much to say about oil spill research and development, or rather the lack of it. Again, I quote from the panel's report:

> A major research and development effort is urgently needed to develop more effective spill clean-up equipment and technology because what is now available is essentially primitive and largely ineffectual.

This panel made over 100 recommendations and costed them at approximately $1.5 billion over a 10-year period. It suggested that $800 million to $1 billion could be raised through a $2 per tonne levy on all oil products transported in Canadian waters.

It recommended that part of these funds could go towards enhancing Canada's spill response capability. This would be done by upgrading government co-ordinated and government funded research and development into spill response technologies and by supporting the establishment of a major industry operated spill response co-operative in all high risk areas in Canada.

The panel's interim report in September 1989 noted that both government and industry have significantly reduced their funding of oil spill response R and D over the past decade. According to the panel, there is a glaring need for more extensive research into the long-term effects of oil and chemical pollution.

The interim report listed some of the technologies requiring additional research and development, techniques for containing spills at their source, remote sensing and spill tracking technologies, beach clean-up techniques that minimize disturbance, better techniques for cleaning up spills in the Arctic and disposal techniques.

The final report last October stressed again the need for a major collaborative research and development initiative by industry, government and universities. This panel acknowledged that the level of required expendi-

tures is high, but it also said that this cost would be minuscule compared to the cost of cleaning up a catastrophic spill such as the one from the *Exxon Valdez*.

Hon. members will be aware of Exxon's out of court settlement announced yesterday. Exxon will pay $1 billion in civil damages, criminal restitution and fines, in addition to the $2.5 billion already spent during the clean-up. And that is not necessarily the end of it for Exxon. Aboriginal people in Alaska may still sue.

The panel had some specific funding recommendations for Canadian spill-related research and development.

> The annual level of Canadian funding, for spill-related R & D at all levels, should immediately be raised to at least $10 million—the objective must be to reach $20 million per year within five years.

In sharp contradiction to the need for continued and increased expenditures in spill research, funding has declined over the past several years. Since 1986, under the current government, funding for oil spill R and D has shrunk dramatically.

It was another federal government which began research into the spills in the early 1970s responding to the *Arrow* tanker spill off Nova Scotia. Environment Canada co-ordinated a multimillion dollar government-industry research program, but Environment Canada's funding for oil spill research and development has declined substantially since the 1970s. In 1978-79, $2.3 million went towards spill countermeasures R and D, almost all of it for oil spill research. Last year that funding was $1.1 million, and that money was divided equally between oil and chemical spill countermeasures.

A research paper I commissioned from the Library of Parliament last year estimated total funding of other federal government agencies at approximately $500,000, and half of this came from the now defunct Unsolicited Proposals Program.

The Tanker Safety Panel pointed out the cutbacks to Environment Canada's R and D team at the River Road Environmental Emergencies Technology Centre. This team manages the Arctic and Marine Oil Spill Program and has produced a variety of oil spill response techniques and equipment. Their research budget has been cut from $2.3 million to $300,000 in 1979 dollars. Over that same period, expenditures by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans on oil spill fate and effects has remained at about $300,000. Canadian Coast Guard expenditures on equipment evaluation has remained at less than $100,000.

Other federal funding programs which have supported some R and D in the past have either been terminated or severely curtailed. They include the Environmental Studies Research Fund managed by the Canada Oil and Gas Lands Administration; the Arctic Marine Transportation R and D Program funded and managed by Transport Canada; the Northern Oil and Gas Program managed by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development; and the Unsolicited Proposals Program managed by the Department of Supply and Services.

Industry funded spill R and D has been declining. The Canadian Offshore Operators Spill Research Association conducted marine oil spill R and D until the latter half of the 1980s. Between 1980 and 1984, they spent $5 million on R and D. Spending in recent years has declined to virtually zero. The Canadian Offshore Operators Spill Research Association has now been disbanded.

Industry, however, has recently called for more R and D into oil spills. Both the Canadian Petroleum Association and the Canadian Petroleum Products Institute have done so. The Environmental Studies Research Fund, ESRF, administered by COGLA, was financed through a levy based on a percentage of the value of leases awarded to companies for offshore research on oil and gas exploration. A substantial cutback has occurred here. In 1983 the ESRF was established and it spent $1.3 million on oil spill R and D in that year.

• (1610)

In 1984, the EFRF spent $1.3 million on oil and oil spill R and D. That spending declined to $73,575 in 1990, and for a period of three years, 1986, 1987 and 1988, funding was absolutely zero.

What about the universities? The Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council has supported spill research at Canadian universities. Its level of funding, however, in the words of the tanker safety panel is woefully inadequate. The panel states that this country, "must place greater emphasis on developing effective

clean-up technologies and learning more about the environmental consequences of spills."

With respect to the green plan, the government's response to date is extremely disappointing. The Minister of Transport's preliminary response in November said nothing about increasing spill R and D. The green plan was a far cry from the sweeping recommendations on funding requirements outlined by the tanker safety panel. What is there has been stretched over six years instead of five years, by the finance minister's new budget.

Any delay in providing necessary research funding increases the risk to our environment. I, of course, have particular concern for the Arctic and its unique ecosystem. The Arctic is extremely vulnerable to oil spills. Lancaster Sound and the Beaufort Sea are perhaps the most vulnerable.

I would also like to mention the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska where there is pressure for oil and gas development. Canada must do everything in its power to prevent such development in this sensitive area, which is the calving ground of the Porcupine caribou herd.

Mr. Speaker, the ability to handle large spills offshore while tankers are in transit is non-existent throughout the Arctic. Research and development expenditure in oil spill countermeasures has been reduced dramatically since the Beaufort Sea panel released its report six years ago. Despite that panel's recommendation that funding be increased, we must see an increased commitment to oil spill R and D as a necessary investment in our future.

In conclusion, we cannot afford not to spend those dollars for the sake of our environment and for the generations to come.

Mr. Fred J. Mifflin (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak on this very important subject. In light of the remarks of the two previous speakers, I thought what I would do, inasmuch as my background allows me to, would be to talk in a general sense of what is involved and get some measure of the scope of what we are dealing with here. Perhaps then if time permits, I would give two or three examples to show the House some of the concerns I have in respect of specifics that may be addressed by either looking at the present budget or, if that is not possible, maybe in future years or in future allocations.

I do not want to attribute blame or to make comparisons here. Perhaps some other time we may want to do that. I am looking at the scope of what is involved here. The sheer scale of explorable nature today is beyond yesterday's wildest imagination. I want to give you some facts and figures; there is no other way to do it. I want to make a comparison of the small and the large and the short and the long to give you some indication of what sort of scale we are dealing with.

Scientists tell me that today we are probing phenomena that are as tiny as ten-15 of a centimetre. That, to me, is pretty small. It is one million billionth of a centimetre, in a universe where the edge is 1023 miles away. That is 100,000 billion billion. I cannot conceive of that but I am impressed by the numbers.

Equally, we are studying phenomena that has lived for such a short time that it occurs in 10-25 of a second. By contrast, our astronomers and cosmotologists tell us that the universe is some 20 billion years old. What a range.

I recall listening to a speech given a few years back by then President Reagan not long before his term was over. He spoke to the Empire Club in Toronto. He noted, when speaking on this same subject, that the industrial revolution increased productivity by a factor of 100, while the microchip has raised the database technology by a factor of one million. A single microchip today has the capacity of a million transistors. The transistor not too long ago was considered to be a breakthrough. It is estimated that in about 10 years' time it will have the capacity of a billion transistors.

Again, I am looking at the scope of what is involved here. No matter how this is looked at, there is no doubt that technological leadership has become a strategic factor in determining the economic performance of a country, region or, indeed, a province.

In this regard, I regret to tell you that from the statistics I have, Canada lags behind its industrial competitors, and as someone from the Atlantic region, we regretfully lag behind the other provinces on production and retention of human resources. On a per capita basis, we employ one-half the number of engineers and scientists that our competitors employ. That is not a very impressive thought. I look at it in my case. Of the scientific knowledge that exists in the world today, 90 per cent of it has been created since I left high school and it

will double again before I become eligible for the old age pension.

Mr. Speaker, that means something to me, I am not sure if it means very much to you.

To give some practical examples of this, I spoke a few moments ago about how we lag behind. We are 15 years behind Europe in fishing technology.

I now want express some concerns. One concern I have is that the government seems to have eroded our premier research organization, the National Research Council. Just this morning I was listening to a commentary on the radio where great concern was being expressed that our expertise in basic research is being lost.

There is no question that anybody who knows anything about research—and I do not know a lot, but I know some—that while the bounds between basic research and applied research is always a very fine line there is an argument for one or the other. But like everything else, there are the fine bounds. There is no question that basic research has provided the inspiration and the direction for important improvements in the world.

I want to mention to the House three examples. The first is the development of radar, which was accredited for the Battle of Britain being won by the Allies in World War II. It was developed from basic research and the fact that someone noticed that large objects produced echoes from radio transmissions.

The second example is the Salk vaccine. The cure for poliomyelitis was developed from basic research on the tissue culture of a monkey's kidney cell and basic research in that area.

The example that will indicate the tireless efforts and the persistence of our researchers in the basic research area is the development of the chromosome theory. The chromosome theory took 67 years and, indeed, was developed by an obscure monk in Austria who was interested in garden peas and bred them in his monastery garden. This is an indication of what basic research can do. Obviously, that is a concern we should all have.

The next point I want to make is the concern I have with the cutting of transfer payments for post-secondary education and reduced over-all funding for vocational training. My hon. friend from Oxford quoted the Economic Council of Canada and I going to quote as well from a report of last year. They mentioned a number of important statistics, but their over-all concern is that we are not training our people properly to compete in the highly industrialized and competitive world around us. There are two things I want to quote from this report: "A relatively high secondary school drop-out rate of nearly 30 per cent means that more young people fall outside the formal education and training system than is the case for many of our competitors".

The examples are that only 72 per cent of Canadian 17-year olds participate in a formal education or training program compared with 87 per cent of Americans and 94 per cent of Japanese. That is a tremendous lag. I think, nationally, all parties would like to address that.

The second point that is made is: "By some international standards, the quality of high skill segment of the Canadian workforce is only mediocre, according to the 1989 competitiveness scoreboard. Canada ranks in the middle group with respect to managerial talent, research and development, personnel and skilled labour".

Everybody in this House is aware that we have the native talent to do more and to do better. We need to be seized with the necessity to do it. While we laud all the efforts that have been made so far, I think it is very difficult to say that there is not a lot more that can be done. The question once again, of course, is how much is enough. The indication and the motion speaks to the Prime Minister saying it was going to be doubled and I think we have fallen far short of that.

• (1620)

In summing up, I think a good way to end is to talk about the third concern I have. Very briefly, it is the idea of establishing Centres of Excellence. It is my understanding that the freeze for the main source of funding for research for the universities in Canada and the federal granting councils has caused cutbacks to the point that this whole idea may be jeopardized.

If I could be permitted a personal example here, I make reference to Memorial University in St. John's, Newfoundland which, since 1986 and 1987, has been pursuing a topic called Ocean Studies Task Force, look-

ing at studies that can be done and put in place by the year 2000. I think anybody with a knowledge of Memorial University and its Centre for Cold Ocean Engineering, its marine laboratory, its marine biology programs and, indeed, all the programs that are centred in developing an excellence in the 17 separate areas of management in ocean studies, I think it is fair to say, whichever government, it seemed to have got off the ground very well in the mid-1980s. But it is certainly my understanding that in this particular case, while the potential is there, the desire is there, the reason is there, certainly the geography, the expertise and the academic excellence is there, it has come to a grinding halt with respect to the kind of funding that it is going to need to put this program together.

I am in favour of the motion, but I would encourage the Prime Minister and, indeed, this government to take cognizance of these kinds of things and to take the kind of action that would put Canadians, not just in selected areas but indeed in some of the areas that I mentioned in the forefront and to take advantage of the potential that we have.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maurice Tremblay (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to point out that I will share my speaking time with my colleague the member for Richmond—Wolfe.

Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to be able to rise today on the motion put forward by the hon. member for Saint-Henri—Westmount. When I look at it, this motion reminds me—and I think it is worth mentioning—of our memorable debate on free trade, during the 1988 election campaign, with what we knew then and we know even more today, about market globalization.

One the main arguments for promoting this very important issue, and we realize it today, was that Canada, the government of Canada, our government could support it and, thus, give our businesses the tools they needed to compete on the global market.

As it turns out, the opposition parties that were so strongly against free trade are now introducing a motion to criticize the government of Canada, not for a lack of interest for this field, but simply for not giving enough.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you that the development of the scientific and technological capability of Canada is foremost in the priorities of the federal government.

In Canada, the national effort in the field of science and technology is led mostly by the federal government. Notwithstanding what the opposition parties are saying, the spending commitment to science and technology grew, increasing from 4.65 per cent of program expenditures in 1984 to 4.89 per cent this year, the highest percentage in ten years.

While, as a percentage of the gross national product, the government of Canada spent more on non-military research and development than the United States and Great Britain, he still spent less than France and Western Germany and about as much as Japan.

To encourage Canadian businesses and research facilities to exchange ideas, help raise funds and contribute to the development of products, Industry, Science and Technology Canada came up with a number of initiatives aimed at the creation of networks and partnerships. One of the most interesting is the Strategic Technologies Program, whose objective is to promote pre-competitive technology development and its diffusion in Canadian industry.

In the years to come, the success of an industry or business will depend on its ability to develop advanced technology and to apply certain essential technologies.

We want to ensure that our industries have access to those technologies.

Strategic technologies are generic. They can be applied by many industries and to many sectors of our economy. They affect the competitiveness of a broad range of industries.

Strategic technologies enable all industries to enhance their competitiveness. Even our traditional, resource-based industries such as forestry and agriculture use these technologies to remain competitive.

Strategic technologies reinforce each other. What is accomplished in one area of advanced technology may accelerate the development of other areas.

Industry, Science and Technology Canada developed its Strategic Technologies Program after an in-depth study and wide-ranging consultations with industry, uni-

versities and the provinces to determine which technologies were essential to Canada's competitiveness.

Following these consultations, three strategic technologies were selected for the program. They are: information technology, biotechnology and advanced industrial materials.

I will start with biotechnology. It involves genetic engineering, mass production of animal or vegetable cells, the production of monoclonal antibodies, and protein engineering. According to certain estimates, by 1995, medical drugs developed according to biotechnological procedures should represent over 40 per cent of the Canadian market in pharmaceutical products, worth $4 billion, Mr. Speaker. This percentage may well rise to 70 per cent by the year 2000.

Since the federal government created the national strategy for biotechnology six years ago, the number of Canadian businesses involved in biotechnology has risen from a mere handful to over 200 and is still growing.

Mr. Speaker, the total value of Canada's biotechnical research and development is currently estimated at more than $350 million, and over 1,800 private and public sector researchers are working in that field.

Thanks to the strategic technology program the Department of Industry, Science and Technology helps research companies and establishments use the existing infrastructure for research and development, particularly in biotechnology. Of course department officials plan for the future in light of previous achievements.

Mr. Speaker, the second of the three strategic technologies under this program, that is information technology, covers telecommunications, micro-electronics, intruments, guidance systems, the latest manufacturing technologies, and artificial intelligence.

Canada's industry gained wide recognition in that field by setting up teledetection and telecommunication systems never before seen anywhere in the world.

Data technology in Canada has become an industry which every year produces revenues of $30 billion and directly provides work for a quarter of a million Canadians.

Data technology also creates new businesses overnight, especially in the service sector where there are so many opportunities for technicians in telecopy, electronic publishing and geographical data systems.

The federal government has already taken certain initiatives to promote the development of information technology. For example, with respect to our innovaction strategy, we have set up a micro-electronic and systems development program with a budget of $60 million for developing micro-electronics and data processing systems.

• (1630)

The Strategic Technology Program provides other incentives to boost the growth of that vitally important sector. The government has earmarked—these are my concluding remarks, Mr. Speaker—$10 million for a university/industry consortium called PRECARN. This all-Canadian group supports the latest research and development jointly carried out in robotics and artificial intelligence. Such are some of the priorities of our government.

Mr. Yvon Côté (Richmond Wolfe): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to take part in this debate on the motion introduced by the hon. member for Saint-Henri—Westmount. All the more so since we all know that the economic competitiveness and future prosperity of Canada is a topic which deserves our full attention and which should be debated not only by members but by all Canadians as well. This debate gives me and my colleagues an opportunity to set the record straight with respect to this government's commitment to science and technology. Despite the odd myth that may have gain some currency, the fact is that one of our government priority is to build a strong and prosperous Canada for the 1990s and beyond.

Mr. Speaker, science and technology are our hole cards when it comes to strengthening Canada's economic competitiveness and financial prosperity. Research and development, particularly in the technical field, are growth mechanisms in a global economy where innovation and the dissimination of knowledge are of such vital importance.

I should like to emphasize a key initiative which clearly shows the approach of our government to science and technology. I am referring specifically to the Networks of Centres of Excellence Program, the key element of government strategy to promote long-term basic and applied research in Canada. It encourages researchers to minimize barriers between disciplines, ideas and institutions, and to combine their efforts with a view to enhancing industrial competitiveness on a national scale.

Mr. Speaker, researchers no longer work alone in their basements, away from everything and everyone, working very hard, without any kind of resources.

Centres of excellence networks are a new way to promote excellence in scientific research in Canada. With interlinked networks throughout Canada, they further the integration of the research community into the industry, universities and governments. No researcher could ever realize his full potential while working alone in a basement. Those times are over. We have to pool our energies and our skills to ensure a better future for our country. Our top Canadian researchers now have a unique opportunity to work together within a coordinated structure on long-term projects.

All in all, the centres of excellence serve the following purposes:

First, to improve Canada's performance in science and technology in order to contribute to long-term basic research.

Second, engineers and scientists trained under this Program will gain international stature. Being interlinked with other universities across Canada, participating scientists will be able to confront to international competition and to tackle modern scientific methods.

Third, it will allow new technical knowledge to be passed on to the industry.

Fourh, this Program will launch an era of cooperation and creation of networks between researchers working in various institutions and corporations across this country. But what will be the effects of these objectives?

This initiative, Mr. Speaker, will include the participation of more than 500 Canadian researchers from 35 universities and 37 large Canadian corporations channelled into 15 networks. Total grants from the Government of Canada—this government—will amount to $244 million. Through these networks, we will not only enhance research and development but ensure that our capacities in that regard will be applied towards social and economic goals. In the end, we will become more competitive and our fellow citizens will no doubt enjoy a better quality of life.

These networks were set up about a year ago. The network for marine resources development—and that could be of particular interest to our colleagues from the Maritimes and also from the Pacific—could offer new perspectives to the Canadian fishing industry and allow it to become more competitive.

There is another network which deals with pest control. That network could lead to increased productivity in agriculture and forestry. Again, that will be of interest to our colleagues from the Prairies, and particularly to producers from the area, whose crops are often threatened by such infestations.

I can also talk about another network that I find interesting. It deals with concrete and is centred at Sherbrooke University. Did you know that this network for research on concrete has benefitted from a $25 million investment thanks to a team of collaborators from Sherbrooke University, in the Eastern Townships, whose reputation is country-wide? This study on concrete, and on the molecular structure of concrete, will lead to discoveries that all of Canada will benefit from.

The advantage of this network is that it will involve the collaboration of seven universities for the general study on concrete, and of 14 other universities throughout the country for the molecular study. I could give you some names like the University of British Columbia, McGill University in Montreal, Laval University in Quebec, the universities of Ottawa, of Toronto and of Alberta. On top of that, many national companies in Canada will cooperate and contribute. Even in Eastern Quebec, one company in Matane will benefit from this cooperation between universities.

Mr. Speaker, in our day and age, the economy is based on knowledge and because of that, an unprecedented cooperation is needed in the science and technology sector, and this cooperation must involve industries, governments, and universities.

Mr. Speaker, as I said at the outset, it is not possible any more to stay each in his own house. We must share our skills and knowledge with our neighbours in order to get the most out of those resources. The centres of excellence network promotes cooperation and puts together skills everywhere in Canada. It will stimulate the acquisition of new knowledge and strategic technology transfers for a better future in Canada.

• (1640)

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the speech the hon. member for Richmond—Wolfe just made, like a true Quebecer, as we may call him in this House, particularly in the absence of the Bloc Québécois members. We do not see much of them here, but we are qualified to talk about what is going on in our universities.

I have a comment to make, Mr. Speaker, especially this year, on the 1991-1992 Estimates. Some things, like the CANMET mineral technology centre, are being patriated, thanks to members like Yvon Côté, from Richmond—Wolfe, Jean-Luc Joncas, Maurice Tremblay, who represent Quebec here, in Ottawa, and who champion, in their respective caucuses, the patriation of research centres.

Let us take a look at what there is for us in the Wilson Budget. There is a $15 million research and development project for Northern Quebec. But that is not all. There is also an alternate energy sources centre in Varennes, an $8 million project. That was unheard of under the Liberal government. What we are doing here, in Ottawa, is defending the interests of Quebec, in collaboration with the Quebec government. In the case of the CANMET project in Val-d'Or, for instance, we had the support of Mrs. Lise Bacon and the former Minister of Mines, Raymond Savoie, who helped us get a research laboratory in Quebec.

I would like to ask the hon. member for Richmond-Wolfe, who is from such a beautiful region, this: Is it important for you to defend the interests of Quebecers in Ottawa? You gave certain facts, and so did I, but is that important or not?

Mr. Yvon Côté (Richmond—Wolfe): Mr. Speaker, I quoted earlier a very specific example of the impact of the centres of excellence networks across Canada, which bring cooperation and have an enormous immediate impact on all of us. I mentioned the University of Sherbrooke.

So, there is a financial impact: $25 million to scientists in Sherbrooke. There is a moral impact, that is, the pride of having scientists who are willing and able to do research whose consequences will extend everywhere across Canada.

I know that in the case of concrete, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that Béton Provincial in Matane and Matapédia, for example, could benefit from this research on concrete and lead to an even better use and expertise in that field.

We were talking about Hibernia, which brings an international cooperation from France, particularly from Paris, but which could have been provided by Canadians. These centres of excellence are a welcome contribution from our government.

Of course, there is also the transfer of technology which will lead to the development of local businesses, because once that research has been done and is considered successful, it is quite evident that this local pride will bring investments and real business development.

Yes, it is important that we contribute.

Mr. Jean-Luc Joncas (Matapédia—Matane): Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to the speech by the hon. member for Richmond—Wolfe. Naturally, there has been much talk about spin-offs in various areas.

Living in an area where there are many farmers and forests, he mentioned the importance of concrete in which the centre of excellence was involved in the Sherbrooke area. I know there are many such centres across the country in various fields.

I would like to know more precisely what each of us can expect from these centres, in our areas.

Mr. Yvon Côté (Richmond—Wolfe): Mr. Speaker, this is a matter on which I would have to elaborate. Unfortunately since I only have one minute left, I would say that, beyond the moral impact I referred to in a previous answer, this is mainly going to allow for the development of specific local skills.

If a center has acquired some expertise in concrete, for instance imagine the message for young people in elementary or secondary schools. And imagine the effect it would have on academics or on students when choosing a career, when they realize how profitable the

expertise of that university can be. So we will have new engineers, Mr. Speaker, and this is one of the immediate results that I can see.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions and comments are now terminated. Debate.

[*English*]

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina—Qu'Appelle): Mr. Speaker, I too wish to join in the debate this afternoon on the Liberal motion in front of us.

Much has been said today on the need for further research and development in Canada. When we do away with all the rhetoric that we have heard today, there is fundamental agreement among all political parties in this House that as a nation we must strengthen our ability to do research which is both basic and applied and to use the findings of our research in developing new services and new products.

If we are to survive in the type of competitive world we live in, we have to recognize and acknowledge that it is a world of very rapid changes where traditional trading patterns are being changed all the time, and that the only way to survive is through smart technology, smart trade strategies, smart economic strategies.

It requires a nation with a high degree of research and development, a high capacity for processing information, a capacity for being able to use what it has learned to implement and practise that knowledge.

It is not enough for us to do R and D and then not use that knowledge. It is not enough for us to have all the information at our fingertips, stored in computer data bases, and not be able to use that data to affect our behaviour or our trading strategies, et cetera, that would allow us a competitive edge in the world today.

We could talk a bit about the records of the present government. I would tend to think that most hon. members would agree that the Minister for Science, if he was not on public display but more in the privacy of a private conversation, over a beer or over a lunch, would admit that the record is not as great as he would have hoped it to be.

I am sure that some of our Liberal colleagues in a private situation would admit that programs like the scientific research fund, which Mr. Lalonde introduced in the dying days of the Liberal regime, was indeed a tremendous waste of public money and a waste of money that could and should have gone to proper research. I am sure my Liberal colleagues, in the privacy of a private conversation, would admit that more should and could have been done when they were in government those long decades.

However, it is not enough to acknowledge the need to do more in private. What becomes important is for us as an entity, as a Parliament together, to be able to affect the thinking and the priorities of the government so that it begins to recognize, not in a private way but in a public way, in a way that results in action, that if we are to survive as a trading nation we must spend more on research and development.

We have to recognize that an erosion is occurring in Canada, and let not political gamesmanship, pointing blame or defending oneself, and the huffing and the political puffing hide the fact that our universities are deteriorating.

A year ago I had a tour of some of our universities across this country: some in Alberta, some in Saskatchewan, some in Manitoba, some in Ontario. I talked to faculty and to students. In one university, students told me they have exactly 15 minutes to spend with a book because there is such a line-up behind them waiting for the same source book. Our libraries are badly underfunded and cannot keep up with the latest journals, magazines and books that are being published. Our Canadian students do not have access to the latest in their particular field of expertise.

• (1650)

At another university, I was told about their lab equipment that had not been properly replaced and upgraded since the early 1970s when there was a spurt of spending in R and D and in universities. Those students are using lab equipment that is at least a decade and in some cases two decades old. Those students do not have an opportunity to deal with the latest technology.

I hear stories of the difficulty of getting entrance into university, that more universities are having to set higher requirements. Just recently I noticed that the university in my home city, the University of Regina, is talking about establishing quotas in its different faculties. It does not have the space and the faculty to meet the demand that is out there for higher education.

Yet, the demographics will tell us that we are going to have a shortage in this country of trained people. We are going to need scientists, engineers and teachers. We are going to be having a shortage at some point in the future.

Historically we have made up the deficit by importing graduates out of Italy, Holland, Germany, England and the other European countries, but that is not possible any more. We cannot expect waves of scientists and trained people from Europe to come and fill the need that exists in Canada.

We see the sad situation arising. Here we have young Canadian men and women desiring post-secondary education. We know that down the road they are going to be needed, that we are going to have a shortage. Yet, somehow or other we are not able to bring together these two central facts and do something about it.

Recently I have had an opportunity to see some of the scientific sectors that exist in other countries. The one that impressed me the most was the one I saw in Taiwan where there is a tremendous combination of resources. There is a co-ordination of resources between the private and the public sectors not just in terms of dealing with the research and development of R and, D but also the marketing of it.

Is it not about time that we in North America began to realize that our traditional economic model, which is essentially one of competition, an adversarial model, is not going to make do in the 21st century? When we see economic giants such as Japan and Germany, we begin to realize that they have a different economic and social structure. They have one in which the private and public sectors co-operate very closely. Nowhere is that co-operation closer than in the area of research and development.

The public sector and the private sectors sit down and work together to target certain areas. Certain tax concessions, the raising of capital, and the focusing of the country's resources, whether through the public or private sectors, are brought together to bear on the goal.

We have seen both Germany and Japan become technological leaders. They have taken certain fields and developed expertise in those fields. Then with the co-ordination of the public and the private sector, and I should include the trade unions as well, they worked together to create for themselves high-tech industries that create employment, good employment with high paying jobs, and wealth for the country and that help the general good of the nation.

That is a model I think we have to seriously start looking at. The adversarial model between the public and the private sector and between different industries and between labour and business is one that in essence is self-destructive. Nowhere is it more self-destructive than in the area of research and development. A new attitude and new thinking are needed if we are to survive economically.

When we contrast the state of our universities and the state of R and D in this country with the state of the universities and R and D in countries like Japan and Germany, I think it becomes obvious and very plain what the difference is and why some succeed and others do not.

We also have a basic structural problem in this country when it comes to R and D. That was enunciated many years ago by the Lamontagne committee report on research and development. What it found was that—and I believe that paper was done in the early seventies—compared to other nations in the world our public expenditure on R and D at that time was a little bit more than what public expenditure was in most of the industrialized countries in the world. What they found significant was that the private R and D done was way below what was normally done in the other OECD countries. When they broke that down a little further, they discovered that Canadian owned businesses did quite well when it came to R and D and that it was the multinational firms that did so poorly when it came to R and D.

In some ways that is logical. It should not surprise us at all that a multinational firm generally does its research and development in its own country. Our economic structure is such that so much of our industry is foreign owned by multinationals which do little research in this country. That is what the Lamontagne committee report pin-pointed as a structural problem that we had.

When I heard earlier today some of the remarks from our Liberal colleagues about R and D, attacking the NDP for being anti-business, I chuckled. Many of the things that my colleague, our critic for science and research, was saying were things to be found in the

Lamontagne report. The Lamontagne report of course was a Liberal report, but then perhaps Mr. Lamontagne was of the old school, of the old Liberal school of Walter Gordon and Mr. Kierans, the old school that died in the sixties, the old school that believed in Canadian economic nationalism.

It is no wonder that we see the evolution of the Liberal Party coming around to the point where when we say things that are not unusual, in fact things that Liberals like Eric Kierans and Mr. Lamontagne around that time were saying now are considered by the Liberals in the House as being anti-business, socialist, sloganeering, totally impractical and off the wall. So be it.

• (1700)

If we are going to deal seriously with the question of R and D in this country we have to be able to mobilize industry, the public sector and labour. I suggest that it is harder to mobilize industry when it is a multinational industry. Canadian industry which has some roots and loyalty to this country can work together in a common strategy to do the research and then do the development and the marketing. That becomes, of course, insurmountable when we are dealing with an economy where vast chunks of it is owned by foreigners through foreign multinationals.

I could stand here and recite statistics concerning the record of the present government. I think they have already been put on the record. I do not want to get into this game because really what we are doing on the floor of the House of Commons is posturing.

As I suggested before, I am certain that in a private discussion, my hon. friend from the Liberal Party and my friend the Minister for Science, sitting privately together without the television sets and the microphones and so forth, we would find, I am sure, 99 per cent agreement. It is a pity that basic agreement cannot be brought out here into the public forum, that we cannot take that agreement and really create programs that would begin to meet the R and D needs for Canada.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, I was delighted to hear the hon. member say that he was posturing in the House. That must be a rarity. I am surprised to hear him suggest that he would ever posture. I was unaware that someone as distinguished as he, who has run to be leader of his party, would have considered indulging in such a pastime.

I did listen with interest to his comments about the past policies of the party of which I have the honour to be a member. I was amused to hear him suggest that the New Democratic Party has picked up on the policies the Liberal party began to advocate 20 years ago, in fact, almost 30 years ago.

I have always suggested that the New Democratic Party has been slow to pick up good ideas, but I did not realize it took that long.

In that vein, I wonder if the hon. member could, perhaps, say that he agrees with our party, that research and development is not the sole focus of government activity, but in fact it involves all elements of society. Much more than government is involved in it. The Liberal Party policy that has been so ably set forth in the debate today, whereby all segments of our society must participate in the development of research projects in our country is, in fact, a very sensible policy, one that commends itself to the hon. gentleman and even to the members of his party who are less up to date in their thinking than he is, 30 years back though he may be.

Mr. de Jong: Mr. Speaker, there certainly is a lot to respond to in the brief question of my friend.

First of all, my friend is new to Parliament. I think he is beginning to recognize the amount of posturing that even he does automatically. At some stage he might even become so self-aware that he begins to realize that what happens on the floor of the House of Commons is one reality that in many ways is surreal to the reality of the real world.

Perhaps when he begins to realize the surreality of this place, he will become a very effective member, when he will be able to differentiate between various realities.

When my hon. friend talks about old Liberal ideas, let us not forget that the NDP is called "the Liberal Party in a hurry" by some. When I talk about the economic nationalism that used to be advocated by the Liberals, it is something that we find to be still a valid idea. If we want to follow the Liberal course in terms of how to spend money and encourage private R and D, then what Mr. Lalonde brought forward with a scientific research tax credit, saw literally billions of dollars being wasted.

I wish I had my notes on some of the research projects that the Liberals were financing at that time. I believe there was one in which they were trying to raise cows so that cows could give chocolate milk.

I believe the Liberals were going to help finance that as part of their research and development projects.

If you could run and look at the list of what the Liberals were going to sponsor—and in fact they did—billions of dollars were lost to tax scams. That is the Liberal idea of how to encourage private R and D. Well, if that is the idea, forget it. Those folks are not ready for government tomorrow. They were not ready for government then; they are not ready for government today or tomorrow, and if that is still the thinking of the Liberal Party, they are not ready for government for the next decade to come.

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague for his quite helpful observations on science and technology policy. I wish my friend would not leave, because we have some words for him.

I do not think the debate here is about surrealism, quite frankly, and it may be a good deal less about posturing. I think it is about a little honesty, a little sincerity, a little seriousness, as representatives of the Canadian people.

We heard the hon. member moments ago talking about the Liberal science and technology policy of the past. I do not mind telling you, Mr. Speaker, and I know you are going to appreciate this, that the national rate of expenditures for science and technology was higher during the Diefenbaker years than it was during the Trudeau years.

When Mr. Trudeau came into office, the gross expenditure on research and development was 1.4 per cent of GDP. During the 1970s and almost throughout the 1970s it was up .9 per cent. So this party, this party which has been the firmest advocate of research and development has not a thing to learn. The Liberals could learn if they recognized the contribution they had made to the deindustrialization of Canada at the present. We are happy to see them joining the fight.

On the other hand, I just left a meeting of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology where we sat mystified. My Liberal colleagues, whom I respect very much on that committee, heard the Minister for Science talking about an additional $1.5 billion that he had to spend, out of which there would be a number of programs launched, KAON and so on, and a number of things were somehow supposed to figure into this. I asked my colleagues where the $1.5 billion was? What is this, new money? They said, oh, no, that was the 5 per cent and the 3 per cent additions that were in the budget last year and this year.

What that means is that within the confines of a decreasing real dollar rate of expenditures for research and development, they are going to take money from already existing and short funding programs and do all of these new things. That was misleading. It was hypocritical because it communicates a bad, wrong, and unhelpful message to the people with respect to what should be done, as well as to what the government is doing.

I want to ask my hon. colleague if he thinks that so far either the Liberal Party or the Conservative Party have been essentially helpful in addressing this very desperate need of the Canadian economy.

Mr. de Jong: Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague would agree that individually, members of both the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party see the importance of R and D and would like to see more R and D. However, the fact and the reality remains, that when the Liberals were in power their performance did not live up to what they publicly stated to be their goals.

Certainly the Conservative government does not live up to what even the Prime Minister has stated to be the goal. Indeed, we are slipping into a Third World stance. Of all of the OECD countries, we are one of the lowest in our expenditures on R and D as a percentage of our GDP.

In answer to my colleague, I must say honestly, no. The Liberal government and the Conservative government have not done the job which needs to be done.

• (1710)

Mr. Murray W. Dorin (Edmonton Northwest): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to participate in the debate.

When I was reviewing the text of the opposition motion, I was struck by the fact that it failed to adequately capture the essence of the competitive technological challenge that we face.

This is a challenge which encompasses a wide range of pervasive issues, each of which is a vital element in the competitiveness equation. We are in the midst of a period of unprecedented scientific and technological change. These changes have touched every Canadian and virtually every aspect of our lives.

While research and development performance is clearly a key determinant for success, there are a number of underlying factors which we must first address. These are factors which will ultimately determine the success of any research and development effort.

One integral factor is public awareness of science and technology. It is clear that we face some rather formidable challenges in trying to build a strong science culture in this country. Changing the attitudes of a culture is a long-term process. It is an undertaking that requires the collective commitment of all sectors of our society: government at all levels, industry, organized labour, educators, parents, and our science and engineering societies and associations.

It is imperative that we make this commitment. To state it simply; if people do not properly understand what drives the changes they see happening around them, they will resist. After all, it is only human nature to do so.

The government has therefore placed the highest priority on fostering greater public awareness and understanding of science and technology. Our citizens, particularly our young people—

Mr. Milliken: Spending money on advertising.

Mr. Dorin: Yes, there is some advertising involved, and I am going to get to that in a moment.

Our citizens and young people must be made more aware of the integral role of scientific and technological development in our personal lives, our national economic well-being, and our international competitiveness.

We must convince more Canadians, first, that a scientifically and technologically literate workforce is a condition of continued or increasing national prosperity; and, second, that science and engineering represent very promising careers for their children. It is vital for us to get more Canadians involved in informed debate and decision-making involving the vital science and technology issues of the day. Clearly the task at hand is a formidable one.

The message concerning the need to promote enhanced public awareness was hammered home in a survey conducted last year on Canadian scientific literacy.

The findings of this first-ever survey of adult Canadians revealed an alarmingly low level of science literacy knowledge. If there was any good news to be found in the results, it was that Canadians often scored higher than other western nations. The results of the survey were rather sobering, however. For example, over half of the respondents did not know that the earliest humans came later than the dinosaurs; close to half did not know that it takes a year for the earth to go around the sun; close to two-thirds could not name a Canadian scientist; and over half could not name a single Canadian achievement in science.

I would be curious to see how members of Parliament would score if they took the test. And I don't mean this as a commentary on the intellectual capacity of any one members but rather on the fact that our low levels of scientific literacy appear to be quite pervasive. We have our work cut out for us in terms of heightening public awareness.

We are in the midst of a period in which our nation is depending on the talents of our scientists, our technicians, and our researchers to an unprecedented extent and numbers just are not there.

A major part of our problem is attitudes, attitudes passed along from one generation to the next. Changing attitudes begins with awareness, and this applies to everybody. We need to work with our schools and our educators in more actively pursuing a range of avenues which develop science and technology literacy and prepare students for careers in these fields. We must look at options such as co-operative work education and adopt school programs which bring schools and industry together in efforts to develop the workforce of the future.

It is obvious that parents, educators, employers, and governments must take creative and concrete action to

break down the stereotypes which limit the career choices of both women and men. But government cannot do the job alone, nor should it be expected to. From a government perspective we realize that it is our responsibility to provide the leadership, the co-ordination, and the policy support needed to foster public awareness activities which involve industry, academia, and other key players.

I am proud to say that the government is committed to this leadership role. It is a strong commitment that can be traced through a number of initiatives we have launched. Hon. members have already heard or will be hearing about the Canada Scholarships Program, the Networks of Centres of Excellence and the initiatives of the Natural Sciences and Research Council. I would like to focus specifically on public awareness.

Three years ago, the government launched a national campaign to raise public awareness of the importance of science and technology to Canada's economic growth and to our quality of life. The campaign is designed to make Canadians, particularly youth, place more value on science and technology, to influence career choices, to make science and technology development an increasingly important part of public policy and to increase the level of national scientific literacy.

To date, the campaign has made significant progress towards achieving its long-term objectives. The campaign itself has developed to the point where it has become a social product for which there is a growing demand. The campaign has contributed to promoting the importance of Canadian scientific and technological development within the public issue agenda. It has begun to reverse the negative images that youth have about science, and has informed thousands of Canadians about our nation's scientific and technological achievements.

Perhaps more importantly, the science and technology public awareness campaign has helped leaders in the scientific community increase their effectiveness in communicating with the public and is both supported and catalysed provincial and territorial government action on public awareness in and outside the educational systems.

Allow me a moment to touch on some of the specific things we have done as part of the public awareness effort. We have the Science Culture Canada Program, which is supporting a wide range of projects from coast to coast, aimed at promoting greater public awareness of science and technology.

We launched a national advertising effort aimed at youth and we produced and distributed a range of public awareness materials. A travelling, interactive computer exhibit toured shopping malls across the country. We have worked with the provinces and territories on initiatives to increase the number of science and technology-related learning experiences in elementary school classrooms.

We are working with the provinces, the teachers and the school boards to strengthen the quality of science and technology education.

It is particularly important that we reach the students in grade six through nine. Surveys have shown this to be the key period during which attitudes are shaped. It is here that we win them over or we lose them for good.

A cornerstone of our public awareness effort is National Science and Technology Week, organized jointly with the provinces and the territories and scientific and engineering groups. Last October marked the first time we focused a national spotlight on science and technology, and by all accounts the week was a great success.

We had "The Magic of Chemistry" open house in St. John's; the University of Victoria hosted the Science Olympics, where teams of high school students competed in science problem-solving contests; Yukon College hosted hands-on scientific demonstrations by guest speakers from B.C. Science World; there was a high school science award ceremony in Jonquiere, Quebec; and, Winnipeg hosted the first National Congress of Young Sciences of Canada. These are just some examples. In all, there were over 600 events held, from coast to coast, and we expect an even bigger celebration for this October.

We want to use this occasion to give young people, in fact all Canadians, an opportunity to talk to scientists, to touch technology and to explore the new ideas being discovered every day. If we can do it for fitness, for theatre or for music, then surely we can do it as well for science and technology. It is an idea whose time is long overdue.

The government would like to extend the invitation to members on all sides of the House to get involved in National Science and Technology Week. There is a great

deal we can all do in carrying the vital science and technology awareness messages to our constituencies.

I could not end without mentioning a particular science involvement in my own riding, the Edmonton Space and Science Centre. Just recently, I participated in a ceremony where the federal government committed $2 million towards that centre for the increased role that centre will be taking on as a science and learning centre in Edmonton for northern Alberta. I am happy to have that centre located squarely in the middle of my constituency.

I am pleased that I had this opportunity to outline the details of our government's significant and, indeed, unprecedented commitment to fostering the development of a science culture in Canada. It is important to note that all the policies and programs, all the grants and incentives in the world will be in vain if they are not coupled with a strong public awareness and education effort. The Government of Canada recognizes this reality and I am happy about the way that we have responded.

• (1720)

Mr. David Berger (Saint-Henri—Westmount): Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but say that the member who just spoke in this debate made a very interesting speech, but he avoided altogether the question and the motion which is the subject of the debate today. He started off by saying that he thought the motion was too narrowly framed in speaking of research and development, and then went on to speak about scientific literacy and scientific cultures throughout his whole speech.

I will acknowledge that the two go hand in hand, that there is a need to develop scientific culture in this country, but I find it astonishing that he did not refer to the Prime Minister's promise to double Canada's spending commitment to research and development. If the debate was too narrowly framed, his criticism should be directed to the Prime Minister, the leader of his party, who in a speech to the Montreal Chamber of Commerce seven years ago next week promised: "to double Canada's spending commitment to research and development within a first mandate".

I would like to remind him also that the Prime Minister wrote in his book *Where I Stand* that: "research and development and the resulting innovations are the lifeblood of a successful economy and country".

The Prime Minister asserted that if the percentage of our Gross National Product allocated to research and development were increased by just 1 per cent, it would generate an additional one million jobs in Canada and $20 billion in additional sales of manufactured products.

Of course we know what has happened since 1984. This government has abandoned the promise made by the Prime Minister, has cut support for research and development in practically every manner possible, and as a consequence Canada's collective output to research and development has gone down, rather than go up as the Prime Minister promised seven years ago.

I would like to ask the member to say a few words about research and development. If it was so important to the Prime Minister seven years ago, why is it not a priority of the member and of this government today? Why are the jobs that would result from increased R and D spending and why are the export sales that would result from increased R and D spending not a priority of the government?

How can this member stand by while other countries are spending twice on research and development as much as Canada does and are beating the pants off us in international competition? What suggestions has he got to see that Canadian industry will spend more or invest more on research and development?

I want to anticipate the kind of point the member would probably say. I am not suggesting that the Government of Canada should throw money at the problems. Far be it for me to suggest that the Government of Canada should throw money at a problem.

What I would like from that member is some kind of an idea of how we can stimulate Canadian businesses to invest in research and development and provide Canadians with the kind of jobs and sales that they deserve and which the Prime Minister promised he would give us seven years ago?

Mr. Dorin: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member answered his own question in the final two or three sentences. That is simply that it is not the question of science and technology, as he stated. I acknowledge it is a very critical one for an industrialized country like ourselves if we want to maintain our standard of living

and our living style. The fact is the equation is not simply how much money comes from the Consolidated Revenue Fund or from the taxpayers of Canada and how much money the government spends. Surely we have to look at the total industrial and scientific community of the country and we have to look not just to the government itself.

He mentioned the fact that we cannot solve the problems by throwing money at them. That is true. Perhaps I can give him two examples of things that this government did which had enormous results.

The first one is we put in place changes to the Patent Act. At the time it was called Bill C-22. I just met with somebody last week in my office from a major company which has put $100 million into research and development at the University of Alberta in Edmonton for research into pharmaceuticals and new drugs for the future. That is a $100 million investment at one university in Canada and it is directly attributable to the fact that we in the last Parliament passed that bill, I might add, fought tooth and nail by his party, his leader and by his supporters in the other place.

A second example is in northern Alberta. I will use this example because it is close to home. In northern Alberta we are going to see shortly the construction of a new forestry project. I talked with the head of the engineering firm involved with that project only last week. He was telling me that this is going to set the standard for forestry projects in the world because it will have a virtually zero emission of toxins and pollutants. He expects a lot of interest to be generated from around the world in the forestry industry by this plant which will be world class.

The Prime Minister said we needed to have increased research and development in this country, but he did not say that it had to be strictly a matter of the size of the cheque that the government would write. I think I have demonstrated through two or three examples just exactly the the kind of things we have done that are not necessarily calls upon the taxpayer.

Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I am able to congratulate the member for Edmonton Northwest for his probably unsuccessful bootleg to the opposition motion put forward because let's face it the motion put forward is a brilliant motion when we really examine it.

The member for Saint-Henri—Westmount said:

> That this House condemn the Government for failing to honour the Prime Minister's promise to "double Canada's spending commitment to research and development."

We cannot stress enough just what the point is. The point as reported in the *Gazette* back on March 23, 1984, said that "Mulroney promised in Montreal that a government under his leadership would bring down interest rates and double Canada's spending commitment to research and development during its first mandate", double the spending commitment, I remind the hon. member for Edmonton Northwest, in case it did not click for the last four hours. The actually quote is, and this is incredible: "We believe this will create hundreds of thousands of new jobs and billions in new sales for Canada each year". He said that to the Chamber of Commerce.

An hon. member: If only they had doubled the money, we would have all those jobs today.

Mr. Keyes: Yes, as so articulately spelled out today in the House on a few occasions, not only during his remarks but also during his articulate pin-pointing questions to the members opposite. Contrary to the Prime Minister's promise, spending on research and development in Canada has actually gone down since the government took office and the spending commitment from close to 1.4 per cent of the gross domestic product to 1.3 per cent of the gross domestic product. That is incredible.

• (1730)

When did this take place? It took place probably during the most successful, resurgent years in the Canadian economy that we had seen—seven years of good fortune, of job development, of spending, of buying, of production, of jobs. And yet, down we go, to 1.3 per cent of the gross domestic product.

The member for Edmonton Northwest likes to talk about tests. The test for the member opposite is to stop with the optimistic promises for future commitments, because we have already had those. We have had these optimistic commitments to research and development for the last seven years. It is time to see his government put its money where the Prime Minister's mouth is.

Mr. Dorin: I will be very brief. It does not take anything more than a brief moment to reply. The essential message is that the Liberal Party has just demonstrated again and again and again the fact that in its mind the only way to measure commitment or anything else is by how much taxpayers' money you manage to spend.

There is no point in spending money foolishly, like the $2 billion boondoggle of the SRTC.

I demonstrated in my answer to an earlier question the kinds of things that we have done to encourage spending, not by the taxpayers but by other people—industries—into research and development, developing new products, new technologies that create jobs and will be exported throughout the world.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions and comments are now terminated.

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to stand here in this House today to discuss this important opposition motion.

Many of us I think can agree that research and development is the only way that we can possibly become leaders in the world, rather than be relegated to followers. It is that which permits us to find new knowledge and to apply that knowledge so that we can in fact be in the forefront in a number of areas, whether it be in the technological area or the social science and humanities.

I could talk about the promises that have been broken, but I think my colleagues have made the point several times and I won't do that, with one exception, because I find this most interesting. I want to quote from the *Toronto Star* an article dated January 13, 1991. It is entitled *Closed Eyes on Research and Development:*

> For years Prime Minister Brian Mulroney has spoken eloquently and often on the need for a national commitment to research and development. In 1982, even before he became Progressive Conservative leader, Mulroney vowed to double public and private sector spending on R and D.

Here is what he said:

> Either we go into the game and become important players in this major league or we become a nation that will, during its entire lifetime, play in the Junior B circuit.

He went on. In 1983 as opposition leader, he bemoaned the fact that Canada had lost—and I am quoting—"a generation because of the absence of commitment to science and technology".

What a glaring contradiction. At the end of 1984 we stood at 1.40 of gross domestic productivity. That is in terms of spending for research and development. It slipped, and it is almost 1.30 now.

People will say, and my hon. colleague said, "you measure everything with dollars". That is not the issue. The issue is that there was a promise made time and time again.

Mr. Keyes: That is another lie.

Mr. Duhamel: And that promise was not honoured. That is what is causing a whole lot of difficulty in this country, that kind of verbal commitment, without the follow-up, without the action. It is unfortunate.

Mr. Crawford: Shame.

Mr. Duhamel: It is easy for members to take examples of success and say: "We have built this. We have done that", but we have to look at the country and the over-all picture.

The over-all picture is not a good picture. It is simply not so. There is another technique that is being used by members of the opposition quite apart from saying that the Liberals did it or that you want to spend your way out of it. They use a number such as $40 million or $22 million. It does not really matter.

Of course, to a Canadian out there, that is a lot of money. We have to ask the other question. How much money is it in relationship of what has to be done and to what other countries are doing? If we look at those two questions, we find that it is totally inadequate.

[*Translation*]

I find it very distressing that the Prime Minister, even before he became Prime Minister, made this promise, and that later, when he should have done something, when the economic situation in Canada was still in pretty good shape—in fact it was in very good shape—he failed to support education.

[*English*]

We have to take a look at the cuts, the capping and all of that in the global context. Not in an unkind way, I say

that whatever the government touches in the whole area related to education and research and development, it is not going well.

The government increases the number of immigrants that it brings to this country. Bravo. That is not a real problem. But, where are the support programs? Where are the language programs? It has messed that up.

Regarding the copyright law, teachers and professors have been waiting for three years and still nothing. If I, as a teacher or professor photocopy a page or so, I have to be in fear of breaking the law. Absolutely nothing has come forward.

What about the cuts to transfer payments and $100 million to training and retraining? What about the 3 per cent administrative fee on the student aid program? What about the 7 per cent goods and services tax on books and other learning materials? I could go on and on, but we have to look at it in the global context.

It is not only the capping of research and development funds. These other reductions and cuts also have a negative impact. That is really very unfortunate.

I want to make certain that we understand the importance of research and development, not only with respect to developments in technology, but with respect to social problems in this country and indeed in this world.

[*Translation*]

So many people think that when we talk about research and development, we are talking about technological progress. Of course that is also very important, but the social sector is even more so, since the most complex problems confronting our society today are social problems.

[*English*]

Let me just share with you what I think most members would agree are the greatest challenges facing our nation. They are not the technological challenges. Of course, we need to make progress there. We must and we will.

What are the major challenges facing this nation? The whole question of national unity and the whole question of poverty. Almost 5 million Canadians are poor. Most of them are women and 1 million of them are children. There are 1.8 million Canadians going to food banks, many of whom are children. There are 2 million people on welfare as we meet in this House today. There are over 1.5 million Canadians unemployed. There are 5 million to 7 million who are functionally illiterate and are costing the country a bit more than $10 billion a year.

It is really quite inappropriate that women in this country still do not have their fair share of some of the best paid positions and that they still earn roughly two thirds of what it is that men earn.

Research and development can play a role.

[*Translation*]

Research and development must show us what we can do to correct and resolve these major problems, these major challenges to our society and to our country.

[*English*]

Let me say very quickly what the Royal Society has recommended. It is an important organization. It has recommended an expansion in the funding of research, the social sciences and the humanities even at a time when many observers are worried that Canada may find it difficult to keep pace with fast moving and increasingly expensive fields of research in the natural sciences, engineering and medicine. That is what the Royal Society has said with respect to social sciences.

• (1740)

Some will know that there are tax credits for certain types of research, but not in the social sciences. People do not see an immediate pay-off, therefore there are not the kinds of investments. Yet it is the most underfunded of all and it is probably the most important of all in terms of national unity, in terms of correcting the social difficulties which we face on a daily basis as a nation.

If we look at the government's program in terms of centres of excellence, I believe, if my memory serves me correctly, there is one on aging and its impact on society. There are literally hundreds of problems that need to be studied, yet there is only one in the centres of excellence. I think that is a powerful statement in terms of what the government sees as its priority. It is misguided.

Those are not the most important challenges facing Canada today, that is where they have invested the funds. They are important and I do not want them to lose those funds, but they must be increased in the field of social sciences and humanities. We need some tax

credits. We need some additional assistance so that we can come to grips.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, I think I have reached the end of my speech. In concluding, I would like to say that to me this is not a partisan issue. It is all about promises, promises, promises that were not kept. It is also a matter of priorities: priorities for the country, for you and me and the people we represent, for a strong, united and prosperous Canada.

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the comments of the hon. member for Saint-Boniface. When he refers to the motion which states in part, and I quote: "—the Government for failing to honour the Prime Minister's promise to 'double Canada's spending commitment to research—", I am sorry but, in our part of the country, in Abitibi and in Quebec, the Prime Minister honoured his promise. Indeed, the increase in spending was two and even threefold. Let me tell you why. In the 1991-1992 Estimates—all hon. members received a copy at their office—you can read that a new mining center will be developed this year in the North, in Quebec, at a cost of $15 million, as a site for testing ideas resulting from the mining research and development program.

Never, in the past seven years, has the Liberal Party organization in Abitibi lent a helping hand on this issue. You say that this is not a partisan matter, but you were conspicuously absent everytime there was an important debate. Articles such as this one are published in newspapers, and I quote: "Our thanks to the government of Canada for opening in Val-d'Or a research laboratory specializing in comminution." These are the words of our people, people like Paul Giroux, a restaurant owner, Roger Roy, from Jean Coutu pharmacy, Brigitte Giroux, from Saint-Hubert BBQ, and Roger Gareau, from Gareau Automobiles, thanking the Canadian government for developing a project for the mining sector and for helping that sector. So, are you for that project aimed at helping the mining industry in Quebec, yes or no?

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (St. Boniface): Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. I am very happy that the hon. member shared with me his views and these facts, and I really like him. But I still want to get some things straight. It is past time—as I said at the beginning of my speech—to point to some projects and figures and then try to prove something that does not exist. These projects exist. But let us look at the whole of Canada. If we look at Canada, I challenge you.

If I used any statistics that are incorrect, I am willing to do almost anything that you will ask me, dear colleague. But do not simply point to a project or a figure and then try to determine that everything works well. One other thing you have to be careful with: You said that in Quebec the spending commitment will be doubled, tripled ou quadrupled.

Mr. Saint-Julien: In Northern Quebec!

Mr. Duhamel: Perhaps, but some areas in Canada may have been cut, hit hard or crushed. That is what people are telling me, dear friend.

So, to summarize, I tell you that I welcome your comments. I welcome the goodwill with which you shared your views with me, but I assure you that your reality is perhaps accurate, but that mine is different, simply in that I try to think about the country as a whole, including Manitoba.

[*English*]

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River): Mr. Speaker, in browsing through some of the notes, I noted that the Prime Minister complained seven years ago about the then Liberal record of percentage of GDP devoted to R and D. He was being a little cynical about it, but he said that it was 1.3 per cent of GDP. I looked at the notes from our critic today as to where the government is now in percentage of GDP applied to research and development, and it is still 1.3 per cent. We have come a long way in 28 years.

I would like to think that the process of research and development involves government, involves universities, and involves the private sector, the private sector being the clearing house. I want to comment as well that it is not simply expenditure of funds by government that is going to move this area ahead. It is actually inducements by government to the private sector to invest and spend funds. It is the over-all spending that we want to increase. We do not want it confined to government spending.

As we stand here today talking about this continuing 1.3 per cent and how we would all like to increase it, I note that we in this House have not been able to do very much about that, although we all want to.

I would like to ask my colleague whether he thinks that the social sciences which he has referred to might be able to make a contribution to the process of inducing a greater investment in R and D by all sectors of the economy.

Mr. Duhamel: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. He has made a number of important points.

First, he has recognized the importance of social sciences. I believe that social sciences can play a meaningful role. They have been doing that, will continue to do that, and will improve on that. It is critically important that this happen. I have also indicated that there should be some tax credits for people to assist the social sciences. The member's point about getting the private sector more integrally involved in research and development is also well taken.

However, it is not just money; it is also an attitude. It is opening up our minds to the possibilities. It is recognizing that if we want to be up there as No. 1, as leaders as opposed to followers, research and development will do it for us, investment in the abilities of our people. Research and development is the key.

Mr. Rey Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, I would like to share the following quote with the House in debating on this motion:

> Either we go into the game and become important players in this major league, or we become a nation that will, during its entire lifetime, play in the Junior B circuit.

That infamous statement was made by the right hon. Prime Minister in 1982 as his way of expressing his commitment to science and technology. At that time he did not have the reins of power in his hands, but he made it clear that he intended to place Canada, through a commitment to research and development, in the major leagues.

The game remains the same. The game is cutthroat where high-tech talent and innovation translate into dollars. It is a world where the undisputed leaders have a commitment to research and development. The game remains the same, but what has happened to the commitment of the Prime Minister and his party? They have had six years to take Canada to the major league, but we are becoming more junior every day.

As Official Opposition critic for national health and welfare, I will seize this opportunity to bring to this debate my perspective on how the government cuts are affecting health care, from lay-offs to the cancellation of research that may have shown us better and healthier lives. Unfortunately research is something that cannot be shelved now and taken out and dusted off when the economic climate is brighter.

• (1750)

Time does not stand still for technology. There are scientists in this country who have worked for years to gather the best people around them; specialized, talented people. I have recently heard of cases where researchers unable to realize funding from this government will have their excellent research teams disbanded. That will be a tragedy.

For instance, in the National Health Research and Development Program, estimated funding of $32 million was slashed to $28 million in the same year, in 1990. What does this mean? I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, what it means to people like Dr. Raisa Deber, a professor and researcher at the University of Toronto.

Because of the uncertainty of her funding, her two junior researchers may lose their jobs. The further implication of that is that we will be losing future talents as well. Their research was a study to better treat back pain, high blood pressure and other ailments through enhanced communication with patients—excellent research protocol that may not see the light of day. Dr. Jack Siemiatycki, professor at the Institute Armand Frappier of the University of Quebec, will also be forced to let go two of his team members unless he finds the funding NHRDP no longer provides. Dr. Siemiatycki was studying the link between asbestos and cancer. Only recently in this House we have been faced with the issue of this asbestos as a source of the problem.

Additional funding is not easy to procure, I submit. Canadian companies spend on average one-half of what is spent on research and development in other industrialized countries. The government has recently turned to Canadian corporations and pointed a finger, blaming business for lack of research and development. However, the blame ought to fall on this government because this government not only has reneged on its commitment; in

fact I think it has reneged on research and development altogether.

While wishing for a high-tech economy fuelled by an educated work force that my colleague from St. Boniface has alluded to, the government pares away research funds and money for education. The government is living a catch-22, but it is the Canadian people who will be snared.

There is an apathy in the government. There is an apathy in the country. It is an apathy not shared by eight other leading industrialized countries. Canada spends only 1.3 per cent of its Gross National Product on research compared to about more than twice spent by the United States, Sweden, France, Japan and West Germany. It is no wonder Canada has fallen behind.

The National Health Research and Development Program is the main funding agency for research projects in applied health care. It is one of the most important sources of funds for researchers working for preventive medicine. Yet this agency is having its budget drained away.

Today, the climate for health care is turbulent. Transfer cuts and freezes place unprecedented pressures on provincial governments. Newfoundland's budget tried to cope by closing 360 acute care hospital beds. Nine hundred health care workers are being laid off. Quebec and Ontario, along with the western provinces are feeling the strain. Ontario spends one-third of its tax revenues on health care. Each person in this province makes on average 10 Ontario health insurance claims each year.

Recently we discussed the plight of medicare in our country. We were really saddened. Just yesterday I was discussing this issue with the member for Hamilton Mountain and the member for Mississauga East. We are really saddened. We are not seeing any future for medicare. While we recognize there is no question that the cost of health care is rising, there is no question solutions need to be found. Money needs to be found to keep medicare intact.

Yet the most promising solution, preventive medicine, is just research away.

We must learn how to prevent disease even more. We must learn how to make health care delivery more efficient.

The answer is not user fees or closing beds, as we seem to hear from the government side, and the answer definitely is not to slash the budget for research and development.

How does this government think we can defuse the problems of tomorrow unless we tackle them today? Right now, in this city, at the University of Ottawa Medical School, Dr. C. Y. Kang is developing a vaccine against the HIV virus which is known to cause AIDS. Dr. Kang's microbiology team has found a drug that stimulates immunity, the capacity for the human body to defend itself against the HIV virus and "it looks quite promising", to quote Dr. Kang. I hope, for the sake of the world, the prospect of finding funding is promising as well.

Dr. Kang will need at least $1 million to manufacture this drug properly for testing. What if the money is not available in Canada? Will doors in the United States open if Dr. Kang knocks?

Research and development are more than a means of ensuring economic prosperity; they can also be a protector. We all know the story of Banting and Best who helped discover insulin for us and, thereby, prevented a lot of misery and tragedy among patients with diabetes mellitus, patients with high blood sugar.

Through this discovery, Canadians and people around the world have been offered some respite from this illness. I believe Canadian scientists and researchers have much more to offer, if only they are allowed to pursue their talents in science.

Frequently I receive letters from people across Canada who suffer from myalgic encephalomyelitis, a type of disease that is known in layman's terms as chronic fatigue syndrome. The question is: What type of research is being done to prevent this disease? What is known about it, and how can they repair their health and lives? Maybe the government could have a better answer. I do not have the heart to tell these people that very little is being done in this country and, with the present government commitment to research and development, little will be done while this government is in power.

Let me end by echoing the sentiments of my colleague from Saint-Henri—Westmount in saying that this government should be condemned for failing to honour the

Prime Minister's promise "to double Canada's spending commitment to research and development". I challenge the government to start investing in the future that it professes to support. If we invest in the well-being of Canadians, we will have a better Canada and a better country.

Mr. David Berger (Saint-Henri—Westmount): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for his valuable contribution to this debate.

It is unfortunate that the Minister of National Health and Welfare chose not to intervene in this debate and respond to the comments of the member. He was referring to cuts in the budget of the National Health Research and Development Program which, as the member explained, provides funding for research to health promotion, disease prevention, health care delivery and preventive medicine.

I wondered if the member might just explain a little more what the distinction is between health care research or disease prevention and medical research, which is conducted by the MRC.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The hon. member has one minute. I do not think he can do it, but go ahead.

Mr. Pagtakhan: Mr. Speaker, health care research and disease prevention encompass investigations and inquiries into all aspects of health as a tool to prevent disease. One aspect of that is perhaps to help discover a vaccine that can be funded by the Medical Research Council. Other sciences, the social sciences, the role of counselling, the role of the social workers and other health care workers are all legitimate aspects of health care delivery, and we would want to know their role in preventing disease.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): It being 6 p.m., it is my duty to inform the House that pursuant to Standing Order 81(17), proceedings on the motion have expired.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[*English*]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

Adjournment Debate

BANKRUPTCY

Mr. Rex Crawford (Kent): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to follow up on my question of February 26, to the Minister of Industry, Science and Technology. He will know that this is no ordinary recession. Southern Ontario is being hit hard. Plants are closing down. Jobs are lost forever. It is a far cry from the temporary examples of the last recession in 1981-82.

It is a fact that only 24 per cent of the lay-offs in 1981-82 involved total or partial plant closings. But in 1990, these accounted for 64 per cent of the job cuts. I raised that issue in Question Period with the Minister of Industry, Science and Technology. He basically stated that since this government had created so many jobs since 1984, there were more jobs to lose. That gives no comfort to my constituents.

For those who say that this recession is not as bad as the last one, they are dead wrong, or they have not been to southern Ontario, the economic engine of Ontario. Southwestern Ontario alone is responsible for 60 per cent of the province's gross domestic product of $250 billion.

Welfare rates in Kent county are up 400 per cent from 1981 levels. The city of Chatham has a 30 per cent unemployment rate in the automotive sector, and 38 per cent out of work in the transportation sector. These are dramatic figures, far worse than in the last recession.

For example, Motor Wheel Corporation in Chatham has been operating since I was a young child, with a labour force of over 600 strong. It is closing its doors permanently in May. Hunt-Wesson's canning plant in Tilbury made it through the last recession, doing business for over 25 years, but not this time. The company president says that the twin killers of high interest rates and the high dollar put them out of business. Now tomato farmers in my riding are left holding their baskets, with no one to sell to.

The recession is hitting hard. Dresden, with a population of 2,500 is seeing two of its major employers closing their doors, over 100 people out of work. Many of these people have worked at National Hardware, one of the firms, for over 30 years. Think of the ripple effect on the local economy. Ever since I can remember, Dresden always had about four or five farm implement dealers. Those small businessmen made it through the last

recession, but not this time. Now there is no one left. Zero. This is no ordinary recession.

Agriculture is vitally important. Essex and Kent counties alone, grow and sell nearly half a billion dollars worth of agricultural produce. This recession is hitting us with a double whammy. While the government opposite merely says this is but a normal downturn in the economy, that by having a plant close down here and there, it somehow makes us more competitive.

About one-third of Chatham's workforce is in the auto parts industry, so it may follow that the city would suffer similar setbacks to other automotive towns, such as Oshawa and Windsor. But Chatham is smaller, with a population of only 42,000. When a plant lays off, the result devastates and disrupts the entire local economy.

Lay-offs have had a dramatic effect on the city. Real estate sales are down 50 per cent and southern Ontario merchants are not only suffering as a result of laid-off people spending less, they are also losing money to the American merchants, perhaps up to 40 per cent of their income.

Bankruptcies handled by just one office of Peat Marwick Thorne in Chatham are up 50 per cent from last year. This is no ordinary recession, some mere cycle in the economy.

I was interested in the comments of the Minister for International Trade in this week's issue of *Maclean's*. He says the auto parts industry is mostly unskilled, and that of course we will lose some plants and workers. But he offers no adjustment programs during the restructuring. He offers no alternatives. He says to the unemployed: "You are on your own." Instead, the government fails in its commitment to research and development, and cuts and freezes education and health care.

• (1805)

These are not the actions of a government that is committed to training our work force for the jobs of the future or assisting those workers currently laid off.

The recession is cutting deeper into the economic foundation of southern Ontario and this government turns a blind eye to it.

We are witnessing the terrible deindustrialization of Canada. We have lost 13 per cent of all manufacturing jobs since free trade. We have lost 20 per cent of our share of the world markets during the last five years. Our segment of the world export trade fell from 5 per cent to 4 per cent. As a result our current account balance has shifted from a $2.7 billion surplus in 1984 to a $16.7 billion deficit in 1989. Our trade balance with our major trading partner, the United States, has dropped $6 billion since 1984.

As our industrial sectors are being sacked and pillaged through free trade and a sad economy, the government has offered no adjustment programs, no answers, just more of the same. Canada is facing a serious long-term competitive crisis and it is no more apparent than in southwestern Ontario.

Southern Ontario, Canada's manufacturing heartland, is suffering from hardening of the arteries. As the winds of change blow away our economic structures and erode southern Ontario's foundation, the government is just standing back and watching. Any good farmer knows that you just do not stand back and watch your soil erode and blow away. You set up windbreaks.

Our manufacturing sector is the soil by which Canada's economy grows and prospers. The Tory government is letting it erode away.

Recession is not just a word in the dictionary. It affects your neighbour across the backyard fence, the farmer down the concession road, the local coffee shop where everyone gathers at six in the morning. It affects your kid's baseball or hockey coach. Recession hits families.

To conclude, this is no ordinary recession. I will be interested in knowing what the government plans are to tune up the economic engine of southern Ontario.

Welfare rates in Kent County are zooming. Burdened by the weight of the recession, some southwestern Ontario communities, including Chatham, are eligible for the first time in history for special provincial aid to pay for skyrocketing welfare costs.

I ask the government, on behalf of my constituents and southern Ontario, what policies are in place that will lend a helping hand to workers and their families?

What is this government doing while the recession is hitting us hard? How will you assist those 64 per cent of lay-off victims who will have no factory to return to after the recession is over?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre H. Vincent (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, allow me to praise your usual patience with our colleagues in this House for the length of their speeches.

The government recognizes that the Canadian economy is going through an adjustment period, which is creating problems for many Canadians. However, considering the growth rate experienced in the past years, the slowdown should not come as a surprise. This natural consequence of rapid growth is such that the demand in products and services exceeds the economic production capacity.

The strong expansion of the Canadian economy over the past seven years has exceeded our capacity limits, both on the labour and the product markets, creating destructive inflationary pressures which threatened to settle in the economy, making their elimination more difficult and expensive as years go by.

For that reason, Mr. Speaker, the government has introduced and followed fiscal and economic policies to achieve a better balance between demand and production, and to reduce inflationary pressures. These policies will lower interest rates and bring back a more balanced and sustained growth. Moreover, the government has introduced structural policies improving the competitiveness of the Canadian economy on international markets and increasing our production capacity. For instance, the imposition of the tax on goods and services allowed the Canadian manufacturing sector to improve its competitiveness, thanks to the elimination of the federal sales tax that subjected that production to discrimination, as was generally acknowledged.

Those policies aimed at reducing inflation and improving competitiveness are particularly important to protect and increase jobs in the automobile sector in Canada because of stiffer international competition. Without a reduction in inflationary tensions in Canada, those jobs would be lost to a producer whose production costs are much lower.

• (1810)

Because of the policies adopted by this government, Canada has cornered an ever larger share of the North American market.

However, the North Americain automobile industry is deep in a cyclical recession after several years of unprecedented sales that flooded the market. That recession has been aggravated by the present weakness of the economy as a whole.

We recognize, Mr. Speaker, that those periods of economic adjustment are not easy and that some people are faced with very real problems. However, it is important for Canadians to realize that the changing economic situation helps to ease inflationary pressures that have increased business costs and prices and that have eroded competitiveness and could jeopardize the jobs of all Canadian workers.

Also, Mr. Speaker, there are encouraging signs showing that the automobile demand may raise. In January and February, automobile sales have increased by 16 per cent over the third quarter of 1990. Because the rates have fallen by over 400 percentage points—

[*English*]

HOUSING

Mr. Scott Thorkelson (Edmonton—Strathcona): Mr. Speaker, the Nielsen task force which this government established several years ago did a complete review of federal government spending on housing. Its report was very revealing.

Only a fraction of the government programs in place at that time helped those in real need. Only about 40 per cent of federally-assisted housing was directed to those in need, perhaps 32,000 households.

Our government has turned this around. The new directions in housing introduced in 1986 has resulted in all social housing dollars going to those in need. Programs today are now targeted to those households that are unable to afford adequate and decent housing.

In the last four years, this government has assisted some 75,000 low income households. That is an increase of about 230 per cent over previous programs. All told, this year $1.8 billion will be spent to assist nearly 640,000 households to meet their housing needs.

Through these subsidies, we are providing decent shelter and affordable rents. Over the lifetime of each dwelling it will provide a home to many households in their time of need. Surely these directions are the way to go.

When resources from government revenue must be carefully parcelled out, it must go to Canadians whose lives will be improved substantially. It should not be squandered on those whose personal resources are more than adequate to rent or purchase on the private market.

Studies have shown us that about 15 per cent of Canadians must rely on some form of government assistance to meet their shelter needs. I am talking about families, women with young children, the elderly, the handicapped who through no fault of their own do not have affordable homes. Many are paying 40, 50, 60 and maybe even 75 per cent of their income each month for rent and heat.

Yet there are glaring examples of well-to-do individuals who are living in housing projects that are massively subsidized by the federal government. These people are shutting out the homeless and low income Canadians from affordable housing. High income Canadians should not be taking advantage of funding intended for low and moderate income Canadians.

There is a housing co-operative in Edmonton which was given a $280,000 cash grant in 1977 when it was built. Under a special program it received a preferential mortgage rate of 8 per cent for 50 years. This means that each of the co-operative's 59 units receives a 1.5 per cent interest reduction grant of $42.83 per month.

There is an individual living in that co-op who is earning over $90,000 per year and tax-free allowances. This is completely unacceptable. This individual could easily find and afford a home to rent or buy in Edmonton. It is unconscionable that a member of this House should show so little regard for the poor of his own community. I know that there are desperate families in Edmonton who would be absolutely thrilled to have the opportunity to live in this government-assisted housing. There are at least 30 people on the waiting list to get into the Sundance Housing Co-operative in Edmonton where a member of this House resides.

• (1815)

Furthermore, recent statistics have come to light which make it very clear that the situation in Edmonton is not unique. There is a shocking number of people living in co-ops throughout the country who have incomes in excess of $60,000 per year, more than 12 per cent.

Many of the people living in federally subsidized housing co-ops can afford the carrying costs of a modest home. Many housing co-op projects are financed by 8 or 9 per cent mortgage money over 50 years.

Having such high income earners living in these federally assisted housing projects is an abuse of a program meant for low and medium-income Canadians. Effectively, it shuts out the homeless and needy who must have affordable housing.

I would like to return to the example of a member of this House abusing that program. The member lives in a five bedroom unit that he shares with three other adults and a teenager. The whole rent for that apartment is $622 and he is paying one fifth of that, plus a modest surcharge of $60 or $70 a month to offset some of the costs because he is in a higher category. This member should be paying market rent.

My question is: Will the minister or the parliamentary secretary and the government give consideration to either a policy of encouraging these high income Canadians who are abusing this program to move out of these co-op projects or, perhaps better yet, introducing a policy of charging the market rent so that the sum return to the community and to the government is such that we can build more units and subsidize low and moderate-income individuals.

Mr. Ross Belsher (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the hon. member and his question which was directed a few weeks ago to the Minister of State for Housing.

The need for affordable housing, as he has said, is an ongoing concern and helping provide that housing is a priority of this government.

A full evaluation of the program was conducted last year. One aspect that was reviewed was the issue of high income Canadians living in co-operative housing supported by the federal government.

Last December, the minister announced that the federal government would continue with the co-operative housing program, but with some improvements. A system of income ceilings for eligibility to move into any future projects is being introduced. Once residency has been established, the household incomes will be reviewed annually.

For those households whose income goes beyond the ceiling limit, they will be surcharged. The minimum number of units in each co-operative project dedicated to households in need that benefit from rental assistance will be increased from 15 per cent to 30 per cent. Through the provinces' cost share, the Rent Supplement Program, now eight of the 10 provinces help fund up to 50 per cent of the household in each co-op.

The minister is encouraging the others to follow suit. The experimental indexed link to mortgage that has been used for the last five years has proven to be quite successful for financing co-operative housing. Efforts are under way to expand the pool of potential investors and to hopefully reduce interest costs even more.

The logical result of this change should be an increase in the number of units that can be produced each year for the same federal government investment.

I know the minister is working out the program details with the Co-operative Housing Federation. He wants to ensure that the program is as cost effective as possible while retaining a range of income. It is the responsible approach to providing affordable housing to thousands of low and moderate-income Canadians.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to expand on my concerns about the process that has been followed over a number of years not to ensure the environmental soundness of a project called the Rafferty-Alameda dam.

This has been a sorry history at every stage of ministers of the Crown putting their political concerns for friendly relations with certain premiers above the concerns of Canadians for their environment, for the protection of their water supply and for a number of other serious concerns about the ecosystems of Canada.

• (1820)

Time after time we have heard in this House statements from ministers that they want to see a full environmental assessment, but the actions have not matched those statements. This week we have had the Rawson Academy of Aquatic Sciences make a submission to the Environmental Assessment Panel reviewing a project that is, for all intents and purposes, well on its way to completion and therefore not even amenable to controls on how it is developed to bring those more in conformity with the best interests of protecting the environment.

As I look over the agreement that the Rawson academy analysed this week for the Environmental Assessment Panel, I think I see some of the problems as to why the ministers in this House have spoken positive words and taken very little action. This agreement signed in 1959 guarantees that the Government of Canada will expeditiously provide the Government of the United States of America with a minimum of a certain amount of flood storage. It is not as surprising as it might have been at the time, when we see the minister promising action and taking none.

We will recall that it took two court cases to order the Minister of the Environment to carry out an environmental assessment and that even then the actual establishing of that environmental assessment was delayed by up to eight months before it commenced. By that time, as we well know, there were suspicions about secret agreements behind closed doors, with the premier of Saskatchewan to give a nod and a wink and let the construction of the Rafferty Dam and the beginning of Alameda Dam proceed despite there being no environmental assessment.

We now know that Rafferty is virtually complete, that Alameda is well under way, and that no environmental assessment has been completed, so it is impossible to correct the design or construction of those dams to conform with the interests of the environment.

What was not quite so clear is that we are not even able to put environmental constraints on the operation of those dams. The environmental panel which we thought at least had the ability to recommend that the dams be operated in an environmentally positive way, or at least in a minimally damaging way, would not even have the ability to make those recommendations because the ability of the Government of Canada to control the operation is already seriously compromised by an agree-

ment it entered into with the United States for the operation of the dam, by the operating agreement that is attached to that, and by a licence that has been issued which relates to the operation of the dam.

Two ministers this week have tried to assure the House that despite the analysis by the Rawson academy the control of water relating to these dams is under the jurisdiction of a 1959 intergovernmental agreement and under the control of the International Joint Commission. Nothing could be further from the truth because this agreement in fact modifies that 1959 agreement. The International Joint Commission has not even been advised that that agreement has been changed, nor has it been told that its mandate under it has changed. Even though it recommended that 1959 agreement for the apportioning of water between Saskatchewan and North Dakota, it was not consulted on amendments to it, nor will it be consulted on agreements still to be made as to the water quality.

Lest we question who this agreement is in the interest of, I would like to quote a few sections of it:

> —releases from the Canadian dams will be scheduled to coincide with the periods of beneficial use in North Dakota—may be delayed when the State of North Dakota determines and notifies Saskatchewan—

Saskatchewan shall deliver water "if North Dakota requests the delivery".

The International Joint Commission for many years has functioned to protect water quality and water distribution between Canada and the United States. It is not too late to bring that body into a review of this agreement, a review of the water quality standards which must be set before April 1 of this year, and to ensure that the International Joint Commission with all its expertise is in fact reviewing this agreement and is making recommendations so that it will operate in the best interests of Canada.

• (1825)

Piece by piece this country is giving away control over its own water. We are constructing dams with no national control over the ultimate and cumulative effect of those dam. We already have more water diversions in Canada than the United States and the U.S.S.R. combined, and we have no idea what the ecological effects of those diversions are.

It is not too late for the national government to take control of the most important national resource we have, and that is water. The government itself in its federal water policy had good words to say about the importance of the control of quantity and quality of water in Canadian hands. Where it has had the opportunity to exercise that control in case after case, it has failed to do so. It has failed to ensure that an environmental assessment is conducted to protect the quality and quantity of water for Canadians.

I urge the government to revise this agreement to make sure that it is doing what it should be doing for Canada.

Mr. Ross Belsher (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member opposite for Ottawa West has raised questions with respect to the latest development on the Rafferty–Alameda project in south eastern Saskatchewan.

As the Minister of the Environment indicated earlier, proceeding with additional construction of the Rafferty Dam and additional components such as the Alameda Dam and the interconnecting channel between Rafferty and Boundary Reservoirs would be in direct contravention of the Canada–Saskatchewan agreement which was designed to respect the integrity of the environmental assessment and review process.

In response to the hon. member's specific question as to whether contracts for the Alameda Dam were let or not, officials of the Department of the Environment have informed the minister that bids for a contract were in fact received, some land acquisition actions were initiated by the Saskatchewan government and technical review is now under way.

I sense that receiving the bids and land acquisitions by the province are clear statements of the province's intention to go ahead with the construction of the Alameda Dam, which were certainly not permitted by the agreement of January 26.

The latest field observation confirmed that there is limited construction activity on the Alameda site indicating some parts of the contracts were already let by the Saskatchewan government.

The Government of Saskatchewan must respect the Canada–Saskatchewan agreement which arose as a result of the Federal Court order of December 28, 1989. That order requires an environmental assessment by an independent panel according to the federal guidelines order for the environmental assessment and review process. In keeping with that, the Minister of the Environment appointed a panel on February 5, 1991 under the guidelines order in response to the court order.

Furthermore, as the minister indicated earlier, the province is proceeding with extended activities on the project beyond the scope that was agreed upon with the January agreement for which Canada offered financial assistance to the province. The concern that has been highlighted by the member is also shared by the minister. As a first step the Minister of the Environment has ordered that the payments to Saskatchewan be withheld until we are satisfied that the province is living up to the agreement.

As the hon. Minister of the Environment stated in the House on October 18, Environment Canada officials have been instructed to seek an injunction against the province on continued construction and land acquisition related to the Rafferty–Alameda project. The Minister of Justice has agreed to initiate such action immediately following denial of the government's request for an injunction by the provincial Justice McPharson on November 15, 1990. An appeal process is under way.

Our laws must be respected and it is the government's intention to see that it happens anywhere in this great country of ours, regardless of which province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at ten o'clock a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

The House adjourned at 6.30 p.m..

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, March 15, 1991

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S.O. 81—FREE TRADE NEGOTIATIONS

Mr. David Barrett (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca) moved:

That this House calls upon the government to avoid a worsening of the social and economic hardship caused by the Canada–United States Free Trade Agreement by withdrawing from the current trade negotiations between the United States, Mexico and Canada.

He said: Madam Speaker, I regret it was necessary for my party to move this particular motion, but along with that regret is the awareness that it is absolutely essential that we go on record again against the consequences and the very principle of the U.S.–Canada Free Trade Agreement, with the addition of Canada potentially sitting at the table with Mexico.

It is important to give a quick overview of what has happened as a consequence of the free trade agreement, what has happened statistically, economically, and frankly, what has happened politically. This House lost a staunch ally in the argument against the free trade agreement when the former leader of the Liberal Party stepped down and was replaced by its present leader. The Liberal Party has now softened its opposition to the free trade agreement. It has vacated its role in serious questioning about the Mexico–Canada–U.S. connection.

Reading the minority report submitted by the Liberal member on the committee one sees the typical Liberal response as the party gets closer to power. Free trade with Mexico is necessary, but not necessarily free trade. I wanted to put that on the record at the outset to prick the conscience of the Official Opposition and make it understand it has a responsibility to participate in this House.

An hon. member: What nonsense.

Mr. Barrett: I know some think that party historically has no conscience. Perhaps the party could be seen that way, but I feel individual members are rankling in discomfort over the fact that they have been dragged into a very neutral position on this issue.

Now I will address my comments to the government. I do not expect the government to fall today on reflection of what I have to say, but if it was serious and really concerned about the Canadian people, it would admit in the face of overwhelming evidence that their economic policies—with the free trade agreement being the apple of its eye—are the cause and the reason for our suffering so much economic hardship in a Canadian–made recession in this country today.

• (1010)

I recall sitting in the committee when we had the good fortune of having the Minister for International Trade appear before it. During the questioning in the committee I, along with the member for Kitchener, asked the minister clearly: "Can the minister state specifically how many jobs have been created by the free trade agreement?" He could not name one specific job, but in his defence, in response to the member for Kitchener, he said: "Give it a year". That was early last spring. He has had the time but still has not documented one single job that has been created by the free trade agreement.

An hon. member: Another year.

Mr. Barrett: Another year, God save this country if we have another year in which we are allowed to follow the path of being totally taken into the United States orbit through this free trade agreement.

I recall that the Prime Minister made a statement immediately after taking office in 1984. He said, and I quote: "Give us 20 years and you will not recognize this country". This statement was incorrect, if not outright false. It has only taken from 1984 to 1991, seven years, for us to almost not recognize this country. The destruction of health care, the destruction of hospital insurance,

the destruction of national institutions, all Liberal programs which were forced in minority governments by NDP or CCF minorities, social democratic policies that were accepted by Tories and Liberals as a means of sewing the fabric of this nation together. All of them have been at risk.

Furthermore, in other areas of a mixed economy that were developed by consensus in this country, we have seen a gradual erosion of the things that are necessary, VIA Rail, CBC, transfer payments, Petro-Canada; all long term. Every single instrument that we agreed to in a consensus with former Conservative governments and Liberal administrations, and with the support of the Canadian people, to develop an indigenous mixed economy that gave us some foundation for maintaining a Canadian identity.

What are the facts? One hundred and fifty-two thousand Canadian jobs have been lost. I want to refer specifically to what some of the proponents of the free trade agreement were telling this country in supporting the government's position: 152,000 jobs have been lost.

Mr. Crosbie: Oh, oh.

Mr. Barrett: I speak for myself and I wish the minister would speak for himself instead of for the President of the United States and for Carla Hills in the United States. Carla Hills tells the minister what tune to dance to. He is a very poor dancer but he makes an excellent try.

Mr. Mayer: What a windbag.

Mr. Barrett: That is no way to talk to the minister. I think it is shocking that the member behind the minister would call the minister a windbag. I think it is unparliamentary and I ask the member to withdraw it. I know they have internal cabinet problems but this is going too far.

Madam Deputy Speaker: A point of order, the hon. minister.

Mr. Mayer: Madam Speaker, I was referring to the hon. member who is speaking. If we unleash this kind of rhetoric on the prairies this summer, we would have the biggest wind and the biggest drought in the history of the prairies. Fortunately the wind is only going to be in the House.

Mr. Barrett: I do not know under what part of Beauchesne that point of order is, but if the member wishes to defend himself and his cruel attack on the minister in that manner, so be it. I would never call the minister a windbag. I let the evidence stand for itself.

I want to go further by saying that in the food and beverage industry we were told we were going to have 6,400 jobs created by 1998. After two years, in that industry alone, we have lost 30,000 jobs.

Forestry employment was projected to remain constant over 10 years. In only the first two years of free trade there has been a 15 per cent decline in the number of jobs, a total of 11,000 lost. The government projected that the wood industry would grow by 2,000 jobs. After two years there has been a loss of 32,000 jobs. This goes on and on and on and still there is no explanation from the minister or the government, to all Canadians, the specific jobs that he claims has been created.

Far be it for me to quote back the minister's words, but sometimes it is necessary. I do not do this to be mean or cruel or to hurt the minister's feelings.

Mr. Milliken: We would never suspect that.

Mr. Barrett: I know you would not suspect that, but it is necessary sometimes to refer to *Hansard*, as embarrassing as it may be, to remind the ministers of some of the statements they made.

The member for Kitchener kept on persisting, in a meeting with a committee, asking the minister to produce evidence of jobs. He said: "Have any of those jobs been made public today, i.e. the number of jobs and the new investment?" "No, sir" said Mr. Shannon. Mr. Crosbie: "I have not seen any." Mr. Reimer: "How soon do you think we might see some?" Mr. Shannon: "In my view, it is probably too soon to make much sense of what there is, as I indicated to you." I then said: "Well, if you cannot tell us a list of jobs that have been created, could you make a list of the jobs that have been lost?" Others have done that, very clearly.

Your own member, Mr. Reimer, a profound, thoughtful member from Kitchener, who I last understood was a Tory, was the one who was asking these questions, not me. To insult your own member is a problem. I can take it, but to have your own member being rebuffed this way

is shocking and the Canadian people should understand this.

I want to refer to a specific statement made by a man who I have yet to meet. He was a cabinet minister in this House who, as I understand, ran afoul with some of the behaviour patterns that are expected to be normal for members of this Chamber and he came into disrepute. I refer, of course, to the hon. Sinclair Stevens. I want to refer to a statement that the former minister made since leaving politics. Remember, members, when an hon. minister makes a statement, we must take him at his word. It may put a lump in your throat, a loss of sub-electricity in the cell brains that you operate with, but you must take the statement.

Mr. Sinclair Stevens said, in early December: "Secret deal to boost the dollar. That part of the ingredient in the free trade agreement was to get the Canadian dollar up." He recounted a conversation he had with Mr. Baldrige, now departed. Of course, in speaking to Mr. Baldrige, Mr. Sinclair Stevens said that there was acknowledgement of a deal on the dollar. Mr. Baldrige is no longer alive and cannot recount his part of that conversation. The Minister of Finance has denied that any such deal took place and everybody has run from the issue. I asked the research department of the Library if we could get in touch with Mr. Baldrige and it is even outside of their ability to be able to do that.

But we have some other methods of contact around this issue beyond the use of a leftover Liberal ouija-board. What I want to refer to is the mysterious coincidence that exists about the date within which Mr. Stevens said this deal was made on the dollar, the time Mr. Stevens said Mr. Baldrige said the deal was on, and put that timeframe into what has happened to the Canadian dollar. An amazing coincidence.

In December of 1985, a conversation was confirmed to have taken place by one of the participants, Mr. Stevens. In early 1986 and up until the present time, the grasp on the value of the Canadian dollar goes up, up, up, up. There was a little spurt just before the last election when they got nervous. Maybe the Liberals would win. That faltered, and it is still going on.

• (1020)

There is no rational fiscal reason why the Canadian dollar should be so high, except that it logically fits to benefit the United States in this free trade agreement. This government has not used it as a fiscal instrument to protect us.

I could not talk to Mr. Baldrige; I talked to his staff. It is very easy to do. You phone to the United States. I want to thank the Speaker for allowing us to use the telephones. I phoned the people on the committee and, lo and behold, I spoke to Mr. Franklin C. Pfeiffer, Jr. of the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Trade. He was very vague on the question, but he said he would send me a copy of the committee hearings. So I have here the hearings before the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Trade of the House of Representatives, 100th Congress, Second Session, February 9, 26, 29, March 1, 11, 25 in the year of Our Lord 1988.

Throughout all of these hearings, the U. S. Secretary of Commerce, Mr. Baker, was asked about the Canadian dollar being too low because as we enter a free trade agreement it would be an impediment. What could be done to get the Canadian dollar up? What is the government's policy on getting the Canadian dollar up?

I want to tell you of a strange phenomenon. I have marked four specific areas of this report where Mr. Baker was asked by members of the committee about the Canadian dollar, and in every single instance he said to the committee member: "Mr. Member, I will talk to you privately about this issue". In four instances in front of the committee, when he answered every single question, when it came to the Canadian dollar he said: "I will talk to you privately about this deal".

An hon. member: The deal is off.

An hon. member: Secret deals.

Mr. Barrett: Now, someone of a suspicious mind would say that if the government's former minister would lose her briefing papers—and I am very careful when I describe that, Madam Speaker, her briefing papers—when the government cannot produce its own documents as to its position, when Sinclair Stevens makes this serious allegation and it is brushed aside, and when it is raised in U.S. committees, they are told they will be given a private briefing by the U.S. Secretary of State,

someone of a suspicious mind would say Sinclair Stevens knew what the hell he was talking about.

Since I have a very brief time, and that is tragic, I must now devote my time to the next step of the free trade agreement, expanding it to the Mexico connection.

This House had a committee set up under the able, capable, competent chairpersonship of the hon. member for Don Valley West. There was outstanding leadership on that committee, and profound thoughtfulness in setting up the meetings, but he was confined by a limited budget to having hearings only here in Ottawa. He was told too, and the rest of us on the committee were told that we should not worry, the government would not make a decision about participating in the Mexican talks until the committee did its work.

An hon. member: Don Valley West.

Mr. Barrett: Don Valley West. Well, Don Valley went west when it came to this government, given some support to the committee's chairman and the promise to the committee chairman.

An hon. member: It has gone south.

Mr. Barrett: Gone south is even more appropriate. One day before the committee was to start its hearings, the government announced that it was on the road toward getting going on the free trade talks.

During the course of the committee hearings, I frequently asked, politely, in deference to the skill of the committee chairman, for detailed reports done by this government before it entered on any such major undertaking on behalf of the Canadian people. We have seen not one single document produced by this government showing independent research evaluating the pros and cons of the Mexico—U.S. connection. There is a minor little paper from the Department of Science and Technology, but for a major undertaking by the Canadian government, no valid research has been tabled.

We were promised a labour studies project. It is still to be released, so the good work of that committee was for naught. We were being used as a bluff hand in a game in which the cards were already counted up. They are all in the United States hands.

One of the critical arguments we used in that debate and in this Chamber was: What is the impact of us competing in Mexico against low wages, no health or safety standards, poor environmental conditions and the minister's answer in this House? The the Prime Minister's answer is: Are we opposed to giving the opportunity for a Third World country to lift itself up?

I felt humbled by that devastating attack, but I kept it up. I thought someone in the government would have the sense and the responsibility to ask those questions before we embarked upon the free trade discussions.

Did anybody in this government ask? No. Was there an outcry from some of the backbenchers? No. Was there confusion from the Liberals? Yes. I want to refer to how the American politicians take their responsibility. Even though there is an impression left that somehow everything is on track down there, let me show how they go about these things.

I ask the minister in response if he will stand up and accuse the Americans of being anti-Third World. Here is a copy of a letter sent to the President of the United States dated March 7, 1991 signed by Mr. Lloyd Bentsen, chairman of the finance committee and Mr. Dan Rostenkowski, chairman of the ways and means, the Congress and the Senate. I will read one paragraph alone to make the point that is necessary: "A number of members of Congress have expressed concern about the proposed extension of fast track authority, particularly as it applies to the proposed free trade agreement with Mexico. They have identified a number of legitimate concerns that in our judgment should be addressed in a meaningful way before Congress considers the extension of a fast track authority. Specific concerns include the following: the disparity between the two countries in the adequacy and the enforcement of environmental standards; health and safety standards; and workers rights."

Here is the United States of America that is expounding the new world order that this government subscribes to, questioning what is going on in these areas in Mexico and this government has not uttered a peep about the very same questions.

The reality is that the Americans are deeply concerned, as we are, about the social issues, and also the wage and working conditions that would destroy job

opportunities for Canadian workers, men and women, from coast to coast in this country.

I know I have only one minute left in such a short timeframe and such a catalogue of material. But let me tell you this, Madam Speaker. The New Democratic Party has catalogued the devastation of the free trade agreement. It has been consistent in its opposition to the free trade agreement. It is now consistent in us not participating in talks with Mexico and is the only party on record that says: "If we should gain power, we will give the six months' notice to abrogate the treaty because it has been a betrayal of Canadian working people".

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member a question.

During the course of his comments, which of course were very high in rhetoric and short in any real factual content, he claimed that 152,000 jobs had been lost as a result of the U.S.–Canada Free Trade Agreement.

I have in my hands the document called *CLC Today*, December/January, 1991. It says that the CLC estimates that 226,000 jobs have been lost because of the free trade agreement, whereas the hon. gentleman is saying 152,000 jobs have been lost. This is a considerable difference: 74,000 jobs.

I am wondering why it is that the CLC are greater exaggerators even than the hon. gentleman.

• (1030)

I note in the document that the CLC gives us a whole list of what they say are the job losses: Albright and Wilson Americas, the phosphorus plant at Long Harbour, Newfoundland, 290 jobs gone. I happen to know, since it is in my district, that it had absolutely nothing to do with the U.S.–Canada Free Trade Agreement. It had nothing to do with marketing. It had to do with the age and the technological capacity of that plant compared to other plants they have in the world. It had no connection to the U.S.–Canada Free Trade Agreement.

CBC in Toronto, 500 jobs. What did that have to do with the U.S.–Canada Free Trade Agreement? Broadcasting was not covered in the agreement at all, or crown corporations. Clearwater Fine Foods in Port Mouton, Nova Scotia, 150 jobs listed. That plant closed because of a scarcity of fish. Then they list National Sea Products in Canso. What did that have to do with the U.S.–Canada Free Trade Agreement? That was because of a scarcity of fish. Molson–Carling across Canada, 1,400 jobs. Beer did not come under the free trade agreement at all. I can give you more examples. VIA Rail: what did VIA Rail have to do with the U.S.–Canada Free Trade Agreement?

Is the member admitting that this CLC document is a piece of fiction, totally inaccurate, viciously ignorant, carelessly ignorant, a Maude Barlow kind of document, the product of a mind seized by fantasy? Does he agree that this is the case and therefore has reduced his estimate by 76,000 jobs compared to this tendentious piece of fiction from the CLC? "Season's Greetings" they say from the Tory government. I say that the CLC, Madam Carr, and the rest of them should apologize for trying to foist on the people of this country such a piece of fraudulent material as they have issued.

I am glad to see the hon. gentleman is correcting them today, and I hope he will come right out and say that the CLC in its fanatical opposition to the free trade agreement has gone too far in publishing such a document.

Does the hon. gentleman agree that at least 76,000 of those jobs are purely fictional?

Mr. Barrett: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the minister for effectively deflecting the fact that he cannot produce one single job on the record, not the CLC, not Dave Barrett, but on the record showing that it has been created by the free trade agreement.

As to the document, I don't have to defend the CLC. I ask the minister to attack my figures. Furthermore, I have not brought in the business community's figures that it uses in support of this government: the Canadian Conference of Businessmen, or that other ragtag outfit, or the banks that shell out money for this government, the bank that has admitted that it has given money to this government because it is more to the specific policy. If you want to get in the trades on support, I will tell you this —and I say this proudly—that I would rather have the working men and women of Canada supporting my position than the right-wing business community of this country.

I want to repeat my question. Why is it that non-captives of the CLC—Mr. Bentsen, who was a vice-presidential candidate, and Mr. Rostenkowski—are moved to write to their President asking for guarantees while this government has even denied that such requests are necessary? Why is it that an American senator and American members of the House of Representatives have the courage to raise these questions, but when they are raised in this House they are attacked by that minister who views all criticism as a personal insult?

I have never attempted to insult the minister personally. His own record does that better than anything I can do. I have been a sympathetic friend of the minister. I have been waiting for him to come to his senses, but I think it is now beyond his ken. There is a call for that member to go back to Newfoundland and lead the Tory party. They are already in oblivion. What possible help could he give them in that course?

The questions are clearly focused; the questions are clearly stated.

This government has not produced research. It has not produced documents showing that all the warm bodies they have in bureaucracies have put their mind to this question, but they have spent $25 million on the Spicer commission, on airy-fairy searches for basic problems of this country which have more to do with economics than anything else.

The greatest threat to the province of Quebec is not the internal divisions in this Chamber, but the free trade agreement which will ultimately lead to the loss of its economic sovereignty. I challenge the members from Quebec and the rest of Canada to understand that the greatest threat to the survival of any potential nation—sovereign or member of a confederation—is the economic sovereignty they can determine within their own borders. When that is lost you do not have a country, and this country is becoming a lap poodle to the United States and is losing its great heritage as an independent sovereign nation with some control of its own economic destiny.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Eugène Bellemare (Carleton—Gloucester): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca on his witty speech in the House today. I agree it is a shame he did not get more time to speak to us this morning. I think he would be great on the Improv programs we see on U.S. TV or on the Johnny Carson Show. It is a relief to have someone who can start the morning with so much humour and wake up the Tories with the kind of comments he just made.

I admire his sense of humour, and I admire him for what he has done for the parliamentary channel. I am sure that this morning, everybody in Canada is saying: Let's get rid of the Spicer Commission and ask Barrett to tour the country and talk to us about Third World countries and Tories, and especially about the excellent programs introduced by the Liberal Party when it was in power.

I like the hon. member's sense of humour and I admire him for it. It is really too bad that his opposite number in this respect, the minister responsible for free trade agreements with the most powerful country in the world or one of the Third World countries— The hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca never said which of the three was from the Third World. He missed an opportunity there!

So again, my congratulations, and it would be nice to hear some more from Mr. Barrett and enjoy his humour for the rest of the morning.

[*English*]

Mr. Barrett: Madam Speaker, I deliberately focused in seriousness on the government's position in response to questions in this House about the Third World. I was shocked, and still am, at the facetiousness with which the government answered those valid questions about the impact on our economy of having a low-wage partner in a free trade agreement.

I want to point out again that regardless of the party you belong to, it is imperative that we protect and defend those people who send us to this Chamber. It is not good enough to put ourselves in a position without asking serious questions about it. It is not good enough to place ourselves in a position of being at the mercy of a low-wage partner, particularly when the other partner is asking these questions and we are not. I am ashamed of the government.

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure as always to have the opportunity to speak in this House, even though the motion before us is a silly and jejune motion. It calls upon the government to avoid a worsening of the social and economic hardship caused by the Canada-U.S. Free

Trade Agreement. There has not been any social or economic hardship caused by that agreement.

• (1040)

It then goes on to say: "by withdrawing from the current trade negotiations between the United States, Mexico and Canada", when there are no current trade negotiations between the three. This is a matter which is before the U.S. Congress now to decide whether or not it will give fast track authority for such a negotiation. No negotiations are yet started.

I want to correct something the hon. member who introduced the motion said. He said he was trying to prick the conscience of the Official Opposition. Well, how can you prick what isn't there? To prick something you first have to find it. I have never noticed, and I do not think anyone else in this Chamber has ever noticed the Official Opposition having a conscience. He started out already in attempting to do the impossible.

Mr. Barrett: When I knew you, you were a Liberal.

Mr. Crosbie: That is why I happen to know they have no conscience. That is why I left them, to look for a party that had a conscience.

The motion is basically about free trade. I want to give a quotation from Thomas Paine in 1791. Two hundred years ago in *The Rights of Man* he said:

> The prosperity of any commercial nation is regulated by the prosperity of the rest. If they are poor, she cannot be rich, and her condition, be it what it may, is an index of the height of the commercial trade in other nations.

In other words, we are all dependent upon one another if we are to be prosperous in this world. That was recognized even 200 years ago. We cannot be prosperous if the people who surround us are poor.

That quotation alone completely knocks on its head the feeble attempts of the New Democratic Party to oppose a negotiation between the U.S., Canada and Mexico. We all know that Mexico is not as wealthy a nation as ours at the present time, but does that mean that we should, even in our own self-interest, refuse to trade with it, refuse to have anything to do with it because it suffers from lower wages at the moment than we do?

Is that the New Democratic Party philosophy, the party that used to be the party of support for the undeveloped countries of the world, for those who had been dispossessed, for those struggling to make their way up?

Now they are members of the party of the *status quo*, because they bob their heads whenever the organized labour movement of Canada tells them to bob their heads. They have deserted their principles. They no longer want to help the dispossessed, the poor of the world; they just want to help the fat cats in the Canadian Labour Congress to try to maintain a position where there must be walls of protection to keep them in their present status, and to hell with the rest of the world.

That is not the philosophy of our party. The NDP supports the *status quo*. We support change that is needed for the future together with the business community, which today are the revolutionaries. The revolutionaries of our society are the business and industrial people who realize that we have to compete with the world and change.

I would now like to give another quotation. I am raising this debate to too high a level for these hon. gentlemen to understand. Here is what T. B. Macaulay, the famous historian, said in 1824 in Mitford's *History of Greece*:

> Free trade, one of the greatest blessings which a government can confer on a people, is, in almost every country, unpopular.

That is what Macaulay observed in 1824, and it is correct. Any government that tries to lead a country into freer trade must know it is not a popular move to make, because it is a longer term move. It is something that is going to be good for the country in the longer term. The ignorant and those who do not want to see and those who are beholden and dependent upon certain selfish interests will oppose it and make it appear that any change in the *status quo* is going to somehow be damaging to the ordinary person. That is why it is not popular.

It only becomes popular when you stick to your guns and keep explaining what the benefits of free trade or freer trade are, which we intend to do. We have all kinds of independent opinion that supports what we have been doing.

For example, the national financial columnist, Diane Francis, said in *Maclean's* for November 12, 1990:

> The lingering debate over free trade is irrelevant, as is the battle against the goods and services tax. Opponents of both are practitioners of ostrich economics, the tendency of persons with a low economic IQ to simply stick their heads in the sand. The GST and free trade initiatives, whether bilateral, trilateral or multilateral, are essential policies in sync with the irreversible post-war trend towards a global economy.

She goes on to say:

> Free trade is profound historical trend which is as immutable as gravity. The debate of the 1990s is not whether free trade is a good idea or not: the debate should centre on how to adjust, how to improve strengths, cushion dislocations and find new niches.
>
> Canada is already so far along in this process of interdependence that our standard of living and future depend strictly upon how astute and non-protectionist we are. Up to one third of Canadian jobs are directly or indirectly dependent upon trade with other countries.

Then she points out that we collectively owe more than $230 billion offshore, giving us the dubious distinction of having one of the highest levels of foreign indebtedness per capita in the industrialized world, almost $9,000 per person. She says:

> Canada's challenge is to figure out how to earn more hard currency from foreigners and how to motivate workers to work harder. If not, our standard of living, already on the decline, will fall further in the 1990s. Of course, people do not want to hear such messages and would rather vote for politicians who espouse ostrich economics.

The largest ostrich of them all just spoke ahead of me. She concludes:

> The world hurtles towards one global economy, whether we like it or not.

The NDP is like King Canute telling the tide to stay out, defying the tide. King Canute Barrett sits there. The world is hurtling toward one global economy and poor little fat Dave saying: "No, no, no, we are not going to hurtle toward one global economy.» Here in Canada somehow we are going to keep things all together. We are going to depend on our own spavines in a market of 26 million people and we are going to protect ourselves into prosperity. Whereas, what would really happen is we would obliterate ourselves altogether.

The world hurtles toward one global economy whether the NDP likes or not. You are not even an infinitesimal speck on the beach with the tide rolling in over you.

That is what Diane Francis said. On January 14, 1991, Diane Francis said this in *Maclean's* as well:

> Critics of the free trade deal are intellectually dishonest. The facts show that Canadians have prospered under the agreement.

You will have to read the article. I do not have the time to read this whole article today. When we look at some impartial observer, that is the kind of report we get, not the fearmongering and fiction that the New Democratic Party imparts or the Liberal party spreads.

Part of the Liberal Party is inculcated by a bacillus, a bacilli that has come from the New Democratic Party. It controls your foreign policy section. It used to control your trade section. Now you have a trade critic who is fighting against this infection from the NDP, trying to adopt some sensible trade policy. There are even Liberals who have supported the U.S.—Canada—Mexico negotiations. Former leadership candidate, Sheila Copps, said that Canada has to protect its interests.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Crosbie: "I am not sure that we should become a negotiating partner, but I think we should make sure we know what is going on". That member at least wants to know what is going on. She says: "If we are not anywhere near the table, clearly we are not going to be in a position to monitor that". This is a woman showing a modicum of common sense for the first time in her history.

Then metro Toronto MP Kaplan, we are sorry to hear he is not going to run in the next election. He did not have a chance anyway. He said: "Canada should try and get the largest role that we can in the talks to protect our interests".

They are in disagreement with the former honourable Mr. Axworthy. Perhaps he is still an honourable; hon. member Axworthy, now the foreign policy critic who turns faint when he hears anyone mention the word U.S. We are not even to mention the word U.S.

• (1050)

To come back to the main theme of my remarks, we can look at practically any independent study. Here is a study done by the C. D. Howe Institute, *Competitiveness in the 1990s*. What does it recommend?

It recommends the following:

> Recommendation 2: Canada should be a full and active participant in the U.S.-Mexico free trade negotiations.
>
> Recommendation 3: Canada should continue to press for the enhancement of secure access and bilateral trade negotiations with the United States under the FTA.

I do not have time to refer to more of its statements. These are independent research bodies, not long-winded labour politicians like poor Bob White, Shirley Carr and this crew who think that somehow they have got to kowtow to their followers and pretend that somehow Canada can protect itself and cut itself off from the rest of the world.

In *The Gazette* of Montreal for February 27: "Free trade agreement pays off for Canada", a report of a speech by Ambassador Derek Burney, who sets out—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Crosbie: Oh, they laugh. Whenever they hear about facts they laugh in the NDP. They do not know how to deal with facts. Here is one of the facts that Derek Burney put forward:

> Fact number three is that Canada's trade performance is one bright spot in an otherwise sombre economic outlook. The OECD has pointed out that "Canada's strength in international trade has cushioned the country from a more debilitating recession. The free trade agreement, far from opening the floodgates to job-destroying U.S. imports, is presiding over a substantial increase in our trade surplus with the United States—$17.4 billion for 1990 as opposed to $14.2 billion in 1988. The value of total Canadian exports to the United States has increased nearly $8 billion, or 7.5 per cent, since 1988 to a total of $110.3 billion in 1990."

That just happens to be a fact. How could this be if Canada has been devastated and we have lost hundreds of thousands of jobs? How is it that we are exporting more to the United States of America than we ever did if we have lost hundreds of thousands of jobs due to this agreement?

They never deal with these facts. We never hear them deal with the facts. All we have is fiction from Shirley Carr, Bob White and the seven dwarfs, and all the rest of them. Somebody should deal with these facts:

> Fact number four is that the investment picture in Canada is even more impressive—we have moved from a net direct investment outflow of $7.3 billion in 1988 to a net inflow of almost $1 billion in the first three quarters of 1990—a remarkable turnaround—since the free trade agreement—

What creates jobs? Investment creates jobs. Instead of having an outflow of $7.3 billion as we had in 1988, losing jobs, we had a net inflow of $1 billion in 1990 helping to create jobs here in Canada. These are facts, but we never hear facts dealt with by the hon. personages opposite.

Then let us look at the Canada West Foundation report that just came out in February. This studies objectively the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement. Under conclusions it states:

> Contrary to prevailing perception—Canada has significantly expanded its exports of end products by a net increase of over $4.0 billion while imports of end products from the U.S. declined by $600 million.

Despite poor conditions economically there are increases in "exports of machinery, equipment, electronics, aerospace and others". We made our "gains in high-tech and capital-intensive industries rather than selling off our resources".

That is what the Canada West Foundation reported. It has no bias. It is not controlled by any political party. It is just doing a job for the west, an independent job, and those are some of the conclusions that it has come to.

If I had the time I could go through and show that conclusion after conclusion knocks the NDP on the head and the silly statements that it makes. The Maude Barlow party, any party that spouts the same nonsense as Maude Barlow, my God, should be ashamed of itself. It should go hide its head.

Looking at the Canada West Foundation report, the interesting things about these patterns, it states on page 7:

> —provincial-U.S. trade in the West and Atlantic regions and to a lesser extent in Quebec, has grown substantially higher than Ontario-U.S. trade which dominated Canada-U.S. trade in the post WWII period.

I do not have the time to read it all to you, but you have not got the patience to listen to it either.

The Royal Bank of Canada *Econoscope*, February 1991, concludes that the FTA has been very beneficial for Canada and that we should enter into a Canada—U.S.—Mexico free trade agreement.

Dr. Neufeld, an executive vice-president of the Royal Bank, made a speech in Washington to the National Economists Club and concluded after two years of the Canada-U.S. FTA that:

> Our own study of the functioning of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement released today finds that the current recession has little to do with the Agreement; that some sectors are benefiting from the Agreement; that the dispute settling mechanism has contributed to a more orderly review of trade disputes; that precise reasons for some plant closings in Canada and shifts to the U.S. are not clear; that there are areas where Canada and the U.S. must take action to improve the Agreement; but that major policy difficulties in Canada lie not with trade but with fiscal deficits, cost increases, interprovincial trade barriers, federal-provincial tax system disharmony, and low productivity. So I see nothing in the functioning of the Canada-U.S. FTA so far that would argue against further evolution in North American Free Trade.

These are the remarks of an outside observer, not a politician out to appeal to the prejudices and the emotions of people they should be better serving by giving them the facts and the truth.

On page 4 of the same speech:

> The North American free trade area would encompass a population of 360 million, which is larger than the European Community and three times as large as the Japanese domestic market. It would constitute combining the labour abundant and capital scarce region of Mexico with the technologically advanced industry and demographically aging population of Canada and the U.S. It is a strategic fit.

Read the serious material and see why we are doing it. We are not doing this because we think it is going to be instantly popular in Canada. We know we have a whole series of vicious people who do not care about the future of Canada who are going to be attacking this looking for short-term gain. Any person in this country who studies this objectively, knowledgeable people, commend the U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement. They recommend that we go on to negotiate a North American free trade agreement.

The hon. NDP member talked about jobs, jobs, jobs. I can give him examples of tens of thousands of jobs. Are you listening? No, you are not listening; you are gazing blankly into the space above your head.

Here is one example of jobs. "Windsor to get high-tech steel mill. International group, led by Dofasco Steel, plans a $240 million investment. One thousand new jobs by 1993." If you want jobs, brother, I will show you jobs. "Bayer to invest up to $165 million in Canada after a Polysar purchase". On and on it goes with examples of expansions and new investments in Canada.

I recommend the Royal Bank of Canada *Econoscope* study.

Diane Francis says: "Free trade gets a ringing endorsement and that is the Canada way". "Trade deal benefits Manitoba", a report says. Then we have an analysis of the Mexico negotiations by Fred Blaser in *The Financial Post*: "Canada will give as good as we get."

The experts know that we can compete with Mexico. The experts know that low wages do not determine whether you are competitive or not. They know it depends on science and technology. They know it depends on transportation systems and education systems and a whole set of other factors, not just wages which are less than 20 per cent of the cost of goods normally.

Because I do not have a huge amount of time left, here is another thing about jobs. Proctor and Gamble gives free trade thumbs up:

> We've become substantially more efficient in the last two years and clearly we now have more jobs in our Canadian plants than we would have had without the agreement.

After two years Mr. Dave Elliot, an executive at Proctor and Gamble, in the December 21, 1990 *Evening Telegram*, says: "We have become more efficient and clearly we now have more jobs in our Canadian plants than we would have had without the agreement".

Is the hon. member listening to that? Does anybody see the hon. member listening? Has he heard a word?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Unfortunately I must interrupt the hon. minister. The time has expired.

It being 11 o'clock a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 35, the House will now proceed to Statements by Members pursuant to Standing Order 31.

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 31

[*Translation*]

TELETHON ON BEHALF OF MR. ROBERT CORBEIL

Mr. Jacques Vien (Laurentides): Madam Speaker, next Sunday I will be taking part in a telethon to help Mr. Robert Corbeil, a resident of the municipality of Mont-Rolland in my riding. After Mr. Corbeil became a quadraplegic as result of an unfortunate accident, residents of Mont-Rolland started a campaign to help Mr. Corbeil and his family.

Madam Speaker, today everybody in Laurentides knows about Mr. Corbeil's case. I want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to all my constituents who have shown an incredible spirit of community and compassion by getting involved in various projects to help Mr. Corbeil. The telethon is one of those projects, and I urge all residents to give generously.

* * *

[*English*]

FARM INCOME PROTECTION ACT

Mr. Lyle Vanclief (Prince Edward—Hastings): Madam Speaker, the more we hear from farm organizations about the Farm Income Protection Act, the more we are being told that this legislation is not completely what farm groups were expecting and promised.

Farm leaders who thought they were being consulted expressed shock and disappointment that this legislation does not contain measures enshrining the producer's share of premiums, and there is no reference in the bill to the principle of equity for producers of different commodities in different regions of Canada.

We on this side of the House join the agrifood industry in Canada in calling upon the government to make crucial amendments to the bill to protect in the long run a vital sector of the Canadian economy, that of the agrifood industry.

[*Translation*]

CONSUMER AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Madam Speaker, yesterday in the *Journal de Montréal*, we read: Blais:

> According to Pierre Blais,
>
> Edmonston has been engaging in misleading advertising.
>
> It is false to say that the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs supports corporations at the expense of consumers.

According to the newspaper:

> The member for Bellechasse wanted to remind Mr. Edmonston, the NDP consumer critic, that he often asks CCC to intervene in matters that are not under the department's jurisdiction. He mentioned gas prices and explained that setting gas prices was not the responsibility of CCC. Furthermore, hidden guarantees for automobiles were a provincial, not a federal responsibility.

Madam Speaker, the article goes on to say:

> The Minister explained that in many consumer areas, responsibility was shared by both levels of government, but considering the present constitutional context, the provinces would not look kindly on the federal government trespassing in an area for which they had responsibility.

This is a clear message to the NDP.

* * *

[*English*]

FISHERIES

Mr. Fred J. Mifflin (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception): Madam Speaker, once again on behalf of Atlantic Canadians, especially Newfoundlanders, I want to register deep concern and outright protest over the destructive overfishing by the European Community vessels.

Figures just released show that for 1990, European Community vessels are estimated to have caught 76,000 tonnes of groundfish stocks. This is five times over the quota of 15,377 tonnes set by the members of North Atlantic Fisheries Organization.

In addition, despite a NAPO moratorium on the harvesting of northern cod, the European Community set a unilateral quota of 32,000 tonnes. It is clear that in 1990, as they have in the past six years, foreign vessels have disregarded the quotas they set for themselves, and more importantly, they are getting away with it.

The people in the fishing industry are fed up with statement after statement. It is imperative that this government develop a system with teeth to end the overfishing and to protect the livelihoods of fisherpersons in the Atlantic region.

* * *

CHILD CARE

Ms. Joy Langan (Mission—Coquitlam): Madam Speaker, a comprehensive child care plan was the promise of the Tories on the campaign trail in 1984 and again in 1988.

Child care groups across this country anticipated, after almost seven years, that this government would be announcing child care initiatives in this budget. Nothing. There is no new money for child care, in spite of a promise in the 1984 election, in spite of a promise in the 1988 election and in spite of a number of promises in this House by the Minister of National Health and Welfare in response to my questions.

He said that in the life of this Parliament we would have child care. The same minister said that we should look at child care as an economic and a social instrument.

What did Canadian families get? They got a response from the Minister of Health and Welfare saying that the money would have to come from a combination of federal financial reserves and reallocation of other program commitments.

Is this the government's commitment to affordable, accessible child care? Is this what working families can expect; we will pay for child care with money we steal from other social programs? Some promise.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL CONSUMERS' RIGHTS DAY

Mr. Jean-Guy Guilbault (Drummond): Madam Speaker, March 15 has been declared International Consumers' Rights Day, under the theme: protect consumer rights.

Founded in 1960 by five groups from the United States, Great Britain, Australia, Belgium and the Netherlands, today the International Organization of Consumers Unions has 181 member organizations in 64 countries, on all continents. The organization tries to find solutions to problems, international in scope, relating to consumer products such as pharmaceuticals, pesticides and tobacco.

The message of the International Organization of Consumers Unions is especially important for developing countries and countries in Eastern Europe that are now setting up market economies in which consumers have a major role to play.

In Canada, Madam Speaker, consumers are protected by framework legislation, and especially by a market that is sensitive to consumer needs.

* * *

[*English*]

1848 REVOLUTION

Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough West):

[*Editor's Note: Member spoke in Hungarian, translated as follows:*]

[*Translation*]

As a proud Canadian by birth, of Hungarian ancestry, I wish to bring to the attention of this House the very special significance of today to Hungarians around the world.

In 1848, Europe was in upheaval. It was the year of Revolution. The absolute monarchies were decaying and freedom and liberty were attempting to break free of the chains of tyranny. On this day, in that year, the Hungarian people announced their revolt from the absolutism of the Hapsburg monarchy centred in Vienna. This was a bold act. It lead to short-lived freedom, to be followed by a generation of repression by the last vestiges of absolutism.

But, the spirit born on March 15, 1848, produced the Compromise of 1867, which established the Dual Monarchy, which provided a workable arrangement between Austria and Hungary for 50 years. And the same spirit, 141 years later, ignited the flame of liberty in 1989, resulting in a free and independent Hungary at last.

[*English*]

REFORM PARTY

Mr. Larry Schneider (Regina—Wascana): Madam Speaker, I stand here today to address the issue of the Reform Party and their agricultural policy, or rather their lack thereof.

My concern is that Mr. Manning and his splinter reformers have not the slightest idea of the complexities of the agrifood industry. Mr. Manning admits he is a management consultant from Edmonton with no connection to the soil.

Uncertain about the complexities of the farm situation, Mr. Manning acknowledges that his agricultural ideas might not work. Mr. Manning has refused three invitations to appear before the finance committee and perhaps if he were to receive an invitation to appear before the Standing Committee on Agriculture, he likely would refuse that invitation as well.

What are his ideas? Nobody, including Mr. Manning, knows. If Mr. Manning and the Reform Party hope to be a credible force in the next federal election, someone had better come up with a solid agricultural policy, or any policy for that matter, one that the agrifood producers can look at and closely evaluate on its merits or lack thereof.

Therefore, I ask: where is your agriculture policy, Mr. Manning? Where is the wheat? Mr. Manning, where is the beef?

* * *

FOREIGN AID

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Finance is making the world's poor shoulder the burden of his economic mismanagement.

After cuts in 1989 and a 5 per cent cap in 1990, the minister decided in the February budget to reduce the cap on overseas development assistance, to 3 per cent in 1992–93 and following years. Although this will save Canada $262 million next year alone, the results for the Third World will be harsh.

In its recent review of member's foreign aid programs, the Organization of Economic Co–operation and Development expressed, "regret" at the "significant decline in Canadian overseas development assistance". The OECD report concluded that: "Canada's real commitment to its announced aid target must be in question."

Tory times are not only hard times for Canadians, they are also hard times for the poor and impoverished of this world who look to Canada for her humanitarian help and leadership. I urge the minister to read the OECD report and significantly increase, not cap, Canada's ODA.

* * *

• (1110)

BANK OF CANADA

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Madam Speaker, Canadians are fascinated by the new Crow rate. The Governor of the Bank of Canada preaches wage restraint as a miracle cure to fight inflation, but in practice he accepts yet another generous salary increase from the Conservative government on the day before wages are frozen for secretaries, clerks, and other federal employees.

Crow's salary has increased 69 per cent over five years. Crow says high salaries at the bank are necessary to retain staff. Then why is it that Crow's counterpart in the U.S. gets paid $100,000 less than Governor Crow, and the U.S. chairman is doing a much better job of earning his salary too. Unemployment in the U.S. is just 6.5 per cent, compared to the 10.2 per cent which Wilson and Crow have forced on Canadians. The U.S. federal bank rate is 4 percentage points lower than in Canada.

Canadians can neither afford the hypocrisy nor the destructive economic policies of this disastrous duo, Wilson and Crow.

Madam Speaker, the Governor's pay rate is one Crow benefit that Canadians would be happy to see cut.

* * *

POTATO INDUSTRY

Mr. Greg Thompson (Carleton—Charlotte): Madam Speaker, the outbreak of the PVY–N potato virus has caused much concern in Atlantic Canada.

The federal and provincial governments and the Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick potato boards have just announced the implementation of an eradication plan that will eliminate PVY–N and ensure that the normal trade patterns can be resumed.

In addition, Agriculture Canada has begun negotiations with the United States and has already succeeded in reducing U.S. import restrictions.

Madam Speaker, as I have indicated to the House in the past, the Canadian agricultural industry depends upon the export of top quality crops not only to the United States but to the world.

By having the various levels of government and industry work together, we can ensure the eradication of this virus and the continued success of Canadian agriculture.

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[*Translation*]

MONTREAL'S ECONOMY

Mr. Marcel Prud'homme (Saint–Denis): Madam Speaker, Montreal—said the late Jean Marchand—is the motor of Quebec's economy. Montreal, my city, is crying our for help because of the disastrous impact of unemployment. Montreal has broken the gloomy record set by St. John's, Newfoundland, the unemployment champion. According to an article that appeared in *La Presse* on Thursday, March 14, the fact that 180,000 workers are unemployed does not seem to impress the minister responsible for Montreal and especially for East Montreal. The minister keeps recalling the situation under the Liberals, but he should realize that the Liberals were judged by the Canadian people in 1984 and 1988. The people of Montreal don't want to know what the Liberals did or did not do but what the Minister of Labour, the minister responsible for Montreal and especially for East Montreal, intends to ask the government in the way of emergency measures.

* * *

[*English*]

MEMBER FOR DUVERNAY

Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North): Madam Speaker, last night on *The Journal* the member for Duvernay made a statement in relation to our aboriginal people that we in the New Democratic Party, and I am sure most Canadians, find offensive.

The statement was both racist and bigoted. When this type of statement is made by any Canadian it must be challenged. When it is made by a member of Parliament is it unforgivable. At a time when Canadian national unity is at stake and there is a need to promote greater understanding and tolerance, this type of statement is particularly regrettable.

We would call upon the member to immediately apologize to aboriginal peoples and to all Canadians. We call upon the government to dissociate itself from this member and his statement.

* * *

[*Translation*]

ECONOMY RECOVERY

Mr. Clément Couture (Saint–Jean): Madam Speaker, on February 26 this year, the Minister of Finance brought down his budget for 1991–92. The aim of this Budget is first of all to control inflation and to achieve economic recovery. These measures are necessary to stabilize prices, which will have a positive impact on economic recovery. The measures to control wage settlements in our latest Budget are intended as an example to be followed by all levels of government and the private sector. These measures will make it possible to bring interest rates down even further, to a level compatible with genuine economic recovery, and will improve the standard of living of all Canadians.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*Translation*]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Acting Prime Minister.

[*English*]

On February 15, 1990, the House of Commons of the Parliament of Canada unanimously passed the following motion:

> That this House reaffirm its commitment to support, protect and promote linguistic duality in Canada, as reflected by this House in the Constitution Amendment, 1987 and the Official Languages Act, 1988.

I ask the Acting Prime Minister under whose authority were unelected officials meeting behind closed doors last week at Meech Lake to discuss possible changes to the Official Languages Act?

Hon. Marcel Danis (Minister of State (Youth) and Minister of State (Fitness and Amateur Sport) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, many people were in attendance at the meeting to which the hon. Acting Leader of the Opposition refers, including a number of academics, who made a number of suggestions concerning the future of this country. Obviously, the government is willing to listen to as many suggestions as possible. That is why we have the Spicer commission. We will listen to the Beaudoin-Edwards committee. We will listen to recommendations or suggestions that may come from members of this House.

I would like to tell my hon. friend that our commitment to the Official Languages Act is full and complete and total.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Madam Speaker, my second question is for the same minister. On February 15, 1990, the following resolution was unanimously adopted: "That this House reaffirm its commitment to support, protect and promote linguistic duality in Canada, as reflected by this House in the Constitution Amendment, 1987 and the Official Languages Act, 1988."

I direct my question to the Acting Prime Minister. Last week, under what authority did he put on the table one of the basic issues in Canada, namely our bilingual character, one of the fundamental traits of our country? And under what authority did non-elected public servants put that question on the table?

Hon. Marcel Danis (Minister of State (Youth), Minister of State (Fitness and Amateur Sport) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): First, Madam Speaker, I want to tell my hon. friend that the Government of Canada did not put anything on the table during that Meech Lake meeting. There have been consultations with various groups, including academics, and certain suggestions were made. Naturally the Government of Canada is quite prepared to listen carefully to all suggestions, be they from academics, from the various commissions struck by the federal and provincial governments, or from members of this House. But I should like to say to my colleague that at any time the Government of Canada—

[*English*]

—is fully committed to the Official Languages Act.

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Madam Speaker, there is a fundamental contradiction in what the Acting Prime Minister is saying today. On the one hand he is restating the government's support for the Official Languages Act, and on the other hand he says that he is prepared to listen to any particular issue. This is another example—

Mr. McDermid: What's the matter with that?

Ms. Copps: —of where the closed-door process at Meech Lake is not going to work.

Will the Deputy Prime Minister state today that there is a fundamental characteristic of this country, and that fundamental characteristic includes our bilingual nature and in particular the protection of language minorities wherever they live in Canada? This item is not negotiable and it should not be put on the table behind closed doors at Meech Lake.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, as has been made abundantly clear, that question was not put on the table by the government. It is not an open question for this government. The commitment of this government to official bilingualism is clear, constant, and continues.

Let me ask the Acting Leader of the Opposition if she would provide the House of Commons with a list of those questions on which she believes it is improper for Canadians to express their views.

* * *

• (1120)

[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of the Environment.

In the Green Plan, the minister stated, and I quote: "—the federal government has required environmental impact assessments for all proposals coming before the Cabinet for decision. A statement of the environmental implications of new policies and programs will be

made public at the time that the Cabinet initiative is announced".

Last week, in response to a question on free trade with Mexico, his colleague the Minister for International Trade rejected the Green Plan flatly when he said that he was not bound by that clause.

Here is my question: Does the Minister of the Environment agree with his colleague?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment): Madam Speaker, the policy is clear. What was stated in the Green Plan and approved by the Cabinet is that every document submitted to the Cabinet had to contain a section dealing with the environmental implications of the proposed decision.

This policy was implemented and will be enforced. As far as the requirements set as a result of this decision are concerned, we were to release the information contained in that section, or a summary of it, to the Standing Committee of the House on the Environment.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Madam Speaker, let us be very clear that the minister has contradicted his colleague.

The Minister for International Trade has issued a direct challenge to this minister. Last week, the Minister for International Trade stated that the environmental consequences related to trade should not be subject for negotiation within the context of the Mexican free trade agreement.

Two days ago, Mr. William Riley, Director of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, stated the contrary. He stated that we should have separate environmental agreements on some matters, yes. But he went on to say that where the environment and trade impact on each other, he accepted the linkage of the two within the Mexican free trade agreement. That is only common sense.

Which side is the Minister of the Environment on, that of common sense or that of the Minister for International Trade?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Madam Speaker, there is no dichotomy because common sense and the Minister for International Trade are one and the same thing.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Crosbie: The hon. gentleman certainly has not quoted me accurately. I have said that the U.S.–Canada–Mexico negotiation on a free trade agreement is a trade negotiation.

If there are concerns about environmental matters, then they can be dealt with in a parallel negotiation. They will not likely be dealt with in a trade negotiation. This is the same position as Mrs. Hills has taken in the United States.

Mrs. Campbell (South West Nova): Use some common sense.

Mr. Crosbie: They ask questions, and then you hear this mumbling and muttering while you are trying to respond, Madam Speaker. I am a person of some shyness, and this frightens me.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Crosbie: Madam Speaker, just as we did in the U.S.–Canada Free Trade Agreement, we negotiated an environmental agreement, signed just two days ago.

If it is necessary and if it looks like there is a lot of interest, we will negotiate on a parallel track with respect to the environment.

By the way, we already have an environmental agreement with Mexico that was signed by the Prime Minister a year ago. We are working with Mexico on the environmental issues.

* * *

[*Translation*]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. This is a supplementary to the question of the hon. leader of the opposition.

The Secretary of State for External Affairs tells us that he and his government support this country's Official Languages Act. Considering that a representative of his party approached our party with a proposition to abolish

the parliamentary committee on official languages, can the minister explain why, if he supports official languages in this country, we have a proposition by the government of Canada to abolish the parliamentary committee on official languages?

Hon. Marcel Danis (Minister of State (Youth), Minister of State (Fitness and Amateur Sport) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, I am not personally aware of my colleague making the representations the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville alleges were made. However, I can assure him of our full, complete and total support to the Official Languages Act.

I want to thank him and his party for supporting the motion we introduced in this House on February 15, 1990.

[*English*]

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Madam Speaker, another question in terms of national unity in this country that is very, very important, and this again goes to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Acting Prime Minister. Last June, about 10 days before the Meech Lake Accord collapsed, the Prime Minister made a proposal to aboriginal people of this country, and included about six points, including the establishment of a royal commission on aboriginal rights and a greater definition of the treaty rights of aboriginal people.

Also, a comment was made last night by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, and I quote, "It's like the Indians, they do not respect our laws, they do not respect the Constitution, but they want to have the money".

In light of that comment by the member for Duvernay, will the minister first of all dissociate the government from that comment about Indian people and second, would it now move to implement the promises made to aboriginal people in the middle of June of last year?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the question of the statement carried on *The Journal*, a statement by our colleague from Duvernay, the hon. member will know that the member issued a statement this morning and I will quote, if I might, Madam Speaker, a brief reference from that.

[*Translation*]

"The hon. member explained that he was thinking of the behaviour of certain warriors during the crisis at Oka last summer when he said those words."

[*English*]

It was consequently, Madam Speaker, a statement, as I understand it, more limited than is suggested by the hon. member.

An hon. member: Look at the transcript.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): I will nonetheless take a look at the whole transcript. The hon. member suggests we take a look. She has been on *The Journal* and she will know that sometimes not each of her priceless words is recorded on the television program. We will look at the transcript and see if any further action remains to be taken.

With respect to consultations with the aboriginal people, of course it is the intention of the government to find appropriate and effective ways in which those consultations can proceed.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): I want to pursue this point with the Acting Prime Minister.

Last June the Prime Minister made a commitment to doing six different items for the aboriginal people, including a better definition of treaty rights to be enshrined in the Constitution; a recognition of aboriginal people as a fundamental characteristic of this country; and most important, the establishment of a fully fledged royal commission on aboriginal rights of the stature of the commission on bilingualism many, many years ago.

I would like to ask the Acting Prime Minister whether or not he thinks that the proper way to start this important round of constitutional studies we are about to enter into would be to fulfil these promises made to the aboriginal people, the first nations of this country. Is that not the proper way to begin this very, very important round of constitutional talks that are so vital to all the people of this country? Is that not the proper signal to send?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has, I am sure, been following some of the questions of his leader in the House. He will know that she has referred, among other things, to the interest expressed again most recently by aboriginal leaders to be involved in discussions. She referred, I believe yesterday in the House of Commons,

to a letter sent by the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, a letter of which she had a copy but which had not, at that time, been received or seen by the Prime Minister.

I now have a copy of that letter and we naturally are going to be responding to that letter in a way that encourages the fullest possible involvement of aboriginal people, including aboriginal leaders in discussions of Canada's Constitution.

* * *

UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Madam Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Finance, I address my question to the Acting Prime Minister. The finance minister's home town of Toronto is not, as the government perceives, the fat-cat city, but rather a tale of two cities with a chronic unemployment undercurrent.

• (1130)

Given that Toronto unemployment is reaching double digits in which 194,000 people were unemployed in February, up 25,000 from January and that since 1989, 75,000 jobs were lost in Toronto, more than half in the manufacturing sector, will the Acting Prime Minister acknowledge the devastating impact that government policies have had on the Toronto economy and when will the government provide the federal leadership necessary to kick-start an indispensable engine of the Canadian economy?

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): Mr. Speaker, the city of Toronto and surrounding areas commonly referred to as the Golden Horseshoe, probably saw unprecedented growth in the period 1984 up to early 1990. Jobs were plentiful. The unemployment rate was very, very low. During this period of time, unemployment has risen, but it is still the lowest unemployment rate in this country.

From reports coming out of Toronto, we are seeing some turns in the economy which we expected. It is still not what we would like it to be and we probably will not come out of it until the summer. But I can say that with housing sales having doubled over the last month, there is activity again in Toronto, especially with first-time home buyers, I am informed. Interest rates have dropped over 4 per cent. They dropped again slightly yesterday, continuing their downward trend. We feel very confident that Toronto and in fact all regions of this country will benefit from the activities and the policies of this government.

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Madam Speaker, the only turns happening in Toronto are going downward. Again, I go back to the Acting Prime Minister.

The true tale of Toronto is that there are 123,000 people on the welfare rolls. The Toronto housing and construction industries are in a nosedive. Nine hundred Toronto businesses went bankrupt last month and 110,000 Torontonians feed themselves thanks to the the good graces of the 200 food banks operating in that city.

Why is the government's federal budget so void of employment initiatives that are so desperately needed by real Canadians facing real problems? When are we going to put Canadians back to work?

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): I take a look at some of the headlines coming out of Toronto: "Resales Boom", "Relief as Toronto home sales double". Economic activity is starting to come back in the Toronto area. These are from Toronto papers. I understand the concern of the hon. member.

We are concerned about the unemployed as well. But we remember very well a previous government that tried to throw money at problems and did not solve any problems. It did not solve the problem in any way, shape or form.

What this government wants is the economy back on track, permanent full-time jobs, not part-time jobs with money thrown at them because that does not solve the problem. The problems can be solved by sticking to the proposals brought forward by the Minister of Finance in his very well accepted budget of February.

Our economy will be back moving again early in the summer and by 1992 the hon. member will up singing the praises of this government and the economy in Toronto.

POVERTY

Mr. Rey Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health or, perhaps, to whom it may concern.

Financial analysts estimate that $5 billion invested in better day care, before and after school programs, and in higher incomes and more community support for single parents will result in 187,000 children remaining in school and receiving adequate education.

Does the minister not think this $5 billion is a worth-while investment for Canada?

Hon. Marcel Danis (Minister of State (Youth) and Minister of State (Fitness and Amateur Sport) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, the Minister of National Health and Welfare is, of course, concerned with the poverty rate and the children in Canada. That is why since we have come into office over 300,000 children who were under the poverty line before are not any longer. So we have made progress.

With regard to the second part of the question which refers to children staying in school and the amounts of money that we put into those programs, I suggest to my hon. friend that he take a look at one of our recent initiatives which was the Stay In School initiative, whereby the federal government will provide over the next four years an amount of $300 million to try to decrease the horrible drop-out rate of children, especially poor children, in this country.

We are proud of the initiatives of this government and I am very proud of the initiatives of the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

Mr. Rey Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, it is not enough. There is a great deal of difference between $300 million and $5 billion.

My supplementary is for the same minister. The Senate's recent report *Children In Poverty—Toward a Better Future* states that those 187,000 Canadians would contribute $23 billion to the Canadian economy over 20 years. That means an additional $7 billion plus income taxes and over $1 billion in sales taxes.

Given those numbers, why does the minister persist in relegating Canadian families to the tragic cycle of poverty? Why continue to cut programs that generate wealth and opportunities?

Hon. Marcel Danis (Minister of State (Youth) and Minister of State (Fitness and Amateur Sport) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): I would like to refer my hon. friend to one statistic which I think is very meaningful; that is the total of our three main transfer payments to the provinces—the EPF, equalization payments and the CAP program.

When we came into office in 1984, the amount was $22 billion. I would like to tell my hon. friend that now the federal government is transferring to the provinces over $36 billion this year. That is an increase of approximately 6.9 annually per cent since we have been in office. So the increase in transfer payments has been much higher to the provinces than the increase in the budget of the federal government.

* * *

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Acting Prime Minister who will recall a few months ago that the Prime Minister announced a war on drugs and asked the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to play a critical in drug enforcement in Canada. He also will know that the RCMP is one of Canada's most famous symbols, both nationally and internationally.

I would also say to my hon. friend that the RCMP is one of the institutions that unifies Canada at this very, very difficult moment.

My question to the Acting Prime Minister is this: In 16 days the federal government will abandon its traditional role of support for the RCMP in terms of cutting back on the amount of money it provides for its support.

Can the Acting Prime Minister explain why, at this very critical moment in our history, the federal government would be abandoning its support for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police?

Hon. Pierre H. Cadieux (Solicitor General of Canada): Madam Speaker, I think all of us here will agree with part of what my hon. friend has said; the importance and

the good reputation of the RCMP, the famous reputation of the RCMP.

There is no intention whatsoever by this government to cut back RCMP services throughout the provinces, territories and municipalities where they have been serving so well and will continue to serve.

There is one reality on the other hand that has to be taken into consideration, and that is the cost of the RCMP to serve in those provinces, territories or municipalities; and that is under a contract that was signed 10 years ago to which there are some adjustments that are necessary. That is what we have been trying to do.

We made an offer in September 1989 to start discussions to renew, not abandon, the contracts. I am available to meet with my counterparts whenever they are available between now and March 31, to not only make sure that the RCMP continues but to settle the terms that are agreeable to every party. We have indicated that we are prepared to phase in some of those costs as of the first of April.

• (1140)

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Madam Speaker, it is clear that the federal government found $600 million to provide protection for Kuwaiti citizens. I do not think it unreasonable to expect the federal government to come up with adequate funding to provide security and safety to Canadian citizens, wherever they may live.

My supplementary question is directed to the Acting Prime Minister who comes from western Canada where the impact will be greatest and where in fact millions and millions of dollars will be added to the local taxpayers in the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia.

Does he and his colleagues support at this very critical time loading up the local taxpayers with additional policing costs and as a result requiring many local municipalities to look to their own policing options and perhaps beginning the demise of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in western Canada?

Does he and his colleagues support this abandoning of the RCMP in terms of funding at this very critical moment in Canadian history?

Hon. Pierre H. Cadieux (Solicitor General of Canada): Madam Speaker, I think it is very important. My hon. colleague should be a little bit less partisan on this issue, because what is occurring is that there are services provided to eight provinces, two territories, and I believe 190 municipalities across the land, except in Quebec and Ontario.

The contract was signed in 1981 for a 10–year period provided that in 1990, at the date we are right now, the split between the provinces and the federal government would be 70 per cent supported by the provinces and 30 per cent paid by the Government of Canada and all taxpayers across the country.

We are not charging 100 per cent of the service. We are now charging 70 per cent of the service, and we are looking at a very modest increase of 5 per cent for the next 10 years.

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PUBLIC SERVICE OF CANADA

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Acting Prime Minister.

The very day after the budget's vicious ultimatum to public sector workers to sacrifice their income or sacrifice their co–workers, a secret letter to deputy ministers was telling them to push managers down the line and push the lowest paid workers out the door.

Is it not time the government told Canadians how much it is costing them to contract out the jobs of the Public Service? Is it not time it revealed how it is damaging service to the unemployed, to veterans, and to the elderly? Is it not time to admit that all this pain and suffering has not done one iota to cut the deficit?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, the hon. member is inaccurate in her accusations of somehow conspiracy occurring. It is not surprising that deputy ministers communicate with each other both orally and in written form. She chooses to call them secret as if some conspiracy is involved. I humbly suggest that when she talks to her staff she does not issue the transcript to the rest of the world.

The reality is as the budget indicated. The Government of Canada, as its contribution to the necessary fight to bring expenditures at the public level under control so that we do not continue to borrow and borrow and leave

our children with this horrendous debt which will surely hobble them in whatever they might try to do in the future, placed an over-all freeze on O and M expenditures for government and within that context the wage increases will be kept to 3 per cent.

Most of the country considers that a reasonable request, given the fiscal regime the government is faced with.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Madam Speaker, my supplementary is directed to the same minister. This is not an exercise to reduce the Public Service or the deficit. It is an exercise in reducing services to the public. It is now quite obvious that this government has no intention of revitalizing the Public Service. Its secret plan is to destroy the Public Service, another institution that is vital to Canadian unity.

In the circumstances, how can the minister expect his officials to collaborate with Public Service 2000 Plan, the subject of a number of meetings being held today? And how can he expect them to provide an efficient and quality service when all his officials have been the target of vicious and arbitrary attacks, for purely political reasons?

Mr. Prud'homme: Good question.

[*English*]

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, the hon. member's wild hyperbole about destruction of the public service, denying of services and so on are absurd, and she knows it.

It would be a lot more helpful to the public of Canada who are paying the salaries of the public servants and to public servants themselves, if in fact we would reduce the level of hyperbole, talk about the real problems in real language and not for the benefit of television cameras with all of these wild exaggerations.

Public Service 2000 is a regime that we firmly believe will result in a more motivated, happier Public Service and better service to the public. That is why that change is being looked at.

In terms of the other accusations, I think I answered them in my response to her first question.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Nunatsiaq): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Environment.

On Wednesday, the Federal Court upheld the James Bay and Northern Quebec agreement as a federal law and said that the environmental assessment of the Great Whale River project is primarily a federal matter.

I will quote briefly from that judgment: "There is no doubt in my mind that Parliament intended the agreement to operate as a substantive enactment, as if the agreement had become part of the statute. Parliament appears unequivocal as to its intention and purpose".

Would the federal government, which has constitutional responsibility over the aboriginal people, agree now to follow the environmental provisions of the 1975 James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment): Madam Speaker, as my colleague certainly knows, we are presently at the federal level doing a study through the Department of Fisheries and Oceans of the infrastructure proposals made for that project. That study is near completion. We have had public input, and I will be receiving from my colleague, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, recommendations as to the next steps to follow.

We have also entered into an agreement with Quebec to have a joint review of the over-all Grande-Baleine project. We are at the point now where we are negotiating or discussing with the Cree and the Inuit to determine an appropriate chairperson for that very important panel which is composed of four committees.

We are certainly moving well along the road of fulfilling our obligations to native people and to all Canadians in terms of ensuring that the process is followed.

Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Nunatsiaq): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is for the same minister.

I will briefly quote something from *The Gazette* of Montreal which says: "Quebec's most important Inuit organization says Hydro Quebec impact study on Great Whale roads and airports is fatally flawed".

Will this government agree that it has full jurisdiction to ensure that not a shovel hits the ground on the infrastructure until a federal public impact study has been completed on the over-all project?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment): Madam Speaker, I am not to comment on Hydro Quebec's own impact studies.

As I mentioned earlier, we are doing our own federal impact studies on the infrastructure. What is at stake here is very important. What is at stake here is a process that has to be respected in terms of the environmental impact of everything that is being proposed in that region of the country.

It is a massive project and the environmental impacts have to be evaluated. They have to be evaluated because what we are trying to do here, under the theme of sustainable development, is ensure that we preserve the environment for generations to come. That is the commitment of this government and that is exactly what we are about to do.

* * *

WAGE INCREASES

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Madam Speaker, I also have a question for the government. It relates to a matter that the government House leader answered earlier in Question Period.

On February 25, 26, and 27, this government managed to deliver three contradictory and different messages with regard to its economic plan.

• (1150)

On the 25th, it secretly increases the salaries of top level public servants and management of the Bank of Canada in this country.

On the 26th, in the budget, the finance minister calls on those who make much less to restrict their salary increases to 3 per cent and says that for every 1 per cent increase there could be the loss of 2,000 jobs in the Public Service.

On the day after that, the Secretary of the Treasury Board, Ian Clark, says that it will be done through attrition, not through job loss.

Why is it that this government cannot keep the same economic message for three days in a row?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, the hon. member first off raises again the question which was answered by my colleague, the President of the Treasury Board, in terms of the 4.2 per cent.

As he knows, those are the salaries for Governor in Council appointees for which the government seeks the opinion of a private sector advisory board established by the previous government many years ago. It recommended a 6 per cent increase for 1990, last year. The government said no.

An hon. member: Oh, oh.

Mr. Andre: I wonder if the member could ask his colleague behind him if she would calm down and I will try to answer. The government said 4.2 per cent, but that was for 1990. I repeat, last year, 1990.

On February 25, in the budget, the Minister of Finance indicated that there would be a 3 per cent ceiling on salary increases and a freeze on O and M. It translates that if everybody gets 3 per cent, the drop in the operations and maintenance budget of government would probably provide for about 6,000 fewer jobs.

The Secretary of the Treasury Board said: "However annually there is about a 12,000 turnover in the Public Service, therefore it is not likely, even if everybody received the maximum of 3 per cent, that there would be 6,000 layoffs. In fact probably any positions that are lost would be accommodated through attrition."

Those are absolutely consistent, and I am sure even the NDP can understand that.

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Madam Speaker, I think it is obvious that if the government checked on the pay increases of other public servants and they had an independent judgment, they would also be getting more than 3 per cent or 4 per cent.

The problem with this government is that those people who give advice to the government made sure their pay increases were made the day before the budget. Those people who knew what was in the budget also had letters

written, to be delivered the day after the budget, which contradicted the message that the Minister of Finance was giving to this nation.

Why did the government deliberately mislead the Canadian people in terms of what it wanted to do? Why did it deliberately leave a different message with—

Some hon. members: Withdraw.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Unfortunately I am uncertain of what has been said because of his distance from the Chair. I will allow the hon. minister to answer.

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, if you check the "blues" you will find that he accused the government of deliberately misleading, which is out of order, and I would request that he withdraw that comment.

I realize it is not in the interest of the New Democratic Party to understand that which is clearly understandable. In terms of from February 25 forward, both those who advise the government from within the Public Service and those who advise the government from the House of Commons will not receive salary increases greater than 3 per cent. Everything is consistent in terms of from the budget forward.

The hon. member keeps talking about what happened in respect of last year and intermixing that with what will happen in terms of February 25 forward. That seems to be typical of NDP thinking.

* * *

CHINESE CANADIANS

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre): Madam Speaker, the government knows that 81,000 Chinese Canadians paid more than $23 million in head tax to be in Canada and then lived for 24 years with a total ban on immigration of other Chinese, including their families.

Over three years ago, the minister responsible promised Chinese Canadians that he would take to cabinet the question of redress for 62 years of legislated racism against Chinese Canadians. When would the government deliver on its promise?

Hon. Marcel Danis (Minister of State (Youth) and Minister of State (Fitness and Amateur Sport) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Employment and Immigration, I would like to take the question under consideration.

I would be happy to report to my hon. friend as soon as possible.

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre): Madam Speaker, maybe the minister can take this with him to the minister responsible.

We on this side of the House have repeatedly called on the government to set up an all-party committee to study and to consult with the Chinese community on this issue in order to resolve this matter.

Over the weekend, the Chinese Canadian community will be meeting in Toronto. I am asking the minister to tell Canadians whether he has any good news to report to them over this weekend on this issue so we can solve it once and for all.

Hon. Marcel Danis (Minister of State (Youth) and Minister of State (Fitness and Amateur Sport) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, I will certainly take my friend's comments as a representation to the minister.

I know that he refers to a substantial number of years. In closing, I would just like to remind him that the Liberals were in office for a long time during that period.

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FISHERIES

Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso): Madam Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, I would like to direct my question to the Acting Prime Minister today.

The decision of the minister of fisheries last December to cut the offshore share of the cod quota in 4T-Vn has directly threatened the viability of Richmond Fisheries and the livelihood of hundreds of families on Isle Madame.

Today Richmond Fisheries announced that it was tying up two of its four trawlers, throwing 26 trawlermen out of work. This decision is directly linked to recent offshore quota cuts, including the minister's December decision.

Will the minister of fisheries, today, restore Richmond Fisheries' traditional share before further job losses occur?

Mr. Ross Reid (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Madam Speaker, the decision of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Government of Canada on the allocation of quota is based on the long-term interests of all fishermen and those who depend on the fish, whether they be plant workers or people related to them.

The decisions are based on scientific advice and consultation with industry which ensures down the road that we have fish for as many people as possible and in as a sustainable way as possible, with maximum incomes.

The effects on Richmond Fisheries and so many others are unfortunate, but they are in the long-term interest of all those who depend on the fishery. That is why this government put in a $584 million program to try to ameliorate the effects on individuals and on communities.

I know my hon. friend is aware of this. Many of his constituents have benefited from this very substantial, well thought out and progressive program.

Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso): Madam Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for his response except that it misses the point.

The point is that the quota cut for 4T-Vn cod in the winter fishery was carried out in violation of principle X of the fisheries management plan and was carried out without consultation last December. In fact it does not appear to be supported by the scientific evidence which the parliamentary secretary cites.

If that quota cut is pursued, it will directly threaten the livelihood of at least 375 workers and trawlermen at Petit de Grat, at Richmond Fisheries. It is that decision which we are asking the minister to reconsider.

Mr. Ross Reid (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Madam Speaker, may I suggest that I did not miss the question, but my colleague may have missed the answer.

As he well knows, the management of any fishery is complicated. I would not suggest to him that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is a place to have to work if one likes the easy life.

Obviously there is a series of conflicting interests within the fishery: types of gear, the nature of different species approaches and that sort of thing.

The minister of fisheries must balance that, and some of those decisions are very difficult. Some hurt but they are in the long-term interest of as many people as possible, taking into account the conflicting interests.

• (1200)

Unfortunately, as some people are hurt by the fishery, it is the intention of this government to make sure that in the long term that pays off for as many people as possible.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Acting Prime Minister.

The Liberal government of Newfoundland is decimating the health care system of that province. It is closing 360 acute care hospital beds, including closure of acute care treatment at Port aux Basques. They are now denying a large number of Newfoundland residents basic medical care. The government opposite has repeatedly said it will enforce the Canada Health Act. The Canada Health Act states that the health care insurance plan of a province must provide health services on uniform conditions.

Will this government finally commit itself to enforcing the Canada Health Act and inform Newfoundland that it will not accept this basic cut to health care?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Madam Speaker, with reference to that question, the Government of Canada in the fiscal year starting April 1 is transferring to the Government of Newfoundland in excess of $1,400,000,000 for purposes of the Established Programs Financing, tax equalization, and our share of the Canada Assistance Plan. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is responsible for the administration of the provincial health system. It is getting substantial assistance from the Government of Canada; in excess of 45 per cent of all of the revenue of the Government of Newfoundland has been transferred to it by the Government of Canada.

The Government of Newfoundland is responsible for administering the health system. It has been given funds to do that, and it will have to accept the responsibility for the decisions it is making in connection with that health care system, which is getting very generous assistance from the Government of Canada.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

DESIGNATION OF ALLOTTED DAY

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, I would like to formally designate Monday as an allotted day for supply.

* * *

POINT OF ORDER

COMMENTS DURING QUESTION PERIOD

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): While I am on my feet, I would like to remind the Chair that the hon. member for Churchill did say that the government "deliberately" misled the House of Commons and Canada. That is contrary to the rules of this House, and I would ask the hon. member for Churchill to stand up and withdraw those remarks.

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Madam Speaker, I do not believe what I said contradicts the rules of the House of Commons. My understanding—and I have checked the rules before in this regard—is that if I had referred to a specific minister, that would be the case. However, if after we have had a chance to review the case the rules do indicate differently, I would withdraw.

Certainly with regard to the government's intention, I maintain the words that I used earlier.

Mr. Andre: Madam Speaker, it is unfortunate that these not really constraining rules, which guide us in terms of decorum and mature behaviour, are deemed not to apply to the member for Churchill. It is regrettable that he should assume that only by stretching the rules, breaking the rules, can he make his point. If he would rely on logic and moderate tones, perhaps he would better serve his constituents and the rest of this country.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Unfortunately, at the precise moment the hon. member was speaking, I had taken off the hearing aid which allows us to hear better in the House. I do not know for sure whether or not the hon. member said "deliberately", which would be against the rules of the House.

I will ask the House to allow me to check the "blues", which I am sure the hon. member for Churchill will do as well. Should it be that he is out of order, I am sure the hon. member will do the honourable thing and will apologize.

Mr. Murphy: Madam Speaker, I will take your advice under consideration and will look at the "blues" myself and check the precedents. However, I regret the fact that the government House leader went on in the second round to attack me personally. Before he attacks the other members of the House, he should remember that he was one of those members who actually physically charged the Chair in the past.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I think the wise thing to do on this nice Friday afternoon is to go with Tabling of Documents.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO INTERIM REPORT

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment): It is my privilege to table the government's response in both official languages to the interim report of the Standing Committee on the Environment, entitled: *No Time to Lose—The Challenge of Global Warming.*

* * *

[*Translation*]

PETITIONS

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Mr. Barry Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to four petitions.

Routine Proceedings

[*Editor's Note: See today's Votes and Proceedings.*]

* * *

[*English*]

MIDDLE EAST

KUWAIT CRISIS

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, may I begin by expressing to my colleagues who are critics for other parties in this House my regret that there was a brief delay in my transmitting a copy to them of the statement I intend to make. As members of the House will know, this has been a long week and I apologize to them for the 10 or 15 minute delay in delivering that statement.

Over the last seven and a half months, the Kuwait crisis has riveted our attention and engaged much of our debate.

Today Kuwait is again a free country, though deeply scarred by its ordeal.

I visited free Kuwait five days ago. I raised over the Canadian Embassy there, the flag our diplomats so reluctantly took down when they were forced by lack of food and water to leave on October 19.

I wish now to report to the House on that trip which began, quite deliberately, with a call on the Secretary–General of the United Nations in New York and which took me to Jordan, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Iran as well as Kuwait and the United States. I met with leaders of those countries and with the foreign ministers of Egypt and of Italy, and with leading Palestinians from the Occupied Territories.

In Jordan, I visited the headquarters of United Nations agencies working with the casualties and the consequences of the conflict. The Canadian government is contributing to many of their activities, but I want to draw the attention of the House and of Canadians to the United Nations Children's Fund operated by UNICEF for humanitarian assistance for the children who are victims of the conflict. The government has contributed an additional $550,000 to that fund and I hope individual Canadians might make their own contribution to that special Gulf Disaster Relief Appeal, organized by UNICEF Canada to provide medical and humanitarian assistance to mothers and children suffering the effects of that conflict.

My colleague, the Minister of National Defence, and the Chief of the Defence Staff, also visited Bahrain, Qatar, and the field hospital at Aljubayl, to express the gratitude of Canada to our troops and to the countries which hosted them.

My purpose was to look beyond the liberation of Kuwait to the issues this crisis has underscored. The fundamental problems remain, but there are now new possibilities which need to be nurtured.

My interest, as the foreign minister of Canada, was everywhere understood and welcomed. As a member of the coalition of countries who, through the United Nations, came to the aid of Kuwait, Canada's commitment to the liberation of Kuwait was clear.

But Canada also represents a lifetime of commitment to the United Nations. My primary mission was to try to ensure that that the sort of world consensus which emerged to free Kuwait be further mobilized to prevent such aggression in the future, and to strengthen the chances of enduring peace and security. That is the first lesson of this crisis.

There are other lessons. As the Prime Minister said on February 18, one such lesson is that reckless transfers of arms must come to an end. Canada's commitment and record on arms control entitle us to place this item high on the world's agenda. I reviewed with leaders of other countries of some of our proposals to reduce the flow and risk of arms.

Progress, of course, will be slow, but everyone I met in the immediate aftermath of a decade of conflict in the gulf acknowledged the need to address this problem, and to do so practically and persistently. The House should know that in some gulf countries the immediate reflex may be to buy new arms to deal with threats they believe will continue. That underlines the need for countries like Canada to advance proposals like those the Prime Minister has set forth.

• (1210)

But for real peace and security to emerge and for arms transfers to diminish, the underlying causes of tension have to be resolved. These tensions, many of which relate to enduring disputes between Israel and her neighbours, were a major topic of my discussions.

Madam Speaker, no one in the Middle East has forgotten a single moment of history, and there is a lot of history to overcome. There is now, however, an opportu-

nity—now, but not for long. The world must not lose that opportunity.

[*Translation*]

Many of us have said that the recent events have changed the Middle East forever. Canada's purpose has been to make those changes for the better—to strengthen the United Nations, to increase the control of arms and to reduce the risk of war, and to resolve the tensions at the root of insecurity in the Middle East.

I congratulated Mr. Perez de Cuellar, on behalf of the people of Canada, for his resolution during this crisis. He thanked Canada for our support, and believed that Canada had set an example for other states by our determination to settle this crisis through the United Nations. He informed me that the United Nations is poised to police the separation of forces, once an official request is received from the Government of Kuwait.

He also urged us to try to heal some of the wounds of this crisis by helping leaders with whom Canada has close ties—such as King Hussein of Jordan. He was concerned about the Palestinians whose leadership had been so criticized, but whose right represent a continuing challenge to the reputation for fairness and effectiveness of the United Nations. Indeed, this issue dominated many of my subsequent discussions.

On my way to the region, I also met with Secretary of State Baker, just before he embarked on his own tour. He shared our view that there is a psychological moment of opportunity to be seized on the agenda for arms control. His immediate concerns were with the arrangements for regional security which would enable the United States to withdraw its ground forces from the theatre and bring the troops home.

Even as we spoke, of course, the Foreign Ministers of the Gulf Co-operation Council were meeting in Damascus with the Foreign Ministers of Syria and Egypt to reach agreement on the stationing of Syrian and Egyptian ground forces in Kuwait, to replace Coalition ground forces, once a definitive ceasefire with Iraq was arranged.

[*English*]

Madam Speaker, I believed that my trip to the area should begin with the government of Kuwait. The Emir of Kuwait was still in Taif, in Saudi Arabia, where he had spent the occupation. His appreciation for Canada's contribution to the liberation of Kuwait was heartfelt. The Emir was deeply concerned at the damage to his people and to his state. Plans are already beginning for the massive reconstruction of Kuwait and I welcomed the clear assurances that the expertise of Canadian companies will enjoy opportunities commensurate with the important role Canada played in liberating Kuwait.

The senseless damage to Kuwait must be seen to be believed. Across the limitless desert landscape burn innumerable fires, each set deliberately with powerful charges of high explosives. Downtown, on the waterfront, are burned-out building after building, looted store after store, museums, homes, things of value or merit, trashed. This was not war damage; this city was put to the torch in the last 48 hours of occupation.

For the Kuwaitis, the ending of sanctions against Iraq is therefore a major problem. Should oil exports again earn revenues for Iraq when Kuwait remains crippled? On the other hand, Iraq itself is badly damaged and needs to finance its own recovery. One idea being explored by countries of the region is the dedication of a proportion of Iraq's oil revenues to repair the damage Saddam Hussein has done.

Much will depend on what kind of regime survives in Iraq. Saddam Hussein is now being challenged by his own people. But through the force of arms and oppression he can cling to power. As long as he does, the countries of the region will be wary of his designs and will want continued sanctions on anything enabling him to rebuild his armies.

In Kuwait, there is a mood calling for change in the way the country governs itself. The government says it is anxious to open up the regime, to institute more democracy. I encouraged that development and urged that particular care be taken to allow the reintegration of Palestinian residents of Kuwait, many of whom, most of whom, were intensely loyal to Kuwait.

Almost everyone with whom I met indicated that the Palestinian problem is the key issue to be resolved in the region. The answer will have to be found in greater security for all states of the area. The issue has three essential elements which all must be respected. They are the security of the state of Israel, the rights of the Palestinians and territory.

Sequence and relationship—which goes first, and what is tied to what—could consume thought, discussion and negotiation for years. Meanwhile, were that to occur, the despair of the refugee camps would find more radical expression and the arms race would go on.

I sought in my discussions in Jordan, in Syria, in Israel, and in the home of a leading Palestinian, Faisal Husseini, to promote appreciation of the need to build confidence in the collective ability of states and peoples to live together in acceptance and security. Eventually, a healthier state of mind can be built. There is not a lot of time. The countries and peoples concerned could make gestures, take initiatives, not of a kind which bear upon their fundamental security interests, but which build up a habit of working together. That is the message I left with all those with whom I met.

Could not Lebanon be the theatre of such co-operative action to further strengthen the authority of the government of Lebanon?

Could some progress be made among the states and parties on water projects?

Can peoples see their welfare in terms of a shared and more harmonious future, instead of a bitterly divided past?

Madam Speaker, it is not clear that they can. But that is the best way to build trust.

Much time in this discussion is devoted to technique, to whether it should be an international conference, at the United Nations or not at the United Nations, or whether it should be separate bilateral negotiations, and whether discussion between the Palestinians and the Israelis should be part of that or separate, and, in any case, who should represent the Palestinians, and so on.

On that last point, Canada can only agree with the Secretary-General of the United Nations; the Palestinians should be represented by the organizations or representatives they choose. Our distaste for the support for Saddam Hussein by the leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization should not disqualify Palestinians from coming to their conclusions on what we have always said was fundamental; their right to choose their own leadership in the search for realization of their legitimate rights.

As I said in Jerusalem to the Prime Minister of Israel, we are among the closest friends of that country.

• (1220)

Canada will not let Israel be put at risk. As the Prime Minister of Canada said on February 8, and as President Bush said a week ago, there is no security in geography.

I also went to Iran. My meeting with President Rafsanjani was productive. Of course, we discussed problems—human rights and hostages for example. But we did so in a way which gave me hope that Canada can work well with Iran.

These countries are all neighbours of Iraq. They are not disinterested in the outcome of the current uprising there. Indeed, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Iran have brought together in Lebanon the leaders of the various groups representing the masses of people wishing to be done with Saddam Hussein's tyranny, not just the Shiite majority in the south, not just the Kurdish minority in the north, but others as well. We have always said that the future of Iraq is up to the Iraqis. I encouraged other states in the region not to intervene.

I have been encouraged by all the leaders I spoke with. They want a durable peace in the region. They are however not yet ready to move beyond the liberation of Kuwait to address the age-old problems on which they have been so long divided, except with wariness and with distrust. But move they must. Or the arms race will spiral, and the United Nations will lose the lustre of its concerted action to liberate Kuwait. That would be our common loss.

By its nature, this is an interim report to the House, and I will be coming back to the standing committee as early as next week.

My conversations last week gave me a more direct understanding of attitudes in a region whose conflicts are deep and dangerous. They reinforced Canada's ability to play a constructive role in calming those conflicts and in using the end of a war to begin a real peace. I know that all members of this House share our commitment to that goal.

As our ships head home from the gulf, proud of our contribution to one victory, we are seeking now to address the sources of that conflict. Last July no one foresaw the invasion of Kuwait; no one foresaw the unprecedented response of the United Nations. We cannot foresee the developments of the next several

months except to say that they offer a real chance to resolve the most intractable conflict the world knows, and it is in Canada's interest to make the most of that opportunity.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Fred J. Mifflin (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the right hon. Secretary of State for External Affairs for his statement on the Persian Gulf crisis and the search for peace, and indeed the role that Canada has played. I found it very interesting as I am sure all members of the House did.

On behalf of the Liberal caucus, I would like to respond to the hon. minister's statement.

[*Translation*]

Like all Canadians, the Liberal caucus is happy and relieved that the war in the Persian Gulf ended so quickly. The primary objective of the United Nations, supported by all Canadians to expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait and restore this country's sovereignty was achieved.

[*English*]

The Liberal caucus commends all members of the Canadian Armed Forces, especially those stationed in the gulf region, for their professionalism and their dedication in carrying out their duties. I also want to register our sincere gratitude to the members of their families for their understanding, their dedication, and indeed their steadfast support in these difficult times. We are all thankful that no Canadian lives were lost.

The end of the war marks only the beginning of a much more difficult challenge facing the international community, the challenge of reconstruction, development and stabilization in the Middle East, as the right hon. Secretary of State for External Affairs has just explained.

The destructive impact of war has been very severe. The economies of Iraq and Kuwait have been virtually destroyed. Those of other states in the region such as Jordan and Egypt have been significantly hurt. Scud missile attacks on Israel destroyed hundreds of housing units. The waters and coastlines of the Persian Gulf are blackened by oil, and the skies over Kuwait and surrounding lands have been darkened by hundreds of oil well fires. Thousands of civilians are homeless and sick; the danger of epidemics is very real. The situation is desperate.

Estimates of the cost of all the necessary reconstruction, environmental cleanup and humanitarian assistance in the region range well into the hundreds of billions of dollars.

[*Translation*]

Madam Speaker, the war also had a negative impact on many, mostly Third World countries that were not belligerents but suffered as a result of rising oil prices and dwindling export markets.

[*English*]

Moreover, some of the root causes of tension in the region still must be addressed. These include the lack of adequate regional security arrangements, continuing economic and wealth disparities between the various states, problems of democratization and human rights, religious fundamentalism and territorial claims and disputes affecting states and people such as Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel and the Palestinians.

The impact of the war on the United Nations must also be carefully considered. The members of the coalition, including Canada, have lauded the United Nations for demonstrating the capacity to act on behalf of the international community to halt aggression. We speak of the new world order.

The Liberal caucus agrees there is potential for an important new status for the United Nations, but we are convinced that this requires the United Nations and its agencies to be actively and centrally involved in the search for peace in the Middle East.

The Liberal caucus has always supported the collective security provisions of the United Nations charter. We have always accepted that the use of force to uphold the United Nations principles may be necessary, but as a last resort.

That being said, we recognize that there have been valid concerns expressed about the potentially negative impact on the United Nations, and I say the potentially negative impact on the United Nations, of its willingness to endorse war before other options to resolve the gulf crisis had clearly proven inadequate.

There are valid concerns about the relegation of the Security Council to the sidelines once war had started. There are also valid concerns that the five permanent members of the Security Council, who agreed on the

issue, may well be disposed to disagree on other issues of international peace and security which might prevent the Security Council from playing a role in the future.

We believe that Canada must be vigorous in ensuring that these concerns are addressed.

[*Translation*]

Madam Speaker, I would now like to address the search for peace and Canada's role in this respect. The Liberal caucus feels that Canadians should urge their government to play an active role in meeting reconstruction needs in the short term and seeking peace in the long term, in the Near and Middle East. They should also urge the government to encourage the UN to act consistently and consider restructuring the UN to that end.

[*English*]

The government has laid out some preliminary thoughts on this role. The minister has just expanded on these interesting thoughts in the context of his trip to the Middle East. I am sure it must have been a very tiring experience.

• (1230)

I must commend the minister on looking so fresh after what must have been an exhausting experience for him. We welcome him back to the House.

An hon. member: Bravo.

Mr. Mifflin: We particularly support the government's interest in humanitarian and other economic assistance, economic cleanup assistance and controls over arms sales to the region.

We note, however, that the visit of President Bush this week to Ottawa, which displayed its undeniable successes, has clearly illustrated the sharp differences of opinion between the Government of Canada and the United States over the issue of controlling conventional arms transfers.

It is sobering to know that since 1961, $1.6 trillion has been spent on arms in the Middle East. As well, I note that the Canadian Centre for Arms Control and Disarmament recently estimated that the United States plans to sell weapons totalling $25 billion to the Middle East this year.

We urge the government to continue pushing hard on this issue. I note that the standing committee of the House on national defence and veterans affairs is studying this assiduously. We are hoping to come up with some suggestions on a non-partisan basis to the government, which may be able to present some rational and practical achievable ideas in this very difficult and hard to grasp issue which is so key to the downstream happenings in this area of conflict.

I recommend to the Secretary of State for of External Affairs that he undertake a special diplomatic effort to seek out support for reviving the idea of conventional arms transfer talks, first attempted in the late 1970s by the Carter administration.

Liberals believe further aspects of Canada's contribution to building a durable peace in the Middle East should be considered. The following is a series of possible initiatives that we offer and urge the government to support and promote. There are six of them.

First, the promotion of an important role for the United Nations and its member agencies in providing economic aid. The current scramble for reconstruction contracts in Kuwait has not yet been matched by a serious commitment to provide comprehensive aid to the countries of the gulf region hardest hit by the war.

Although a second Marshall Plan of sorts has been suggested by the Government of Canada among others, it would appear that little else is yet being done to co-ordinate an effective aid program that addresses not only reconstruction needs, but also those relating to health and disease prevention, environmental cleanup, food distribution, temporary shelter, management of refugees and some of the other needs.

One means of dealing with these myriad needs is to involve the United Nations and its member agencies which have responsibilities in various agencies requiring assistance. Such agencies include, among others, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the United Nations Development Program, the United Nations Environment Program, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Disaster Relief Organization and the Food and Agricultural Organization.

An active role by the United Nations and those agencies could help to promote the United Nations legitimacy in the region.

The Liberal caucus urges the government to actively promote an initiative by the United Nations Secretary-General to increase the United Nations involvement in relief efforts for the peoples of the gulf region, stressing humanitarian aid and long-term economic aid. Canada could lead by example, earmarking specific funds it intended to contribute to the United Nations for this purpose.

Second, we would like to assist the Third World nations negatively affected by the gulf war. As we have heard this morning, many Third World economies have been severely hurt by higher oil prices and reduced exports due to the crisis in the gulf.

The Liberal caucus believes Canada could play an important role in mitigating this impact through efforts to encourage special assistance in various forms such as increased import quotas, debt relief, reduction measures and new financing.

The government's decision to cut back official development assistance once again in the 1991 budget unfortunately sends the wrong signal at the worst time.

The third initiative relates to peacekeeping and verification. I don't think anybody can deny that our participation in the war limits to some extent our involvement in a peacekeeping operation. We do have experience and we should draw upon that to assist in the organization of such an operation and in the larger task of maintaining the peace.

In our minds, there are two major needs to be met. The first is to provide a framework for conducting an interim border patrol pending the operation of the development of a more permanent regional security arrangement. The second is to develop mechanisms for verifying and monitoring possible agreements on controls over arms transfers and other security arrangements.

The Liberal caucus urges the government to promote a central role for the United Nations in contributing ideas, expertise and co-operation to meeting these needs. We could propose a scheme similar to that used at the time of the Korean War when the Security Council appointed a committee to plan and promote peacemaking and peacekeeping mechanisms.

Next there are confidence and security building measures. "A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step." This is an age-old statement and it has stood the test of time. There is a need to begin slowly building the foundations upon which new political and economic structures can be erected in the Middle East to bring a durable peace in the region. The Liberal caucus believes that Canada could encourage the creation or development of some of these building blocks.

For example, Canada should encourage the states in the region to consider increasing areas of mutual trade. Steps could be taken to encourage moderation and compromise among the countries of the region in the interests of seeking a durable peace. The government should encourage key Arab states to engage Israel in peace negotiations, leading to an end of their formal state of hostilities with that state and an end to the Arab boycott. They could also be asked to affirm Israel's rightful place as a member of the United Nations and support a repeal of the United Nations General Assembly resolution equating Zionism with racism.

The government could also encourage Israel to resume efforts to set up a peace process with Palestinians in the occupied territories as the first step toward achievement of a peace settlement which accords recognition to legitimate Palestinian political rights. We agree with the right hon. Secretary of State for External Affairs that this is a fine requirement.

The fifth initiative involves arms control and arms reductions, to which I spoke earlier. Security, especially for the heavily armed countries of the Middle East, cannot be achieved overnight or through a single event. The Mulroney government's call for a world summit on armaments, while laudable, is no substitute for real steps, however small, that are designed to reduce the likelihood of a military conflict. In fact, they should complement each other.

The Liberal caucus therefore believes that Canada should promote a series of specific arms control and arms reduction initiatives in pursuit of this goal. We should push for a rapid conclusion of a convention on chemical weapons and the strengthening of existing conventions on the use of weapons in war, both conventional and mass destruction. Effort should be put into restricting and prohibiting the transfer of these weapons and their components. Indeed, supplier nations, which include most prominently the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, should themselves be

encouraged to tighten their export controls and to allow public disclosure of their military exports.

Canada must also place special emphasis on encouraging countries of the Middle East who have not signed the non-proliferation treaty to do so.

Finally the sixth initiative: a review of the security provisions of the United Nations charter. We all know that the charter is over 45 years old and the world has changed significantly. The use of peace and security provisions of the charter during the gulf crisis has been lauded, but legitimate questions were raised about their proper interpretation.

• (1240)

If the United Nations is to emerge as the chief custodian of a new world order and if chapter VII of the UN charter is to play a new and stronger role in enforcing decisions of the UN Security Council, as is our hope, we must ensure that the UN's mandate is fully understood and accepted.

The Liberal caucus therefore believes that it would be of great service to the community of nations if the Secretary-General were to initiate a comprehensive review of the necessary steps provided for conflict resolution under the charter to ensure their effective and consistent application.

Madam Deputy Speaker: As time has gone by, I have to seek unanimous consent of the House for the hon. member to continue. Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Mifflin: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I would like to thank my colleagues, especially the hon. Secretary of State for External Affairs. I do apologize but it is a very important subject. Again I thank my colleagues for their indulgence.

We note in this regard that the United Nations charter provides in chapter VI for a procedure under the authority of the Security Council to settle disputes before aggression occurs.

To our knowledge no attempt was made by the Security Council, which included Canada at the time, to address the Iraq-Kuwait border and oil dispute in the weeks and months before Iraq invaded Kuwait. Indeed, the record shows that Iraq began making threatening military gestures toward Kuwait several weeks before invading, yet no state saw fit to ask the Security Council to consider chapter VI action. This lack of foresight should not be repeated.

By way of conclusion, the Liberal caucus, in putting forward the six points to the government, is convinced that if the United Nations is to emerge as a leading player in the management of international peace and security, it must be vigorous in promoting its role as an active participant in both the short and long term peace process in the Middle East. There is a window of opportunity there, and we should use it. Canada's position should be one of making every effort to sustain the United Nations in that enterprise.

We should therefore encourage the long-term changes the United Nations requires to become the agent of choice of the world community to lead the process of constructing and maintaining this new world order.

Mr. David Barrett (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca): Madam Speaker, I wish to thank the House for the opportunity of commenting on the minister's remarks.

I want to say that I was taken aback at the modesty of the minister apologizing to the House for delaying his comments being made available to us 15 minutes late. I think the House owes the minister a vote of appreciation for so quickly coming back to the House after his arduous journey and presenting this report. It is a compliment to his commitment to the parliamentary system that in spite of the journeys he has been taking he saw fit to come to the House as quickly as possible and present us with this report. He should be commended for that.

I suppose we all do a great deal of thinking about these issues. We are free to decide the world's problems in the security of this wonderful country of Canada. However they are complex problems, and made even more complex by some of the actions we take when we think we are trying to solve them.

The minister has been profoundly open in expressing his opinions about what he perceives Canada's role could be, as a minister responsible to the Crown should be, and should be commended for that. I feel a sense of pride as a western Canadian, understanding that my colleague from Alberta also represents that region and that he plays an important part regionally in this government.

Having said the complimentary things, I must address myself now to the content. We have picked some strange partners in the region. While I listened intently to the comments of the minister, I am compelled to reflect

essentially on one of his comments, and that was: "no one should forget history". But the question is: Have we learned from it?

Throughout the process of the coalition, and we are talking about results now, it is well-known that my party would have rather had a longer time with the sanctions. That argument is over, and gracefully it has been accepted as over I think in some elements of the United States as well here in Canada. Now we live with the consequences, and the question of learning with history as it is in front of us.

I put to the minister that we inherited an awful lot of baggage with President Assad of Syria. President Assad of Syria, who we picked up as an ally of necessity during this current crisis, does not come to the table with the kind of background that gives me or my party confidence that in the long run he might not even be a greater problem than Saddam Hussein.

Without giving a catalogue to the House of that particular leader's background, suffice it to say the nation that sacrificed most in terms of materiel and political prestige in this experience was the United States of America. It must be said that the United States of America has been the best friend of this country and we in turn are their best friend, but that gives us the right, too, to tell our best friends when we think they have bad breath.

One of the things that worries me about the United States of America and launching us into a compelling alliance in this experience is the fact that it has now embraced President Assad, the very same person who is directly responsible for the murder of those 200 U.S. marines in Lebanon. This must be said. I am not the minister. I do not have to be the diplomat but it must be said. We are dealing here with a very dangerous person who runs an autocratic government and who has demonstrated in the past that he has even a worse capacity than Saddam Hussein to deal with opponents and with enemies real or perceived. That alliance, because of his participation, is fraught with dangers.

I do not say this exclusively in terms of the United States, but I also say it as it relates to member states in the region, including perceived opponents such as Iran, which has gone through some amazing transformations in our public relations evaluation of who it is and what it is over the last six months. It is going to be difficult, but it will be necessary to confront some of those partners we allied ourselves to with the very serious problems we have in accepting their backgrounds.

I do not know how a diplomat says to Assad: "We know who you are, where you came from, and we do not want to see that around any more". But that in effect is what I hope is said.

Second, I want to deal with the particular role of Jordan. I was particularly appreciative of the comments of the minister about not making a fast judgment on Jordan. I think that is essential, and I commend the minister for that.

I said on January 17, in my brief comments on the regional scene, that we should not rush to judge Jordan, that we will have a difference of opinion of where Jordan comes down in reality or in perception. The fact is Jordan must be a major player in the region and King Hussein must have the support of western nations in the fragile situation that he is in. We should not make judgments about a political response to populace clamouring on the street but understand that we have a role to play in maintaining that state as it is and as it evolves. It is not perfect.

The Saudis as well need to be gently nudged by a country such as ours—and our Prime Minister correctly suggested that the Saudis be allies of ours—that the fight was for human rights and against human rights violations by Iraq. The Saudis are also not very clean in terms of the same catalogue of definition that the Prime Minister used, that is Amnesty International, when he spoke to this House. The Saudis also have not a very good record with Amnesty International.

Dealing with Kuwait itself, if we pick up this morning's paper we discover that everything we said in terms of our definition of liberating a sovereign nation comes to a question about what we liberated in terms of loss of *matériel* and life and the consequences of that loss.

• (1250)

I will just use this one headline to illustrate my point from today's edition of *The Globe and Mail*: "Kuwaiti women struggle to tear off traditional chains". I would ask that the minister consider, on reflection, some subtle message perhaps to the Kuwaitis to understand that there were women in the Armed Forces who served in this country, there were women in that theatre who

were prepared, on behalf of this country's commitment to the liberation of Kuwait, to risk their lives. I do not think it serves the long-term interests of women's commitment, equal with men, to risk their lives in a fight by the government and others for the liberation of a sovereign nation, to find out that they liberated an archaic system that does not recognize the rights of women. Just as an aside, also no votes for women.

I want to deal now with the arms issue. None of these things are said, by the way, as any criticism of the minister, and I mean that sincerely. I have the liberty of speaking on behalf of a third party which gives a lot of licence beyond the boundaries of diplomacy, and I recognize that.

I am impressed by the position taken by the government against the arms race, but I must reflect—and I do not mean this maliciously but sadly—on some of the facetious responses given to my colleagues by government members, not this minister, when questioned about ARMX and ARMX's role here in Canada. I would ask the government to reflect on that debate, quietly go through *Hansard* and look at that exchange. The worst predictions of that debate came true. I wish that had not happened.

The minister is to be commended for taking a strong position. My Liberal colleague clearly stated that the position is of course focused on powerful political entities, and that is that the big five in the Security Council who have been the big sellers. It is tough for an independent country like Canada to walk up to the big boys and say "knock it off".

This is more than an abstract problem. Here are some of the realities we have to deal with. During the last 15 years the Middle East has taken about one-third of all arms traded globally. Thirty nations, including Canada, sold Saddam Hussein more than $50 billion worth of weapons before he attacked Kuwait. Arab nations together have spent more than $150 billion on importing arms over the last 12 years, yet not one of these countries is confident of its security.

Just reflect on what that $150 billion could have done for Third World countries, for the hungry children that the minister properly addressed some of his comments to. Just reflect on what that money could have done.

After recently receiving $3 billion from the gulf oil states and the U.S. for its assistance in pushing Saddam Hussein from Kuwait, Syria has ordered $1 billion worth of Scuds from North Korea, all of which will be able to hit Israel. It is a serious problem.

I conclude by reading this one paragraph: "The Bush administration has backed away from earlier demands that conventional arms control be a major objective for the post-war Middle East. Washington now plans to sell $25 billion of arms to the Middle East in 1991 alone. About 67 per cent of all U.S. weapons being sold in 1991 by the United States will go to the Middle East."

That is absolute madness. If I may express an opinion to our colleagues south of the border, that is an insult to the dead who sacrificed their lives for the freedom of Kuwait, only to find that some impelling economic reasons may be putting the U.S. government in the position of rearming the very same regions.

Having said that, I wish to address myself to the chronic problem of the State of Israel and its neighbours. I am blessed with the same amount of ignorance of the nuances of trying to find an answer to that problem.

I do not have any more knowledge or any less than any other observer, but it seems to me—and I feel strongly about it—that it should be stated, if not evident, that Israel must look to some form of negotiations to deal with its internal and external security. It must expect and can demand the same international commitment that brought together 16 diverse nations to protect the integrity of the boundaries of Kuwait. It must ask for the same commitment from international communities to protect its sovereign boundaries as well.

Until that commitment is given fully, openly, and honestly to the State of Israel by all the players, negotiations that will reach a conclusion will not be possible.

While we get hung up on the nuances of who is to be at the table, while we walk on eggs concerned about expressing opinions of who should or should not be there, the basic reassurance that must be given to force an international debate around "where to from here" is

a statement that the very commitment given by those 16 nations to protect the sovereign integrity of the borders of Kuwait must be given to protect the sovereign integrity of the borders of Israel, which were established by the United Nations the first time in history.

Having said that, I believe there will be a harvest of damage done to the western nations by the war, based on propaganda that we are not in control of. My colleague from the Liberal Party mentioned, in a very astute, brief comment, that we may have damaged our role as Canadians but still can give advice and peacekeeping.

Unfortunately I believe we have placed ourselves, through this experience, in the position of being lumped in with the rest of the western nations and of being viewed, frankly, as attempting to impose western hegemony on the region.

I hope that every effort is made by this government, and I think the minister has done it with his visit, not only to confirm the alliance but to set a distinct and separate pattern defining Canada. The minister is to be congratulated for taking this unilateral drive himself.

To separate Canada further, I would ask that this government propose a unilateral ban on the sale of arms from Canada as a demonstration backing up its position against the arms sale. A ban by Canada would be a powerful signal that we mean what we say.

My time is up and I would like to conclude with a comment concerning my constituents in the Esquimalt naval base and the other military forces there. It is on record that I did not want to see this war take place. It is also on record in my speech that once the decision was made I hoped for a quick dispatch and early return. They have done us proud again. I do not like the circumstances they were placed in, but they have done us proud again. Every Canadian must feel a bit better today that we have an independent armed force that is attached directly to a parliamentary government. I thank those families and I thank those men and women who served us.

I say in conclusion I hope, like in most other wars, their service has not been in vain.

Mr. Berger: Madam Speaker, I wondered if I might seek the consent of the House to put two brief questions to the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Madam Speaker, I am always anxious to answer questions, but I am respectful of the traditions of the House. There is a practice with regard to statements. I think, if we departed from it in this instance, the pressures would be great to do that in the future.

I will be appearing before the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade on Thursday next, and I will be pleased to deal with questions then.

* * *

• (1300)

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Moore: Madam Speaker, there have been negotiations between the government and opposition House leaders, and you will find there is unanimous consent for the following motion. Therefore, I move:

> That, notwithstanding any provision of the Standing Orders, the House shall meet at 1 p.m on Monday, March 18, 1991, and proceed to consideration of the business of supply.

[*English*]

Mr. Milliken: We appreciate the generosity of the government in proposing this motion. We thank it for its munificence and we, of course, agree with it.

Ms. Black: The New Democratic Party will agree with this.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

* * *

[*Translation*]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Barry Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Madam Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Shall all questions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Supply

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S.O. 81—FREE TRADE NEGOCIATIONS

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Barrett (p. 18509).

Madam Deputy Speaker: We shall now proceed with questions and comments following the speech by the Minister for International trade.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform the House that because of the ministerial statement, Government Orders will be extended today by 55 minutes, beginning at 3 p.m.

[*English*]

Mr. David Barrett (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca): I listened very closely to the minister of trade, as punishing as that may be. I thought I would address myself specifically to some of the comments he made.

The minister chose to use a columnist as the source of all of his rationale for supporting the free trade agreement. I do not know if that columnist has ever met a payroll or not, but I have chosen to respond by dealing with some of the business community that he claims are supporting the free trade agreement. I will read some of the quotes.

Mr. Milliken: Let us hear them now.

Mr. Barrett: No. Well, I know you are anxiously awaiting those comments. As a matter of fact, you leapt your feet, hoping that I would be given the floor to answer your concerns. And by the grace of goodness, I was.

I want to bring to the minister's attention a statement by Patrick Lavelle, the vice-president for Canadian auto parts maker, Magna International. He is not a columnist. He does not belong to the CLC. Why those gratuitous attacks on individually named people has a place in this debate, I do not know, but if that is what you choose to do, that is your decision.

I quote: "The government is becoming involved in the U.S.-Mexico negotiations for no pressing economic reason, and with no idea of what it hopes to achieve" said Patrick Lavelle, a vice-president for Canadian auto parts maker, Magna International.

That was at a conference on free trade and the possibility of talks with Mexico. He goes on, and I will read one more paragraph: "'I am tired of Canadian politicians and members of the business community taking risks with the Canadian economy without knowing what they are doing and why', he told the forum on the implications of trade talks for Canada". That is not Shirley Carr. That is not Bob White. That is not the CLC.

Will the minister get up and personally attack this member of the business community for expressing an opinion that is contrary to his and the government's, or does he reserve his personal comments only for opposition members who could be defined as being identified with the trade union movement. These are specious comments attacking personalities instead of dealing with substance.

The next comment I wish to make in this brief time is to deal with the minister's comments about the Royal Bank and using the Royal Bank's latest report as an authority. Can you imagine the government reduced to asking one of the Big Five to be its authority? I want to expose for the minister that not only does the bank overcharge on its credit cards, but it also talks with a forked tongue with some time in between.

Mr. Milliken: No.

Mr. Barrett: Yes. And I want to bring this to the attention of the minister so that he will not be misled again, because one must pity the minister when he picks a source that he does not have enough research on.

Mr. Milliken: We all pity the minister.

Mr. Barrett: Yes. The bank said in the January 1988 statement endorsing the free trade agreement that "this agreement will serve to improve the allocation of resources, increase the number and quality of jobs, and help in controlling inflation. As a consequence, consumers will benefit, employees will benefit, and employers will benefit." That was in January 1988.

Now I come to the report the minister quotes from. In February 1991, two and a half years later, the review said that "it is useful to remember that none of the serious

impact studies of the FTA ever projected dramatic job gains or losses from that agreement".

The bank is talking hogwash. Before the agreement shows any evidence, it says there are going to be great results. After two and a half years, when no results are evident, it says that no one said that there were going to be great results. Come on, Mr. Minister, you've got to find a heck of a lot better source than that. And I have been sticking strictly to business quotes.

I have just a couple more things.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I point out to the hon. member that as we are in the ten minutes of questions and comments. Five minutes have gone by, he may want to allow the minister the rest of the time to answer.

Mr. Barrett: That's why I am winding up. As a last comment—

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. member will please wind up.

Mr. Barrett: —take a full vote and also read the great pamphlet of 200 years ago called "Common Sense".

Mr. Crosbie: Madam Speaker, nobody wants to cut off the hon. member because it helps us. The longer he talks, the more it helps us across the country.

It was not only a columnist I cited; it was the Royal Bank, the Canada West Foundation, and a number of other impartial sources. Then the hon. member got up and cited Mr. Patrick Lavelle, a partisan Liberal, and neglects to mention that the Association of Auto Parts Manufacturers has given their strong support to U.S.–Canada–Mexico free trade negotiations. The association that he cites is on the record supporting the proposed U.S.–Canada–Mexico negotiations.

The hon. gentleman mentioned research. It is time for his party to do a little research into the labour situation in Mexico. We have heard a lot of comment from them with respect to the terrible competition that we are going to have from Mexico because of their lower wages and unwarranted attacks of the labour framework and legislation, and environmental allegations in connection with the environment.

I point out to the House that if the hon. members opposite would do some research, they would see that of 140 international instruments on the environment, Mexico has ratified 27. It has adhered to the 1985 Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the 1987 Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer. They passed extensive domestic legislation and environmental standards. They still have difficulties in implementation and enforcement because of their financial limitations. They are a developing country with a large foreign debt.

• (1310)

I point out that during his official visit to Mexico last year the Prime Minister signed an environmental co–operation agreement between Canada and Mexico and we are implementing several small scale but useful bilateral economic co–operation projects in Mexico.

With respect to labour conditions—I hope this will be of interest to the hon. gentleman who has obviously done no research into this situation—Mexico has ratified 61 of more than 170 International Labour Organization conventions, including eight of what are known as the 11 core conventions, for example, freedom of association, abolition of forced labour, equal remuneration, and non–discrimination.

This compares to the United States which has ratified only seven of these ILO conventions, none of them core, and Canada which has adhered to 26, four of which are core. Mexico actually has a better record than either the United States or Canada in adhering to international conventions dealing with labour matters. One has to wonder about all these attacks on Mexico and unjustified aspersions with reference to the labour situation in Mexico.

In addition, the 1969 Inter–American Convention on Human Rights contains a basic freedom of association provision. That instrument was ratified by Mexico. It has not been ratified by the United States, nor has it been ratified by Canada, so when we start to examine the actual situation in Mexico with respect to legislation and the adherence to international conventions, both with respect to the environment and to labour matters, Mexico actually has quite a fair record. They doubtless have difficulties in implementation because of its economic situation, because of the fact it is undeveloped, and its rapidly increasing population, now 85 million people. Mexico is trying to pull itself up by its bootstraps.

The same thing applies to the criticism of the so–called Maquiladora areas which, in the eyes of the hon. personages opposite, are supposed to be very retrograde.

In the opinion of Mexicans it is far better to obtain entry level jobs which give them some income, experience, and hope for the future than to have no jobs at all. The position of the hon. members of the New Democratic Party is that in Mexico they should not be allowed to have jobs at all. They should not have Maquiladora programs and the like. They should not be allowed to initiate programs to give themselves some hope.

Does the hon. gentleman want to ask a question?

Mr. Milliken: No, it's too late, but we want you to stop.

Mr. Crosbie: Is it too late? Well, I was just trying to answer the hon. member for the New Democratic Party.

In short, there are many reasons for us to enter into this negotiation. I am glad to have the support of the Official Opposition, at least we think we have their support, but one can never tell whether the Official Opposition supports something or does not support it. Their mugs are always on one side, their wumps are on the other. Now the wump side of the Liberal Party wants to speak and I am quite prepared to sit down.

We are going to hear some tortured arguments now. Let us see if we can all figure out what side the Liberals are on with reference to a U.S.–Canada–Mexico free trade agreement.

Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak on the motion put forward by the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca which reads:

> That this House calls upon the government to avoid a worsening of the social and economic hardship caused by the Canada–United States Free Trade Agreement by withdrawing from the current trade negotiations between the United States, Mexico and Canada.

Even a year ago today few of us would have predicted that we would be in this House discussing a trilateral trade deal with Mexico. This is an issue that has come upon us very quickly but its seriousness demands that we examine our options fully. While time constraints mean that we must react quickly, we must be careful not to over–react, careful not to react with knee–jerk divisiveness.

Given that the motion before us provides an opportunity to examine the issue of a North American free trade agreement, I welcome its introduction into the House. However, I find the substance of the motion presents great difficulty.

The motion speaks of the worsening of the social and economic hardship caused by the Canada–U.S. Free Trade Agreement. I agree. The motion then goes on to prescribe a recipe to avoid the worsening of our social and economic ills, that we withdraw from this current trilateral trade negotiation.

The motion before us, given the reality of today, however harsh given the six years of Tory rule, I believe is a flight into fantasy.

We can rightfully say that if we were in power we would not have the trade agreement we have now. We would not have signed a deal that gave away so much and brought so little. We would not have stacked the deck against Canadians, and then proceeded to strip away our ability to become better trained, better equipped, more competitive with soaring interest rates, retraining cuts, education cuts, R and D cuts, and science and technology cuts. We would not have been in the jam we are in today.

We can all indulge in "what if" in this House until we are blue in the face and until the last Canadian has stopped listening. The fact of the matter is that we are not the ruling party. The economic mismanagement that the ruling party has brought us is real and demands our attention here in the House. It will not be resolved by talking about "what if" and withdrawing from reality.

The fact of the matter is Canada is at the table. Whether we like it or not, we are stuck with this Minister for International Trade and this Prime Minister who sold out Canadians under the Canada–U.S. free trade deal. Whether we like it or not, we are stuck with this government for at least the next year and a half.

The Liberal Party has called for an election, because we feel Canadians need a new direction. The fact of the matter is that we are stuck with this government, and it is the members opposite who will be responsible for forwarding Canada's position in these negotiations. Those negotiations will go on.

Given that reality, it seems quite logical and in the best interests of all Canadians not to waste valuable time in the House of Commons on a flight into fantasy.

We need to talk about what these negotiations really mean. What are Canada's negotiating options? Who are the potential winners and losers? What should be on the table, and what must not be on the table? How do these negotiations fit into Canada's trading plans for the future?

What is really unfortunate is that neither the NDP nor the Conservative Party seem willing in this House today to deal with these very important questions. On one hand, we have the NDP saying: "No, without question. Don't even consider it." On the other hand, we have the Conservative Party saying: "Yes, without question. No study, no strategy. Just get a deal."

I consider both of these positions to be highly irresponsible. Both parties have allowed their worn ideologies and specific constituencies to push them into dead ends. The NDP says that it is against trade talks. What is it for? How does it propose to protect Canada's interests in this harsh world of today. Is its answer to shut our eyes, to cover our ears, to pretend that it is not happening? What is its alternative?

We in the Liberal Party, have always believed in freer trade, in multilateral trade. The Liberal Party believes that the Conservative government should have attempted to expand Canada's trade in the western hemisphere on a multilateral basis rather than, as it has done, on a piecemeal basis.

The world is moving towards trading blocs, whether we like it or not. The Conservative government has been slow to realize this reality and therefore has shown no vision with respect to Canada's trade in the western hemisphere. As a result, Canada has not been the master of its own timetable.

Canada's trade must be expanded in the western hemisphere on a multilateral and comprehensive basis rather than on a haphazard and piecemeal basis.

Our Conservative colleagues, who seem caught between the pages of their first year economics textbook, are blind to the economic and social hardships they have brought this country. Their trade vision for our country ended with the signing of the free trade agreement, and they seem dejected by the fact that Canada is no longer the apple of the American eye, and that the U.S. wants to disturb our cosy little bilateral relationship. It is becoming increasingly clear that the Conservatives have been overtaken by reality. Even the Conservative dominated Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade stated in its recent report on this deal: "We are frankly amazed by the lack of detailed economic analysis of the costs and benefits of a North American free trade deal."

• (1320)

Canadians need answers. I represent a riding that has been hit hard by recent plant closings, small business bankruptcies and many lay-offs, a riding that could very well be vulnerable to a North American free trade agreement. What my constituents are saying to me is that they are extremely concerned about these job losses and they are concerned about their future. They know that the Canadian government has mishandled the Canadian economy and they feel that the free trade agreement is hurting, rather than helping. They hear that our ills are for the good of economic restructuring, whatever that means, but they question whether it really has to happen this way.

Now they hear that Canada is involving itself in a new deal with Mexico. They are concerned about having to compete with a country that has lower wages, lower social and environmental standards. There were many concerns voiced by groups appearing before the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade on both sides of this issue.

The people, like the people in Haldimand—Norfolk, want to know what is going on. Does this government have a plan? If it does, what is that plan? They want to know how is it that the international trade minister can one day announce that Canada will participate and that the free trade agreement will not be touched by any trilateral agreement and the next day change his mind and say that changes may have to be made to the free trade agreement.

This Conservative intransigence on this issue could have devastating repercussions for not only my riding, but for ridings all across Canada. This government gave away many things to secure a free trade agreement. Our country made major concessions to gain "preferential treatment in the U.S. market". Surely if the Americans turn around and try to cut another deal with another country, we stand to lose the very thing that this

government was willing so well to give up, that special relationship, that preferential access.

You might think that a reasonable Canadian government would go to the table and say: "Look, we have problems with the free trade agreement and we are losing preferential access. We supposedly had a bilateral deal. Let's correct the errors we made". But to do so this government will have to come to terms with the errors that it made in negotiating the free trade agreement, because until it does, the Canadian public will continue to have no confidence in this government's ability to protect Canadian interests in any trilateral negotiations.

Canadians have learned from this government's bungling of the free trade negotiations, they have learned from this government's refusal to make good on its election promise of adjustment assistance for those workers who have been thrown out of their jobs because of the free trade deal. Canadians have learned from this government's mistaken pursuit of economic policies that have only served to hinder Canadians' ability to compete. They have learned from this government's failure to institute necessary educational and training programs and to make Canadians more productive. They have learned from this government's stubborn adherence to the high interest rate policy, high dollar policy, which has crippled Canadian businesses in the face of increasing competition from the United States. Canadians have learned from the mistakes of this government.

The question is: can this government learn from the unnecessary hardship it has brought upon Canadians?

The Liberal Party believes, given Canada's participation in the current trilateral negotiations, the Canadian government must use these talks to correct the mistakes it made during the initial free trade discussions with the United States. It must understand that free trade does not have to mean the lowest common denominator in wages and environmental standards. It must take control of our country's trade agenda, actively pursue our interests, not cower behind American initiatives or those threats from large multinational corporations. It must take this opportunity to reopen the existing Canada—U.S. Free Trade Agreement and in doing so, it must consult Canadians and make explicit goals it seeks in these negotiations so that Canadians can decide if these goals really reflect Canadian national interests.

It must seek to promote multilateral trading relations and mitigate the unsatisfactory nature of this current free trade agreement.

It must negotiate an agreement which could be expanded to cover Canada's trading partners throughout the western hemisphere.

It must outline comprehensive adjustment programs for Canadian labour and industry to be undertaken prior to the conclusion of an agreement.

It must guarantee the protection of Canada's social, cultural and regional development programs and make explicit statements of Canada's minimal position prior to subsidy negotiations.

It must make it explicit in the provisions of any trilateral deal the protection of environmental and social standards, including labour standards.

The Liberal Party intends to hold this government accountable for these goals in the current negotiations.

The Liberal Party has never been opposed to the concept of freer trade. That is why the Liberal Party has launched a western hemispheric initiative, intended to promote liberalized trade and address concerns such as human rights and the environment.

If Canada is to prosper in this new decade, it will require political leadership that is imaginative, creative, flexible and innovative, all qualities in a dangerously short supply with this present government.

I do not have to remind this House that Canada is a trading nation and a strong trading nation. Our ability to enjoy a decent quality of life in the nineties will be directly dependent on how successful we are in marketing our competitive products around the world. Those of us who have lived our lives in southwestern Ontario, the bread-basket of Canada, are acutely aware of the fact that in order for an economy to be competitive it must be productive.

Under the Conservative rule, Canada has been steadily falling behind all of its major competitors in productivity growth. The only major industrialized country that has experienced a lower rate of productivity growth than ours is the United States. Our productivity performance and our ability to maintain decent standards of living are inextricably linked.

The free trade agreement is a flawed strategy. The Conservatives have linked our fortunes to the only advanced industrial country with even lower rates of growth in productivity than ourselves and investment in infrastructure and standard of living much lower than our own.

We must articulate and implement a trade policy that links us to the emerging markets of the future.

Canada and the United States have also placed second last and last respectively in the rate of growth of income per person. Little wonder that Canadians are upset.

Canadians will not be productive or competitive with punishing interest rates and an artificially high dollar.

Canada's real interest rates are almost twice as high as the U.S. rates. This means that it costs a business in Simcoe, in my riding, roughly twice as much to borrow money as it does someone in Buffalo. These rates are stifling investment in new plants and equipment and they are also keeping our Canadian dollar artificially high, making it increasingly difficult for our exporters to compete. Ontario manufacturers are particularly hard hit by our unrealistically high dollar.

Rates have climbed to the point where ordinary Canadians have stopped spending. Our businesses are refusing to invest in new plants and equipment. By choking off badly needed investment, we prevent our industries from achieving the productivity gains needed to stay competitive.

A trade deal with the U.S. and Mexico is not the panacea the government would have us believe. Canada will not be productive if we continue to fall behind technologically. By any number of statistical measures, our technological competitiveness in the world has dropped sharply under this government. In order to be technologically competitive, Canadians will have to be creative in the way we finance, develop, and use technology.

The Tories have watched the pool of start up capital for high technology in Canada dry up and have done nothing about it. Our government should be playing leadership roles in helping shift private sector financing out of mergers and acquisitions and into our industries of the future.

• (1330)

The biggest single generator of research and development in this country is in fact the federal government itself. Its laboratories are stocked full of world-class scientists doing outstanding work. Much of this research could be transformed into products and processes that would form the basis of new job-creating, profit-making businesses that could compete in this new emerging economy.

What we do not do is provide our government scientists with the private sector based expertise and the financial incentives that they need to turn their discoveries into businesses. Our best government scientists need support from our partners in the private sector, not lay-off notices from the Conservatives.

Canadians will not be competitive if one-quarter of our population cannot read or write. A society that has a large and growing percentage of its population at the margins of economic life due to an inability to communicate effectively is not only an unjust society, it is a society with a limited economic future.

Canadians will not be competitive if our environmental and competition policies are weak and ineffectual. The Conservatives have encouraged our economy to become more concentrated, but not more competitive. In doing so, they jeopardize Canada's competitive future, as our economy gets concentrated in fewer and fewer hands.

Canada needs a dynamic, fiercely competitive, private sector capable of taking on all newcomers. Canadians will not be able to compete if we depend on the free trade agreement to secure our place in world markets.

It is probably true that, to a large extent, the world is solidifying into a number of large regional trading blocks. One way or another, we will continue to share a close trade relationship with our neighbour to the south and with Mexico, but it would be a grave mistake to believe as the Conservatives do that a Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement or a Canada-Mexico free trade agreement secures our trading future. It would be a graver mistake, as the NDP believe, for Canada to stay isolationist. We cannot be an island among ourselves.

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre): Mr. Speaker, first I want to start by congratulating the hon. member on a presentation very, very well done.

I was particularly interested in some of the comments he made about the state of our economic situation in Canada and relating it to the area of research and development in the area of education.

I just want to stress the importance of that statement, especially when we have right now in Canada over 30 per cent of our youth who are trying to finish high school and cannot, for whatever reason. They drop out before they reach the age of 18.

My colleague also indicated the rate of illiteracy at 25 per cent. I would like to add to that. The latest statistic by Statistics Canada has indicated that over 38 per cent of the Canadian population are in fact functionally illiterate when it comes to literacy as we know it.

By the year 2000, we will see that there is going to be more and more demand for service-based industries. In other words, we are going to see a work force that has to be highly educated. We will need the work force to have at least a high school level of education and, in some cases, even university level education.

What we have seen over the past decade and will be seeing in the next decade more and more is our industry fading away and our service sector increasing. If you compare that to Japan, it is very sad because the reverse is true. In Japan, for example, they have approximately 10 times more engineers and scientists as we have in Canada, while we have 20 times more lawyers than they have in Japan. That will give us a clear indication of where we are and where our competitors are at.

In my view there is one thing which is lacking in this whole debate. I listened to the Minister for International Trade's presentation and I did not see him putting a lot of emphasis on investment in our human resources. In my view, if we are to be internationally compatible and if we are to be at the leading edge in terms of trade and technology, we have to start investing in our human resources. That is something which we are not seeing enough of or in which we are not seeing this government take leadership.

The latest budget is a clear indication of the failure of the government to deal with this issue when it has cut transfer payments to post-secondary education, when it has cut transfer payments to the provinces in many other areas such as health care and education. In my view, if we are really to deal with the issue of trade and technology, we have start moving from strength to strength rather than moving from weakness to weakness.

I would like in closing to again congratulate the hon. member and ask him if he can elaborate a little further on the research and development and talk a little bit about the record of the government on this issue, since it promised in 1984 to double the rate of investment in research and development and so far we have not seen anything of that.

Mr. Speller: Mr. Speaker, I will just take half a second to thank my hon. friend for the question because I want to give my colleagues in the NDP an opportunity to ask me a question on that. I think I brought out in my speech the problems with a government that does not put enough emphasis on R and D and a government that puts more emphasis on these trading agreements to promote Canada's future. I do not think that is the direction. As I outlined, I hope that the proposals that the Liberal Party has put forward on this issue will be addressed by the government.

Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North): Mr. Speaker, I would ask a number of questions of the hon. member particularly concerning the position of the Liberal Party with regard to free trade. There seems to have been a dramatic reversal that has taken place within the Liberal Party since the change of leadership.

The former leader, the right hon. member for Vancouver Quadra, said that the fight against free trade was the fight of his life. Now, I think what they have as far as the Liberals are concerned is the flight of their life. They are fleeing from the position of the right hon. member for Vancouver Quadra. All of a sudden we have them no longer talking about "if they came to power", which they will not do, that they are going to cancel the free trade deal. They are now starting to talk about "We have to make one, two or three little changes to the free trade deal".

The Liberals have started to back away. All of a sudden the corporations which have been financing the Tories are starting to find that the Tories have driven the economy into rack and ruin, so they are now looking around for somebody else that they can use as lackeys

and of course there is always the Liberals. They have known that for years, so they say: "We will finance them". Of course, they say: "If we are going to support and finance you, you have got to have some understanding. The multinationals are telling you that we have got to be protected. We do not want anybody tinkering around too much with that free trade deal because it has been very beneficial for us. We can move our capital down to the States, we can move it into cheaper wage zones, we can move it down to Mexico. We can maximize our profits. We do not really care if it hurts the Canadian worker. We do not care if there is a harmonization with the United States".

All of a sudden the Liberal Party is now backing away from its very hard fought claims that it was utterly opposed to anything like the free trade deal, that it would scrap the free trade deal, that it would cancel the free trade deal. That is not what it is now saying.

The Liberals are now saying: "We will take a look at it and tinker". Now, all of a sudden when it comes to the Mexican free trade deal they are starting to say: "Maybe we should be at the negotiating table. Maybe we should sit down and look at the benefits of a free trade deal with Mexico. Let us get involved".

Can the member explain why the fight of their life has become the flight of their life?

• (1340)

Mr. Speller: Mr. Speaker, quite frankly we would not have been in the position we are today with free trade had the NDP not faltered during the last election. Had the NDP not questioned whether or not this was really the fight of its life, we would not have had free trade today. There would not have been that many Conservative members over there had the NDP not had a position.

I want to tell the hon. member what Canadians are saying out there today. What they are saying is that they do not want political parties just to oppose. What Canadians are saying is that they want a party to show a position. That is exactly what I have outlined in this House today: the position of the Liberal Party with regard to trade and how we will move forward.

The Conservative Party that is being handled by the CEOs is saying: "Look, we want to be involved in North America, an island upon itself, trade with North America".

The NDP is saying: "Look, we want to be an island upon ourselves in Canada". What the Liberal Party is doing is moving out, moving forward, into the multilateral field, as did former Prime Ministers Pierre Trudeau and Lester B. Pearson who moved Canada forward into the world arena.

I want to tell the NDP that it will not continue by coming out and consistently attacking, attacking, attacking, without bringing forward any alternatives. I listened to the hon. member who put forward the motion today. The hon. member took two minutes out of a twenty-minute speech to talk about Mexico. The rest of the time he lambasted the free trade agreement.

Unfortunately the reality of the situation is that we have free trade. We would not have had it, had we become the government, but unfortunately that is the case and unfortunately they are the government and they are going to be there for the next year and a half.

What Canadians are telling us to do as opposition members, as people representing our constituencies in this House, is to outline our alternatives for them, where we want to see this country go when we become the government.

I challenge my friends in the NDP to do the same: to stay away from just representing the unions, to represent all Canadians and to put forward the views of all Canadians on this matter. I have done it. My party has done it. I challenge my friends in the NDP to do the same.

Mr. Steve Butland (Sault Ste. Marie): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate you on your temporary promotion to the Chair. I have quite enjoyed today's debate with the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca and even the Minister for International Trade. Although his message is one of total lack of content, we do appreciate the humour.

Also we are appreciative that we have today the final, definitive Liberal stand this week on free trade and the Mexico round of free trade. I am glad that this has been spelled out and will remain the Liberal policy at least until Monday.

It is a great privilege to second this motion, and may I say that the NDP speaks as one voice. There is no divisiveness in our party with regard to the Mexico—United States—Canada free trade agreement. We have been consistent and we have spoken with one voice.

The member for Haldimand—Norfolk suggested that the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca did not speak about Mexico, so I indeed want to address his concerns. We had already devised this situation that the member previous would speak about the free trade agreement and I would try to speak somewhat about Mexico.

I want to spend a few moments on the Mexican government, which we believe was elected fraudulently. It has no mandate from the Mexican people to enter into any kind of trade agreement. There was no understanding by the Mexican people of what is happening to them. I think it is widely accepted that basically Mexico masquerades as a democracy, but it is indeed a dictatorship. There are human rights violations. People who oppose the government are harassed, even killed. There is economic liberalization but there is not political liberalization.

It was suggested to me just yesterday, in speaking to a professor from a Mexican university, that electoral reform has actually worsened. It was suggested that even if in the next national election the ruling party achieved only 35 per cent of the electorate's vote, it would still maintain control of over 50 per cent of the Parliament of Mexico. That is not acceptable.

It was also suggested to us that the only advantage that Mexico has to provide the industries of the rest of North America is a low wage advantage. The business community in Mexico is, I am told, arrogant. It suggests that the lifestyle of the ordinary Mexican should not be tampered with: "They like that lifestyle, they enjoy it, so don't make us any better off. Let me sit around pool and drive my Mercedes, but let those people enjoy the Maquiladora life". It is a wonderful life, Mr. Speaker.

As far as the elections go, the member for Trinity—Spadina is trying to monitor municipal elections in Mexico and Mexico says: "No, our law doesn't allow any monitoring of elections in Mexico. It would not be appropriate". The member for Trinity—Spadina is not a threatening man. We would think that the Mexicans would greet him with open arms and say: "By all means look at these honest elections that we have." But the fact is that the elections have been held in various provinces of Mexico and the opposition party has won elections but not been able to control the municipal councils.

What is it like in Maquiladora? No one has really addressed that. They ask: "What have you got against Mexicans, you New Democrats?" We ask the government: "What have you got against Mexicans?" I throw it back to the government.

I think it is only appropriate to tell a contemporary story—the Maquiladora has been in existence for several years now, I think eight to ten years—about life in the low wage boom towns of Mexico. At five o'clock on a December morning in a two-room shack adjacent to a strip of American owned factories, seven young Mexicans rise to go to work. What do they live in? The shack was built by the family from materials discarded by nearby factories. Wooden pallets become the frame and roof. Cardboard boxes used to ship garage door opener parts to Mexico are now the family's interior walls. Looming right beside the fortress is the actual garage door opener factory; it is the Chamberlain Group from Chicago.

The president says: "We are the cost leaders in our industry". We are not surprised that they are the cost leaders. He goes on to talk about it but does not account for the hundreds of toxic chemical drums discarded by the factories and reused for drinking water by families who cannot read the warnings printed in English. That is what it is like in the Maquiladora.

What does the one American corporate individual say? "I don't see the role of corporate America as being philanthropists about the world. They came down here to benefit themselves and secondarily to benefit Mexico through these jobs".

What do the families say? "People come with the illusion of making money, not to become rich but to make some money. But they cannot live on their salary and there is no house for them to live in. You see that a lot of people get disillusioned and leave".

How many of them leave? If there is going to be such excellent jobs for Mexicans, why would they leave to the tune of a 61 per cent turnover every six months and a 77 per cent turnover in these industries over the course of one year? Is that really the good life? They will move on to another industry for a matter of a few cents per hour,

which will augment perhaps their 80-cent an hour wage. That is what it is really like in Maquiladora.

• (1350)

Mexico is going to be forced to negotiate a deal from a position of weakness. There is unrest in the country. It is debt ridden. There is pollution beyond our comprehension. We believe it has a corrupt government. We say that the unions are in collaboration with the government; they are not there for the benefit of the workers. The incomes of ordinary Mexicans have gone down 50 per cent in the last four years.

There is an old Mexican saying: "It is too bad for Mexico that we are so far from God but so close to the United States."

The Prime Minister went down to Mexico and said that the Canadian free trade agreement created 250,000 jobs. He is not saying that in Canada, but he is saying it down there. It is a case of misinformation.

As far as the environmental laws that the Minister for International Trade cited, they do have the toughest environmental laws in the world, but there is no money, there is no personnel, and there are no teeth in the implementation of those environmental laws. They can write all the laws they want, but if they do not enforced they are in fact not laws whatsoever.

What do environmentalists say as opposed to the Americans? The Americans have already said that there cannot be environmental discussions with this agreement, that it is impossible, that it will drive people away. Environmentalists make a very valid point. Fixing environmental problems now in a trade agreement is a lot cheaper than fixing those problems in the future. We know from our own history that when we try to repair the damage it is more costly and sometimes the will is not there.

The promises of free trade, I remember well, and I am sure all members remember them in their constituency during the campaign. I still have a clipping here: "Speak out. Up to 1,500 jobs in jeopardy in downtown Sault Ste. Marie." "With free trade we are going to have more jobs in industry. We are going to have more jobs in secondary industry. We are going to have more jobs in stores and shopping malls".

What the Conservatives did not say is that they would be in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, in the United States. One of the the major reasons their jobs are in jeopardy is this agreement that we have been in for a couple of years. There is ever more danger of entering into another agreement. These promises turned out to be absolutely false.

With respect to adjustment programs for workers, the Prime Minister said that with the free trade agreement the government would provide the finest adjustment programs in the world. We now know that there were none. It commissioned the de Grandpré report called *Adjusting to Win*. Well, we lost and there were no adjustments. What good recommendations were in it, I do not believe were followed.

Access to the American market through the free trade agreement was the carrot. The steel industry in Canada said: "This is what we want. We will have access and, if they harass us, we will bring it to the panel dispute and everything will be solved". Recent history proves that to be also false.

It is nigh on impossible—and I know the member for Burlington will agree with me—to win a ruling when the language of these panels, with American law, suggests that relief should not be delayed if sufficient evidence exists for concluding that the threat of injury is real and injury is imminent. It says: "There may not be any definite, distinct problem right now, but just in case there might be in the future, we are going to bring a countervail duty against you".

All the rulings read the same. They are against us. What would Mexico hope to gain as far as access to the American market is concerned?

Here is a letter that was put on the door of an industry, Bovie Manufacturing in Lindsay, Ontario:

> Your strike vote last night means that as soon as you go out, the Mexicans will get your jobs immediately.
>
> You also lose 8-10 weeks more wages as you cannot apply for UI while on strike.
>
> In order to apply for UI you must inform us by registered mail that you quit our employ, then wait a further 6-8 weeks before your claim starts.
>
> However, if you work until the end of our coverall and lab coat contract, which will be approximately the end of April, and we lay you off, the waiting time is only two weeks.

Remember, if you strike, there will be no job for you to come back to.

Mr. Milliken: That was a couple of years ago.

Mr. Butland: I do not believe so. This is a very recent edition. June 1989.

Mr. Milliken: Yes. It is not new.

Mr. Butland: It is relatively new. As far as Liberals go, that is recent research.

I want to talk about a case in point—there is nothing like an actual scenario—of a consideration by an American firm in Buffalo called Trico which makes windshield wipers. The president of the firm said: "We are not being profitable enough and perhaps we have to look at Mexico. Let's go down to Mexico and take advantage of the low wages there. Perhaps the company will be more profitable".

Naturally, the people in Buffalo got quite upset. They said: "We have already lost all sorts of industry. Please, Trico, don't leave us." Then the president said: "Let's have some studies. I will co-operate with any studies that you can come up with. Let's take a look at whether or not I can be competitive here in Buffalo".

The studies went on, but the decision was already made. Indeed he was going to Mexico. He had a twin city operation between Texas and Mexico. Off they went to Mexico.

The suggestion was that it was making windshield wipers there and the only consideration was the low wages. The studies proved that when it should have been thinking of capital investment to make its wiper systems technologically superior and in the long run cheaper to produce than those of its competitors, it chose the easy way out by relying on cheap labour both for assembly and fabrication to resolve its problems.

A quick fix sometimes will be the choice. *Assembling for Development* is perhaps the most recent book written on the Maquiladora experiment. It is no longer an experiment because I believe there are 500,000 Mexicans employed in that border area. Very soon it will not be a border Maquiladora, but it will spread to all of Mexico with the displacement of one million to one and a half million Mexican peasant farmers who have known no other lifestyle.

Will they be retrained? Certainly not because Mexico cannot afford that. So off they will go to the nearest Maquiladora. What kind of life will that be?

The whole game has changed. There are more and more pressures upon Canada from multinational corporations that say: "We cannot afford our elaborate social welfare system. Something has to give". That is one area where I think the multinationals are saying: "That is where Canadians should give". We do not want to accept that.

I want to quote someone who should have been the president-elect of Mexico and who hopefully will be the next president of Mexico, Mr. Cardenas, from a speech in New York in February 1991. We identify very closely with what this gentleman said: "It is absolutely inadmissible that an international division of labour between the three countries assigns Mexico the role of a permanent supplier of cheap labour. Raising Mexican wage levels and working conditions in the general direction of American or Canadian standards instead of systematically lowering our salaries and incomes to attract reluctant investors is a paramount reason for pursuing new forms of economic integration".

• (1400)

I want to talk about a social charter, which I think this party endorses and espouses and, I think, Mr. Cardenas espouses. We see no problem with this at all; that any agreement, should there ever be one, should address this. We know full well that it will not be addressed under the aegis of the American trade negotiators or by the Canadian side as well.

The existing disparities among the three economies imply that a substantive, central objective of these negotiations should be the gradual but decisive standardization of trade related norms. First and foremost among these must be a social charter ensuring that workers in the three countries enjoy the same real—not merely on paper—work site conditions, collective bargaining rights, legal framework and occupational safety and health standards in order to avoid the exploitation of Mexicans and present unfair competition to their American and Canadian counterparts. Wages cannot be decreed into uniformity, but the conditions under which they are established and the framework in which labour and management relations take place can be harmonized. The concept is, let us not bring down our standards, let

us raise the Mexican standards. I do not think anyone should have a problem with that.

I know the government always gets very hostile when we bring up plant closures in this country, but I have a veritable litany. I quite agree that many of them, perhaps, are not directly related to free trade, but at least we provide a list. The government maintains that it has created an endless number of jobs but it has never provided a definitive list.

After two years, we still have not measured or made an attempt to measure, the success or lack of success of the agreement with the United States. I understand there was a model for measurement put together by Informetrica. I do not believe it has been acted on and, if it has been, certainly I do not think the results have been tabled.

With that, I believe I am just about out of time. To end, workers cannot be the sacrificial lambs on the altar of a North American free trade agreement. The adjustments we had under free trade with the United States were dramatic and we believe that they will be even more dramatic when we have a trilateral trade agreement among the three countries.

Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North): I would like my hon. friend to comment on one of my concerns in this whole question of the social security network in Canada.

During the negotiations concerning the free trade deal, the Tories kept maintaining that there would be no threat to our social security system, that there would be no harmonization with the American system and that there would be no levelling of it.

Since the introduction of free trade, we have had a clawback of old age pensions, a clawback of family allowances and we have had repeated attacks on our national social security programs. The accumulative effect of cutbacks in federal transfer payments for post-secondary education now amount to just under $5,000 per student, some of which were started by the Liberal government, of course, in 1981-82.

In the health care system, the accumulated effect of the cutbacks now account for $29 billion. What is happening, of course, is that our health care and post-secondary education systems are eroding.

All we have to do is listen to the anguish of the people of Newfoundland this week, when they realized that basic health care is no longer going to be a reality in that province, with the closure of 360 acute care beds and the firing of 300 nurses. This government maintained that there would be no impact. With the free trade deal, there was no understanding that we would have to harmonize, that we would have to bring our social services and social security network down to the level of those of the United States. But it is happening.

My fear is that all of a sudden we will be told that now we have to harmonize with Mexico. There is no post-secondary education, there is not even public school education in large parts of Mexico. There are not even basic sanitary services available in health care. There is not even basic physician services available to much of the population.

I would like the hon. member to comment on what he feels would be the impact of getting involved in an attempt to harmonize our social service programs with those of Mexico.

An hon. member: Madam Speaker, can we try the rule of relevance?

Mr. Butland: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the very concise and insightful question of my hon. colleague.

As far as the social security programs in this country are concerned, of course, let us remember that the free trade agreement was going to enhance the programs, not diminish them Remember the old story: "I would never lie to my mother". I always said: "Well, you did not lie to her, but you gave her an awful kick". Old age security has, indeed, as a result of the clawback, been reduced.

The member is up on his statistics and I guess the proof is there.

The member across says it is the old sparrow trick. Everything is unrelated. Well, the fact remains that social programs are under attack and we ask if that is purely coincidental? I doubt it very much. It is just too fortuitous to be credible.

The member from Souris points out quite definitively and statistically what is happening to this country. Rather than asking me the question—perhaps, I might be biased, but I doubt it—the member should ask a Canadian on the street whether he thinks the social programs

in this country are under siege. I am sure that he or she would answer in the positive.

Hon. John Bosley (Don Valley West): Madam Speaker, I thought I could not be amazed any more about the inaccuracies that would be used about the free trade debate, but this last exchange between the two hon. gentlemen from the New Democratic Party has convinced me that there is no depth beyond which some people will go to try to link anything—anything, to the free trade agreement.

In that last exchange there was not even a shred of an attempt to make the linkage between the demise in government's funding of services in tough economic times and the free trade agreement—not even a shred of an attempt to link them logically. There was simply the bald assertion that because there has been constraint in government funding it is *ipso facto* a consequence of the free trade agreement. Just simply stated. They do not even bother any more making these outrageous claims in this House, which have the effect of scaring folks improperly. They make those claims now and do not even bother, according to the New Democratic Party, with even attempting to make it look logical. They just say it.

That is one of the most irresponsible things I have ever heard said in this place and I have heard many.

An hon. member: Shame.

Mr. Bosley: In a sense, I guess it should not surprise me that my good friends in the New Democratic Party, and I certainly count the member from Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca among them, continue this battle.

• (1410)

Let us be under no illusions about what the purposes are here. The motion before us talks specifically about, if I could quote it: "a worsening of the social and economic hardship caused by the Canada-United States free trade agreement." I will come back to that, but I want to point out only to begin with that we should be under no illusions that it is the specific agreement the New Democratic Party is opposed to. It is not. It is consistently, and on the record, opposed to any form of free trade with anybody.

It will now claim the proof that that is not true is that they are supporters of the managed free trade agreement known as the auto pact. Those of us who have been through this debate long enough—I had hoped we were not going to have to go through it many more times—will remember that the chief opponent alongside my own party at the time, which I regret, was the New Democratic Party. It claimed at the time the job losses that would occur as a consequence of this managed trade pact were going to destroy the auto industry in Canada, and we could not afford to have that.

What is now said by the members of the New Democratic Party is that they are for that kind of pact. In fact, they tried to argue in the free trade debate that it was the auto pact, which they now claim to support, which would be hurt most by the free trade agreement. That is on the record.

I suggest, therefore, that the record before us, because the New Democratic Party knows it would be impossible to have any face in this country by arguing, in a country where 50 per cent of the private sector income is based upon trade, and that therefore the jobs and well-being of a very large number of Canadians, directly or indirectly, more than one-third or 40 per cent of Canadians, are dependent on trading relationships. In fact, it is our trading relationships that make us the most money of all activities in this country and therefore produce the taxes to pay for things.

It would be impossible to stand before a Canadian audience and say the whole truth about the New Democratic Party's position on trade, which is that it is isolationist and has absolutely no interest in liberalizing trade. Therefore, it says it is against specific arrangements such as the current free trade agreement or the proposal with regard to Mexico. I have yet to hear the New Democratic Party say it is for any form of current proposed trading relationship except the GATT. It now says it is for the GATT.

I assume it knows what people are talking about. Wanting to get out of free trade arrangements probably will not come via the GATT, which is why it is for it. It is in effect saying that if we were to get success at the GATT, which is fondly to be hoped because it would solve this problem of having all these bilateral relationships, we would be getting through the GATT with Mexico and the United States precisely what it is the government is talking about negotiating with Mexico and

the United States. And it is that which the New Democratic Party says it is opposed to in this resolution.

Some day, somewhere, and maybe here is a good time, those who claim to make this case on behalf of the New Democratic Party, ought at least once explain why if you get it through Geneva it is okay, but if you get it through Ottawa it is not. It is illogical to maintain these two positions externally.

I assume the New Democratic Party is saying that, in effect, because it knows the GATT is not going to deliver in time, given the regional blocks that are being developed by people who are tired of waiting for the GATT to deliver, it feels safe in saying it can support the GATT process. It will argue that all these developments externally in the world, whether it is in the Pacific Rim or the new Europe, ought to be opposed. After all, trade liberalization is faster than the GATT proposal, and after all, we have to be for only the GATT because that is slow.

Those people who have to deal in real policy in the real world know better. That is precisely why people who look forward and who understand the importance of trade to this country have devoted so much of their time in the last few years trying to make sure we have more and more access to a larger and larger market. The corollary of that is we must be prepared to open our market to the competitively produced goods of the people with whom we wish to trade.

I was taught in college—unfortunately too long ago—that that is a fundamental principle of the development of the economy of the world and of good political relationships in the world. What a man like Richard Nixon once wrote—bless his heart, in a different context—in the New York *Times* was a policy of trade through détente and détente through trade; that ultimately when we built the multilateral trading relationships that this kind of a motion is about and would oppose, we are doing more than simply trading goods. We are indeed finding ways to talk through trade, to try to say to people who have environmental problems, please do something about it and people who have labour problems and standards problems, please we want to help you fix it.

Let me say it to the hon. member this way. If he will not accept the advantages or he does not accept the virtues of a free trade relationship with Mexico, who does he accept it with? In other words, the New Democratic Party said we could not have a relationship with the United States because it is bigger, tougher, better and stronger. Well, we cannot have it with Mexico because it is poorer and weaker. Who can we have it with in the mind of the New Democratic Party? It has yet to say one country that it would negotiate any form of trading relationship with.

Is it India? Is it the countries of the Third World which ultimately need the support of the north, says the New Democratic Party and say some members of my party? The best way we can help those countries expand and develop their economies, have the resources with which to upgrade the standards, and get rid of things like child labour in India, is to be able to sell more goods to the industrialized world. Or is it the case that members of the New Democratic Party are so isolationist, so protectionist, so hidebound in the thinking of the fifties, and so devoted to their relationship with big labour, that what they want to say is: "We will help Indian and Mexico and the countries of the Third World by sending them grants, aid and NGO support, but we will continue not to have free trading relationships with them until they get up to our moral standard".

If that is what the NDP is saying, then I say shame on it, because that is an extraordinary thing to be saying to the people it claims, externally from this country, to want to help. Surely it ought to know that the best way we can produce assistance to those that we want to help and to our own selves is to recognize that what built the quality of this nation was its capacity to pay for its goods, its services and its government programs on the basis that we have always been an extroverted, outward looking trading nation. That is where we got the wealth to pay for this place and the places like this and everything that comes from it. That is what those countries want to do.

I say to the hon. member, even if he were right that the GATT was the process that was going to work, why is it that it is wrong to do bilaterally what you are trying to do multilaterally? Is it not better and is it not smarter to recognize that we are encouraging the process of international liberalization by trade liberalization. That message somehow seems to have been lost.

Instead we get quite strange suggestions. Mexico's labour policies are not good enough. It has environmental problems. All true. The dispute settlement mechanism, according to the previous member, is not

producing any good results. My gosh, say that to the people who just won the pork dispute.

Mr. Butland: They didn't win it yet.

Mr. Bosley: Oh, yes they did, in their minds. The hon. member's issue is dead simple.

Mr. Butland: There is still one leg left.

Mr. Bosley: The hon. member would simply have us sit back here, sit behind protectionist walls and in that way we would not have any trade disputes, would we, because we would not be trading with anybody.

He then quotes somebody concerned about moving a plant to Mexico in June 1989 and blames that on the Canada–Mexico free trade negotiations, which have not begun. It is a little tricky to make the leap of logic. There is nothing that the member will not do. He talks about the change in the social costs that Mr. Cardenas talked about. Absolutely right. If you read Mr. Cardenas carefully, what he says is we need economic integration with the rest of North America in order to find some way to do it. The hon. member is now saying: "But not this one".

I say to the hon. member, if he seriously believes that he wants environmental agreements parallel to this trading agreement and he wants labour mobility agreements parallel to this trading agreement and he wants workers' standards agreements parallel to this agreement, he wants the European model, say some members of this party, then ask for it.

If the NDP will stand up and say it is for a common market, then I will say to them, good, I agree with you. I am saying it. I want it. But the NDP whenever asked have said: "We don't want that either". So what does the NDP want? It wants only to say no.

• (1420)

Well, that is not good enough. There is ultimately a way that we can help ourselves and help others, and that is by recognizing that the long-term solution is in economics. The hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca loves to talk about something called sovereign economies. There is no such thing. Capital, money, those things move beyond and around borders. You cannot protect yourself into economic development. It is not possible to do it. All that happens is that your competitors liberalize because they realize it is to their advantage and they pass you by. We are now happily a member of the G–7 because of our current status and our current standing in economic terms.

It is not going to be very long from now where, because we are—for reasons they may not recognize, and it is not the free trade agreement but other factors such as the policies that have been adopted, particularly by provincial governments, in the last little while. I tremble to think what is going to happen in my province when the new budget comes down from the hon. member's party. The deficit is projected to be $10 billion in Ontario and I tremble to think what is going to happen, because of the policies that are driving businesses out of Ontario. It is not the free trade agreement as the hon. member will find if he asks anyone who is leaving.

Those policies of simply spending faster than we have income to tax, putting all the load on business at a time when business is trying to get out of the slump, all of that is not going to do anything but cause damage.

Hon. members like to quote figures about the free trade agreement or somehow claim that we made claims that there would be a massive economic development as a result of the free trade agreement. I remember the debate and specifically the information we handed out in the election. It said, if you go back and look at it, there would be 125,000 new jobs over 10 years. I remember that statement. That is what it said. I remember making the speeches. In fact the hon. member will remember, but he is now going around handing out quotes—as all members do—from what the CLC says on job losses as a result of the free trade agreement, or says: "What happened to the Informetrica study", or "What happened to the de Grandpré report".

What the de Grandpré report said and what Informetrica said is that it is awfully difficult, and I accept it both ways, to tell whether a job has been lost or gained because of the free trade agreement or some other effect.

People—sensible folks—say they cannot tell whether the plant in their part of the world has just expanded because it has an advantage due to free trade, or the plant in the riding of the hon. member for Burlington has just expanded because of free trade. Whether that is a fact, it may be what they think is the case. It may not be the whole case.

Then, go to the economists and ask how these things are measured. They will say that normally they must be measured in quantum. So you will find something like this. Here is the report of the Canada West Foundation. If we had produced this the hon. members opposite would have said they do not trust it because the government has produced it or the Conservatives produced it, but somebody else produced it. What does it say? I quote: "Contrary to prevailing perception under FTA Canada has significantly expanded its exports of end products by a net increase of over $4 billion while imports or exports from the U.S. have declined by $600 million".

What does that mean? It means in economic terms that we are better off than we would have been had we not had the free trade agreement. No one in his right mind is going to deny that we have lost jobs in the last year or that there has not been a recession. It is there. It is a fact.

What the economists are saying when they do the analysis is if we had not had the free trade agreement, and this will come as a great shock to the hon. member, we would have had an even greater loss of jobs. That is exactly what the economists are saying. They are saying that measuring the impact of the free trade agreement separate from its context, to say just what the free trade agreement has done, and that can only be measured in terms of relative exports and imports, what has happened is that we have improved our case in North America on the export-import side.

Is that a piece of evidence that should matter to the hon. member? It should if we go back to the premise that we started with, that because we are a trading nation, because we are so dependent upon trade, the long-term financial well-being of this country is dependent upon not only increasing trade but increasing trade in end product.

We cannot, and I am sure the hon. member would agree, go on forever basing our wealth and our standard of living on exporting resources. That is not something we want to do. Nor can we have any confidence in our future if we want to rely on low tech manufacturing.

Whether the hon. member likes it or not, what was going on before any of these agreements were signed was that people were taking some of the companies out of this country to places where the same product could be made in world terms or in global market terms, competitively. Not having an agreement is not going to change that. That is going to exist. It is, therefore, a government's responsibility, a policy-maker's responsibility, to say: "How can we try to get access to the new markets that are going to be created, with new wealth and new incomes, where those jobs are going to be and those products are going to be made?"

In other words, are we better off recognizing that having a free trading relationship with more countries—and I am fully happy to say to the member, not just Mexico, but hopefully the Central American countries and the whole hemisphere, if we are successful—to have tariff-free trading relationships, barrier-free trading relationships, with those countries, recognizing that that they do have low wages with which to try and do things for the moment.

We are better off, if we build the relationships that allow us to sell what we know to them, which is going to be higher technologies, communications, value added commercial technologies, that they can use, on top of what they have got. In other words, it is this simple.

The hon. member says he wants to focus his energies on making the Canadian pie closed. He wants no one to be able to sell against his constituents, in competition with people who work in his riding, until he is satisfied that their labour practises or their environmental practises are good enough. The consequence of that is, when that gets around, people will start to say you cannot sell to us if we cannot sell to you. That is what free trading relationships mean.

Canada is one of the countries that until recently, *vis-à-vis* its main competitor, the United States, had higher tariffs, not lower ones. What will happen when that is perceived is that we will lose market share, we will lose the capacity to sell. Or, the other way to say it to him is, as there are more auto parts manufacturers and plants and Maquiladora expands its process in Mexico and goes further, it will be tougher for Canadians to make products here and sell them into the U.S. because there will be Mexican competition for that export market, not for the domestic market here. That is not the threat. We want to get access to the success that is going to happen in Mexico in order to be able to sell a product, in order to be able to do business in a growing pie.

That is the reason for free trading relationships. There is no other way get access to the new economies and the new wealth that is coming.

Yes, there are adjustments that have to be made to face that. As we get out of the recession, hopefully there will be more money for more training and more re-training, and we can persuade business to do more of that. All of those things are true.

It is simply illogical, and certainly fundamentally unsound economics, to think that a country that depends for a third of its standard of living on trade can have any other policy than trade expansionism and trade liberalization.

I say to people on the other side whom I know with the best intentions in the world are focused on those who may be negatively effected, dislocated, fired, or lose their jobs, that is important, but it is not the big picture.

The big picture, if those people are going to lose their jobs because they are uncompetitive, if I am going to lose my job because I am uncompetitive in political terms—and maybe that is what is going to happen—then that is going to happen. You are not going to stop that job loss by not having a free trading agreement.

Mr. Bellemare: What about unfair competition?

Mr. Bosley: Someone shouted out "what about unfair competition?" What you do with a free trading agreement or with GATT solutions, if we can get them into this kind of an agreement, is build into it, as we have, the right to use the disputes settlement mechanism to deal with questions of unfair trading practises, and make sure that you have the right to challenge laws that are passed in your competitor's country to protect unfair trading practises.

• (1430)

Mr. Bellemare: Who are the arbiters?

Mr. Bosley: The arbiters are the bi-national panels that are composed between the countries. Members want to say it cannot be done. It is being done. The free trade agreement, contrary to what members opposite think, is producing net jobs in this country and is producing dispute settlements that are so much faster and so much better that our business community has never seen anything like it. That is exactly what they will tell you.

Finally, that is the wave of the future. You can ride it or you can close your eyes to it, which is what I suggest all members opposite are doing.

Mr. Lyle Vanclief (Prince Edward—Hastings): Madam Speaker, I would just like to make a couple of comments to the member across the floor.

I had a discussion as recently as this morning with a major food processor in the province of Ontario who stated that the food processing industry in Ontario is haemorrhaging. It is past bleeding, it is haemorrhaging. The product that is being offered here—yes it is being offered here—is being delivered here at a lower cost. I know my colleague's answer back will be "we must be competitive".

My question is, what do you say to these producers of food products out there? What are they going to do? What protection are we, as a Parliament in Ottawa, going to give them? What answers are we going to give to them? What do we give to them as a suggestion or offer of what they do to make a livelihood down the road? What are we going to say to them? The government offered training programs after the last free trade agreement which it has not delivered. Where are they? What are we going to say to these people?

The member's comments a minute ago were: "Oh, yes, you have lost your job because you are non-competitive." Are you just going to say to these people: "I'm sorry"? Are you suggesting that they move south of the border or move to Mexico and work there? What are we going to do with them?

Mr. Bosley: Madam Speaker, there is now something over $3 billion in the pot for training programs. That is why we did it.

What the hon. member likes to forget is that when we attempted to move some funds from the unemployment insurance fund into the training side of the ledger so that it could be used for other things—ah, the hon. members do not go back on that, in other words, when they opposed more money for training. They now like to say "where is the money for training".

The hon. member is fully capable of reading the de Grandpré report which we commissioned, at great expense, to say if we need any specific new programs to deal with the free trade adjustment process. The hon. member knows full well what it said. It said you cannot make the distinction, therefore you cannot, in fairness, say that a person who loses his job for technological change or a person who loses his job because of the free trade agreement has a right to be treated any differently

in fact or in law. If we did it, the hon. member would be the first to say: "You have no right to make such a discriminatory practice in the spending of money to assist someone who has lost his or her job".

What the government promised was for the de Grandpré commission to tell us if we needed new adjustment programs on top of the existing system. The de Grandpré commission said: "You do not. You have got the guts of a good system for everybody who loses their jobs and you need to work with that." So, that is what we did.

In other words, the hon. member is right, people who are in industries where retraining is needed have every right to come to the provincial and federal governments and say: "What can you do to help us". We have obligations to help and we believe we are meeting them.

Mr. Steve Butland (Sault Ste. Marie): Madam Speaker, I have so many reactions to the hon. member's speech I am not sure where to start, so they will be random comments.

Anybody who would quote Richard Nixon and Diane Francis in the same paragraph is really reaching for people to endorse what they believe in, because that is apparently the opposite end of the spectrums or the opposite end of walks of life. But, whatever, when you are desperate you will quote just about anybody.

The member talked about us being illogical. I have been on a few committees with this gentleman as the chairman. I think he is a very reasonable man, but the problem is that the government has these ideological blinders on and it cannot react in any other way.

The only thing that I can absolutely and positively refute is his indication that the dispute panels are very successful. They fast track the decisions.

He cited the pork ruling. Of course, we have not finished with the pork ruling yet. The Americans had one last kick at it. They said: "There is some sort of extraordinary appeal that we can make." They have not given up. When they lose, we lose.

The panel dispute mechanism is not working, and I am sure the member knows that.

Mr. Bosley: It is working.

Mr. Butland: It is not working.

As far as the New Democrats being protectionists and isolationists, we suggest that we go out there and negotiate deals from our strength. We should be the initiators, and not tie ourselves to the Americans. We are tied in with them, and we are losing.

They are going to grab our hand and say: "Let's go over here. We know what is good for you." Ask the people again. They know what is good for them. They say: "No. We will not accept what you did negotiate, and we are not prepared to accept what you are going to negotiate for us because we have lost control of our destiny." I know you do not want to hear it, Madam Speaker, but we are losing control of our sovereignty.

Canadians believe that because they see it happening each and every day. The member says: "We did not say this. We said this." I guess there was a varied story during the campaign because I know in my riding the member indicated to me that there were going to be thousands of jobs created in my riding, let alone across Canada.

The bottom line is we are suffering. We are in a recession. If it is not totally related to free trade, certainly the high Canadian dollar and interest rates going along with free trade are part and parcel of the Canadian problem.

Mr. Bosley: Madam Speaker, yes, there is a great gulf between the member and myself.

He cannot find a single economist and analyst of what has happened in the last 18 months who does not say that the free trade agreement has restrained the negative effect of the recession on this country. Every independent analysis says that.

An hon. member: Oh, oh.

Mr. Bosley: The hon. member laughs. The same folks who say that health care is not being funded because of free trade say that every single job loss is because of free trade.

I say to them that it is factually untrue. Everybody who is in the world of analysis of this stuff knows it. The

reason some Canadians are afraid of the free trade agreement is that members opposite keep telling them what is, in my view, factually untrue. They are saying that it is the free trade agreement that is causing the job losses.

It is not the free trade agreement that is causing the job losses. If there is a recession going on in the country because your spending policy is particularly provincial or too high and if you have governments spending beyond their means in this country and you drive interest rates up to the point where they are higher than they should be—

Mr. Butland: Check your 1988 election promises.

Mr. Bosley: Here they go. Here they go, again. Madam Speaker, you can't tell a socialist anything anymore in this House.

Mr. Butland: Sure you can.

Mr. Bosley: No, I can't. There is no point. When a wall is made of concrete, that is what it is made of.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands): Madam Speaker, I am delighted to be able to participate in a debate on Mexico-U.S.-Canada free trade.

This is clearly an issue that, like the free trade debate we were through two years ago with respect to the U.S. agreement, will be of considerable importance over the next period of time as we watch the government embark on these very important negotiations.

I am also happy to be part of a party that has come up with a very sensible forward-looking policy on free trade that acknowledges the existence of a situation that we fought valiantly against throughout the election.

Mr. Butland: Valiantly?

Mr. Milliken: The hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie is getting overwrought. He thinks our policy changes week by week, but in fact as he will discover in the documents I am about to quote our policy has been consistent in this matter for many months now, certainly for more than a month. The quotation I am about to get is very up-to-date and very sensible. I will come to that in a minute, if he can control himself.

• (1440)

I want to deal first with the comments that were made on the motion of the hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca that we are debating today. After all, he is the one who started the debate and moved the motion that condemns the Canadian government's involvement in these discussions. I can understand why.

The hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, in a vigorous speech this morning, went on at considerable length.

Mr. Butland: An excellent speech.

Mr. Milliken: I would not say that it was excellent but he certainly got going, talking about how the Liberal Party had lost the voice when the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra left as leader of this party. After all, the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra led the fight against the U.S.—Canada Free Trade Agreement in the 1988 election campaign, and extremely well he did too.

The amazing thing was that the hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca tried to pretend that the Liberal Party had lost its direction since the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra left the leadership. I want to assure the hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca that is simply not so. Of all the people to complain about it, he should be among the last. With great respect, anyone from the New Democratic Party should be the last to complain about a lack of direction in the Liberal Party with respect to free trade, because it was the members of the New Democratic Party, particularly their former leader, honest Ed Broadbent, who attacked the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra throughout the campaign. He questioned his credibility, accused him of being dishonest with the people of Canada, accused him of not being true to his view that the free trade agreement was bad for Canada.

I can remember Mr. Broadbent accusing the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra of changing his mind when he took office. He said: "When the Liberals take office they will pretend they never made a promise to tear up the free trade deal. He does not really mean it". That is what the leader of the New Democratic Party said, and the leader of the New Democratic Party joined ranks with his friend the Prime Minister of Canada and attacked the integrity of the hon. member for Vancouver

Quadra in a way that can only be described as despicable. It was a shocking disgrace.

If there is any evidence lacking of that little pact between the Prime Minister and Mr. Broadbent, we can only look at Mr. Broadbent's nose in the trough today, at the job he has been given by the Prime Minister, his $120,000 a year salary and the concomitant pension. He is doing very well, thank you.

I think it is one of the most disgraceful political episodes we have had in this country, when the Prime Minister and the former leader of the New Democratic Party joined ranks and attacked the member for Vancouver Quadra and said that what he said was not true. They attacked his credibility throughout the election campaign and undermined it. In the result they were successful in keeping their own fortunes high enough to ensure a defeat of the Liberal Party at the polls and the victory of a government that was pledged to bring the free trade agreement into effect, and that is exactly what they did.

Hon. members on my left sat here in the House with me in December 1988, voting against this agreement, knowing that their leader had helped to undermine the credibility of the principal champion of the fight against free trade, namely the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra, and assuring a Conservative victory that brought us this dreadful agreement that has cost Canadians so many jobs, as we heard this morning.

For the hon. member from Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca to stand here and rant and rave as he did about Liberal hypocrisy was just a bit much. It is a shame he is not here to defend himself on these outrageous comments, because really it was an absolutely shocking performance.

An hon. member: It is a shame that the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra is not here.

Mr. Milliken: It is too bad the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra is not here, or he would have things to say on this particular debate as well.

An hon. member: I will bet he could.

Mr. Milliken: I want to turn to the Minister for International Trade who got up and huffed and puffed about the comments made by the hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca. To describe his speech as a lot of huff and puff is perhaps kind and probably the only thing one could say about it. As the hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie pointed out, it was long on humour but short on facts.

In listening to the minister, one has to wonder exactly what it is he is proposing to do in these talks with Mexico and the United States concerning free trade. That is the concern we in this party have about the whole approach the government is taking to this agreement.

What is its approach? We have never been told. We certainly got no enlightenment this morning from the Minister for International Trade who participated in the debate. One would have thought that instead of reading from *Maclean's* magazine, Royal Bank projections and economic reports, he might have got down to some facts and told us what the government's position is in these negotiations. We did not get any of that at all.

The minister quoted Diane Francis as though she was some expert who knew everything about the effects of the old free trade agreement. He told us nothing about Canada's proposals in this new round of negotiations in which we are about to take part.

I must say that Diane Francis may be an expert. I do not know her qualifications in this field, but when I read her articles I have doubts that she knows what she is talking about on the subject of free trade. She seems to think that none of the job losses that have occurred in Canada over the last two years are the result of free trade. Yet the Prime Minister himself throughout the election campaign in 1988 assured us that once this deal was approved there were going to be hundreds of thousands of jobs created for Canadians; it was going to become a period of uninterrupted prosperity and increasing wealth for Canadians.

We all know that we are now in the worst recession we have had in the last decade, since the early 1980s. We know unemployment has gone to its highest level since the government took office in 1984. We know that interest rates have gone way back up and recently down because of the government's ham-fisted policies of mucking up the Canadian economy. Hundreds of thousands of jobs have been lost, not created. We have unemployment of 1.4 million people in Canada today.

All this, we are told, is not the fault of the free trade agreement. This is just a recession or something that is

apparently caused by external forces, according to the government. Of course we know differently. We know that the government's policies have caused this recession: the high interest rate policy, the tight money policy, the overspending policy of the government in its management of the fiscal affairs of the country. I could go on and on.

The government itself has to accept responsibility for the economic mess we are in, yet it does not want to blame it on the free trade agreement. It has at least managed to avoid that because it would be so contradictory to what it was saying throughout the campaign in 1988.

I cannot help but believe that many of the jobs are lost as a result of the free trade deal. I can point to examples in my own riding of factories that have closed down and moved to the United States.

Hon. members can say it was not because of the free trade deal. That is what we always hear from the minister and people like the hon. member for Don Valley West. They say that there is no evidence that ties it to the free trade deal. I have evidence. When the president of the company says that with free trade there is no advantage to staying in Canada and that he is closing down and moving south, and moves, and all the people are laid off, what more evidence do we need?

Hon. members opposite persist in denying that there is any evidence that free trade has hurt Canada. I say that there is evidence that it has hurt Canada. There is very little evidence that it has helped Canada. Their own policies may be solely responsible for the recession, but they are not admitting that. So what else is responsible? I suggest the free trade agreement has not brought the promised bonanza to Canada but in fact has helped make this recession worse.

It was obvious to everyone when the deal was negotiated that there would be certain businesses and industries that would close down in Canada as a result of free trade. Those are closing lock, stock and barrel, and we are losing jobs in Canada as a direct result of this agreement.

Unfortunately the minister will not stand up and admit that fact in the House. He will not give us figures, and his department does not even prepare them. They do not even look at the facts and attempt to give Canadians a fair, balanced and honest picture of what this deal has done for this country.

Surely before we embark on another round of negotiations with someone else, we should have some figures on this, some authoritative figures, not Diane Francis' quotations in *Maclean's* magazine. Let us get some facts on it. I would ask the minister to produce some hard figures from myriad experts he has working in his department who now probably are being pulled off this kind of work to deal with the situation, with the Mexico talks.

I would like to quote an authority on this. I refer to a member of this House, a member of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, the member for Etobicoke North, who is well-known for his extensive views and writing on free trade. I have some words from him now. He expresses the fear—

• (1450)

Mr. Karpoff: He is well-known for supporting the GST.

Mr. Sobeski: He supported the GST.

Mr. Milliken: The hon. member wants me to speak about the birds and the bees. I am sticking to the Mexico—Canada free trade agreement.

An hon. member: We want something different.

Mr. Milliken: The hon. member is a well-known authority. He has expressed his concern about the government's ability to negotiate for this country, a concern that many of us have felt for years. We have the record of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, which was so badly bungled by the government. Then we have the record of Meech Lake, which was botched and botched again by this government. It is understandable that Canadians are nervous when they hear that this government is going to go out and negotiate another deal.

Mr. Mifflin: To say the least.

Mr. Milliken: "To say the least", as my hon. colleague from Bonavista—Trinity—Conception says.

The hon. member for Etobicoke North, who is the trade critic for this party, expressed his grave concern as follows:

> —the same government that so mishandled United States—Canada free trade is now embarking on the negotiation of free trade among the United States, Canada and Mexico. Canadians have no

> confidence in the Mulroney Government's ability to protect Canadian interests given its failure to promote Canada's interests during the United States—Canada free trade negotiations.

Truer words were never spoken.

I go on to quote the hon. member:

> The lesson that Canadians learned from those negotiations is that the Government's promises of adjustment assistance are empty promises. Nor has this Government instituted the necessary educational and retraining programs to assist Canadians to be more competitive. Worse still, its high interest rate, high dollar monetary policy has crippled Canadian business in the face of increased competition from the United States.

Those are words that I suggest are far more relevant to the debate today than the quotations from Diane Francis in *Maclean's* magazine the minister cited in support of his arguments. I urge the minister to read the hon. member for Etobicoke North's statements on this subject. I could go on quoting him at great length, but he is not the only one who is concerned about the government's ability to negotiate.

Let me read from one of the supporters of free trade who has given us the benefit of his views. It is reported in today's edition of *Le Devoir*.

[*Translation*]

The article is in French and reports what the vice-president of Samson, Bélair, Deloitte and Touche International had to say. The vice-president of the firm, Mr. Pierre S. Pettigrew, indicated his concern about the ability of this government to negotiate an agreement with Mexico. This is what the author of the article, Michel Van de Walle of Canadian Press, reported, and I quote:

> A supporter of free trade, Mr. Pettigrew was very critical of the way the Mulroney government conducted negotiations with the United States. He said that negotiations were very unsatisfactory in the furniture sector, for instance. Canada had agreed to reduce its tariffs at the same rate as the Americans. That was crazy. Our tariffs were twice as high as the U.S. tariffs. This meant that we had to reduce a tariff of 16 per cent over five years, while the U.S. tariff was 5 per cent to start with. It shows a total lack of respect for our industry.

[*English*]

Canadians from every walk of life, supporters or not of the free trade agreement, are concerned about this government's ability to negotiate a fair and reasonable agreement that protects Canada's interests. Yet the government has indicated that it is marching off to negotiate this deal.

We in the Liberal Party are very concerned that we are not getting from the government a clear statement of its intentions. We call on the government today, under the guise of this motion moved by the member of the New Democratic Party, to come clean and tell Canadians what goals we can expect from these talks. What are the national objectives we should have in going into these discussions? What benefits does the government see as coming from these talks for Canadians? Are Canadians supportive of the government initiative in participation in the talks?

Surely we cannot decide whether it is a good thing or a bad thing for Canada unless we have some statement from the government of what we expect to get. There has been no statement forthcoming. We are simply told free trade is good, that the freer trade is the better off we are all going to be.

Canadians do not swallow that line. They should not have to swallow it. They should be given some facts and figures to back this up. We should be told, for example, what things we are likely to be able to purchase from Mexico at a lower rate after the agreement than what we can purchase today.

We should be told by our government what kinds of things we can reasonably expect to export to Mexico if its tariff barriers come down. Yet not a scintilla of evidence has been put before this House to give us some indication of what benefits or otherwise might result from a free trade agreement with that country.

Mr. Mifflin: It is because they don't know.

Mr. Milliken: It may be because they don't know. If they don't know, surely they should find out before they start participating.

Mr. Mifflin: It didn't stop them before.

Mr. Milliken: The hon. member for Bonavista—Trinity—Conception says it did not stop them before. He is quite right. They got into the talks with the United States as a means of finding some way out of the fact that they had done nothing in this country for four years in government and needed something to go the electorate with in 1988.

Mr. Dorin: What was the result?

Mr. Milliken: The hon. member for Edmonton Northwest asks: "What was the result?" As I said at the outset of my remarks, had he been paying close attention, the result would have been different had the efforts of the member for Vancouver Quadra not been so effectively

undermined by the then leader of the New Democratic Party.

The second objective the Liberal Party promotes is that we should be seeking multilateral trading relations with other countries to get us out of the very unsatisfactory bilateral trade relations that we have with the United States at this time.

Third, we believe that we should negotiate an agreement that could be extended to include other countries in the western hemisphere and possibly in Europe and on the Pacific Rim.

As a party we have always supported the concept of free trade. What we have not supported is the particular deal that this government produced which—and I do not want to go into all that again—included much more than free trade. It covered far more than trade. It included a sale of Canada's resources and the restructuring of Canada's economy to one of dependence.

Fourth, we would ask the government to outline adjustment programs for Canadian labour and for Canadian industry that will be put in place before the agreement comes into force. We were promised, during the 1988 election campaign, adjustment programs for Canadian workers and for Canadian industry after the free trade agreement became law. There have been no adjustment programs. In fact, as we have said for months in the House, there have been cuts in what programs there were in place before that might have served as adjustment programs.

There have been no new ones created. In fact the government has completely failed in delivering on that promise. It has broken its to Canadians and it has done worse than that, it has cut back on the programs that were in existence.

Fifth and finally, we would ask for some guarantee from the government that Canada's social, cultural and regional development programs will remain in place following this deal. No such undertaking was given in respect of the Canada–U.S. Free Trade Agreement. We have watched this government slash and cut away at those things in Canada.

We do not have the protection in place as a result of that agreement for Canadian cultural industries that we feel are important. We hope that in considering the negotiations today we will have those programs put in place so that when the new agreement, if any, is worked out with Mexico and the United States we will have protection for Canada's cultural industries.

Those are the points that we as a party are putting forward. We believe they are positive. We believe Canada should be involved in these talks. We support that part of the initiative. However we ask that these safeguards be put in place so that Canadians are not pillaged by their government the way they were in 1988.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Clément Couture (Saint–Jean): Madam Speaker, at the beginning of his speech, the hon. member said that he could not judge the expertise of Diane Francis, but I simply would like to read a short paragraph from the article. Ms. Francis said: "The facts show that Canada has prospered under free trade. For the month in which free trade came into force, January 1989, Statistics Canada reported 12,436,000 jobs in this country. In November, November 1990, the most recent date for which figures are available, there were 12,497,000 jobs, a net gain of 63,000 jobs in this country".

• (1500)

In another paragraph she mentioned: "Free trade has been and still is a good economic policy". Perhaps, but her reasoning is as follows: "Because it ensures access to the best markets in the world and forces Canada to become more efficient".

Madam Speaker, although the hon. member says he doesn't know Ms. Francis, I would like to hear his response to this: Between December 1989, when free trade came into force, until November 1, 1990, a net surplus of 63,000 jobs was created in this country. Although I hope he will not confuse a recession with a free trade agreement that gives us access to the best markets in the world, I would like to hear the hon. member's response, to be able to judge his comments on what Ms. Francis said.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands): Madam Speaker, it isn't easy to answer the hon. member's question as stated, because he quoted figures indicating the number of Canadians on the labour market for two months only: January 1989 and November 1990. The problem is this: During that period, people immigrated to Canada. We admitted more than 250,000 people from other countries during that period. The hon. member referred to an increase of 60,000 in the number of people

with jobs. Sixty thousand is not much, considering that 250,000 new arrivals came to this country. It is not the same thing. According to the Prime Minister, free trade was supposed to create several thousand jobs, 125,000 jobs in this country. Where are those jobs? And what does 63,000 represent? It is not enough, and I am sure the hon. member will agree.

I have another quote, Madam Speaker, by my colleague, the hon. member for Etobicoke North, which might be of interest to the hon. member for Saint-Jean. He said, and I quote:

> The Mulroney government allows the priorities of Mexico and the United States to take precedence. That is not the position Canada should have taken. We should have aimed at a global and multilateral expansion of our economy in the western hemisphere, instead of a slow trickle.

That is a very important point. I hope the hon. member for Saint-Jean will be able to inform the Tory caucus of the excellent ideas put forward by the hon. member for Etobicoke North.

[*English*]

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Burnaby): I listened to the member for Kingston and the Islands very carefully, and a lot of what he said today kind of re-fought the last election campaign. He indicated that the party he represents in this House was the major opposition to the trade deal with the United States.

It seems to me that what we are hearing today from the Liberal members in this House is that they are speaking on both sides of this issue. It is getting increasingly difficult to make any sense out of what they are saying.

I want to ask the member if he would give us a straightforward answer on just exactly where his party stands today on the trade deal with the United States, on an expanded trade deal including Mexico and the conditions in Mexico, which he seems to be somewhat aware of.

He talked about the previous leader of his party and that it was the fight of his life for the member from Vancouver Quadra. I want the member to understand that the fight is still going on. Many of us are still fighting the fight of someone else's life, and I wonder where the member from Vancouver Quadra is on this issue and why is he not continuing the fight of his life.

Mr. Milliken: Why the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby would ask me what the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra is saying or what he thinks on this issue is beyond me. I have not asked him. I would have thought that as a near neighbour she might pop into Vancouver one of these days and ask him herself.

I can tell the hon. member though, that if she has any trouble believing my facts with respect to the election campaign—and she seems to be a little incredulous—I urge her to read Rick Salutin's book. I have been reading it now for some weeks. He is not a particular supporter of this party. I read it at bedtime and I find it a very fine thing to help me get to sleep.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby might profit from reading this book. It certainly describes the woefully inadequate attitude of her party and its leadership in the fight against free trade during the 1988 election campaign, and their attempts to discredit the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra, whose view she is so interested in today.

I urge her to write to the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra if she wishes to have the benefit of his opinions, and get them.

Now let me turn to the second part of her question because she seemed not to understand the Liberal position. I thought she was listening to my speech and I am sure she listened to the speech of the hon. member for Haldimand—Norfolk, who made an excellent presentation and presented the views of this party with clarity and precision.

I tried to be equally clear. I said during my speech that we support the government's initiative in participating in these talks because we recognize that Canada cannot afford to let this government—or, frankly, I would prefer this government were not doing the talks because we realize the risks there are in having it do it—but, unfortunately, it is the Government of Canada so somebody has to be at that negotiating table. We should not leave this to the United States and to Mexico to do on their own; we need to be involved in the talks.

I have just given a five-point outline of things we believe this government should do before it gets involved. That is, come forward with the pros and the cons; tell Canadians the advantages and disadvantages of free trade with Mexico; tell us about its objectives in going into these discussions; guarantee the protection of Canada's social programs; outline comprehensive adjustment programs for Canadian labour and industry before we

get the agreement into force, and tell us what those are going to be in advance; and, finally, negotiate an agreement that will allow more countries than the three of us to be involved in a free trade economic zone.

Those are the objectives I believe the government should pursue in this matter. That is the position of this party. I think it is perfectly clear. I hope the hon. member does not need me to put it in writing. If so, I will underline the relevant portions of my speech in *Hansard* on Monday and send it to her.

Mr. Bill Kempling (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, on February 5 the Prime Minister, along with Presidents Bush and Salinas, made an historic announcement, that our three countries would negotiate a North American free trade agreement.

This announcement set in train a process that will help to build and enrich our three countries.

• (1510)

It is not a perfect agreement, but an excellent agreement and one that is working to the mutual benefit of both Canada and the United States. As its benefits become clear to Canadians, it will be seen by all sides to be a far-sighted agreement.

February 5 is a particularly important day to me. It is my birthday, so having an analysis on that day means something special to me, especially at my advanced age.

I want to try to take a little different tack on this debate because it is back and forth—you said this and I said that, who said something in the election? I want to put another slant on it, if I can.

The Gross National Product of United States of America is $5 trillion. That is double the Gross National Product of Japan and 25 per cent of the Gross National Product of the developed world.

What we have done with the free trade agreement is open a $5 trillion market to Canadian business. Over a period of 10 years, it will become tariff free.

It is all very well for academics and others who have never had a callus on their hands to stand in this place and debate matters of trade, international affairs and so forth, but I do not know if any of them have really operated a business or been responsible for the development or expansion of a business, or had to go out of the country to find customers because of our small population.

We have some excellent industries in Canada, and some of them have developed some substantial markets overseas. I notice that Mexico is our second largest customer for steel. We ship steel bar into Mexico. Mexico makes it into springs and ship it back into Brampton where we make automobiles. We sell the bulk of the tin plate that is used in the canning industry in Mexico, so we have a stake in that market already.

Aside from that, the argument here today seems to revolve around numbers. Who are the winners? Who are the losers? The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands looks upon the free trade agreement as some sort of balance. We did not gain any jobs, all we have done is lose jobs. He speaks of the jobs that have gone out of his constituency.

It is important to realize that this agreement is two years old. There are adjustments going on, and I will give you a perfect example.

A gentleman who happened to be the president of Toledo Scales called my office one morning and he said: "I have good news and bad news." I said: "Give me the bad news first, and I can end up with the good news." He said: "I have a plant in Windsor that we opened in 1890. We make scales, and I am going to close that plant down."

I said: "What is the good news?" He said: "I have more bad news," and I said: "What is that?" He said: "I have a head office in Mississauga, and I am going to close that down." I asked him whether there could be any good news after that. He said: "Oh yes, we are going to open a state of the art plant in Burlington,"—my constituency—"where we will combine our manufacturing and our head office in one operation. We will be world competitive. We will even be able to compete with the Japanese."

That is the type of adjustment that is going on in this country, and people do not realize it. When you sign a free trade agreement, you cannot turn things around that fast. People have to make decisions. Humans are involved.

In the case of Toledo Scales, it looked at the age of the people involved in the industry and said: "The bulk of them went on retirement." They had been there for years. It was one of those kinds of companies.

The person running an industry look at himself and asks: "What am I going to do? Am I going to stay in the domestic market? Am I going to stay in the Canadian market? Am I going to find a niche in the American market? Am I going to go North American? Am I going to go global?" Those are the decisions that a businessman has to make.

Depending on what decision he makes, he says: "I need more capital. I need more plant space. I need some more productive machinery," or, "I am going to sell this business because I am at an age when I do not want to go into the expansionist phase."

Those are decisions he has to make. The only connection to free trade is that the government has opened up this tremendous $5 trillion market and the man has an option he never had before. He has to decide just where he is going to go and how he is going to do it.

In Windsor, Dofasco, NKK of Japan, National Steel of the United States have put together a new plant to galvanize sheet steel on one side and supply it to the stamping industry that feeds the automobile industry. In other words, the galvanizing is to eliminate the rusting out of automobiles. That is being put together right now. The factory is being built and the machinery will be coming in. It is going to hire about 1,000 people. The 300 odd people left Toledo Scale, and now there will be 1,000 in place of 300, so it balances out that way.

I will give hon. members some investment dollar figures so they will get an idea.

I mentioned that DND Galvanizing has chosen Windsor as its location, that is the Dofasco, NKK, National Steel $240 million rolling mill. And as I said, they will be doing the galvanizing operation and selling the product to the automotive industry.

Polysar Rubber Corporation, recently acquired by the German firm Bayer AG, plans to invest about $120 million over the next three years and spend $15 million on R and D in Canada per year.

B.F. Goodrich Canada Inc. will double its PVC polymerization capacity at its Niagara Falls plant, providing an example of recent rationalization for the North American market.

Inco plans to spend $287 million in Thompson to develop a new mine and to expand an existing one, involving 100 construction jobs and 100 other new jobs in the area.

Kruger will invest $115 million in a de-inking plant at its Bromptonville, Quebec newsprint mill to source at least half the old newspaper plant in Quebec.

Pound-Maker Ethanol Canadian Ltd. will invest $12.7 million to establish a 10 million litre per year fuel-grade ethanol plant in Lanigan, Saskatchewan, which will be Canada's first integrated ethanol and feedmill capacity.

Shell, Husky and several other firms will construct a $825 million natural gas, sulphur and chemical project in west central Alberta.

Canadian National Railways will spend $15 million to build 50, "five-pack" rail cars at its Transcona car shop. Each car has five platforms and can carry as many as 10 containers. This is to be used in cross-border trade.

Dominion Textile will spend $5.5 million to modernize its Magog, Quebec industrial fabrics plant.

Inglis was selected by its parent company Whirlpool to produce trash compactors for the North American market at its Cambridge, Ontario facility and has invested more than $3 million in production changes to accommodate the operation.

Norsk Hydro Canada will spend $7 million to build a plant to convert magnesium scrap into high-purity alloys at its Becancour, Quebec plant.

Northern Telecom is spending $6 million at its Lachine, Quebec plant to double the manufacturing area for telephone switches.

One of the concerns of the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca was that he thought Taco Bell was going to take over Northern Telecom. I can tell him that is not going to happen.

California based Hughes Aircraft Company has acquired Ernst Leitz Limited of Midland, Ontario and will move the optical technology work currently done in Des Plaines, Illinois to Midland.

Harris Farinon Canada, a U.S. owned Dorval-based manufacturer of telecommunications equipment, has undertaken a $21 million research and development and expansion program based on an expanded world product mandate in microwave radio and fibre optic products. Bell Helicopter is spending over $50 million to develop and produce its fifth helicopter model in Mirabel, Quebec. Camco of Montreal, Canada's largest appliance maker has invested $45 million in its plant in the past two years and has increased its exports to the U.S. as the main supplier of dryers and dishwashers to its American parent. Amdahl Canada increased its R and D budget to develop a new software product for world-wide distribution.

• (1520)

It is staggering what has been done. Yet members stand here and say we are losing business. Businesses are leaving the country and going to the United States. H. H. Robertson, a leading North American producer of pre-engineered building systems, is investing $1 million to automate its Hamilton plant in order to increase North American competitiveness.

Let me just stop there and tell you something else about our steel industry that just developed within the last few days. Stelco, through its subsidiary Stel-Tek, and Dofasco, Hatch Associates and Ernst Young, formed a consortium called the Canadian Consortium. They competed against two British firms, a German firm, a French firm and an American firm to supply a project being financed by the World Bank to restructure the total steel industry of Poland. That is a tremendous feather in the cap and it says something about the expertise of the people in our steel industry. They were chosen above all the others because we have a technically advanced steel industry and our expertise, according to the World Bank and the Polish officials whom I spoke to, outperforms and are farther ahead than any of the other competitors. We have just recently been involved in that and saw that that one went through.

Formica of Canada Ltd., a maker of decorative laminates, is investing $2 million to upgrade its plant in St-Jean-Sur Richelieu, Quebec. GTE Sylvania announced the closing of a lighting fixture plant in the U.S. and the relocation of activity to a more efficient plant in Mississauga. Christie Brown and Co. has invested $90 million over the past three years and increased exports to its U.S. parent. Dupont Canada has authorized capital spending of $150 million in 1989 and $160 million in 1990, up 80 per cent from previous years and has doubled exports to the U.S. to $40 million. Dow Chemical has spent $800 million in a new ethylene-based petrochemical plant in Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta. Part of that decision was tariff reduction under the FTA.

Again, in my own constituency I have Voortman's Cookies. I hope everyone eats Voortman's Cookies. I will give them a free advertisement here. You can buy Voortman's Cookies right down to Florida now. They had purchased land in the United States. If the free trade agreement had not gone through, they were going to jump across the border, they had developed such an American business. The fact is they bought more land adjacent to their plant. They put an addition on there, bought additional machinery. They are now exporting 60 per cent of their production into the United States. They have now opened a plant in California because that is too far to ship cookies. It would arrive as flour when it got there.

This movement and adjustment in industry is going on and will continue to go on as markets develop, as products develop, as people see their way clear.

The investment in the pharmaceutical industry in Canada in the last few years, since we passed Bill C-22, is tremendous. The amount of R and D they are doing in this country increased. In spite of the week after week after week of hearing the NDP rise and say pharmaceutical products are going to go off the clock, that senior citizens are going to be dying because they could not get certain products, et cetera, and hearing petition after petition after petition, the reports show that pharmaceutical products have not risen as high as the inflation in the country. All you have to do is read the report from the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

Abbott Laboratories of Montreal announced in April of this year that it will invest $10 million to modernize its 44-year old manufacturing facilities. Xerox of Canada has expanded its toner manufacturing facility in Oakville and has made further investments in Toronto.

My colleague, the Minister of National Revenue, and I were just informed the other day that Boeing of Seattle has just awarded a $500 million contract to a company in Oakville that will be making the landing gear for its new range of passenger-carrying aircraft. This is a half a

billion dollar order to a little company in Oakville. We are picking up a little bit along the way.

Kodak of Canada announced that Canadian manufactured microfilm will be processed and converted before it is exported to the United States, adding 75 new jobs. Stelco is investing $60 million in a new pipe-making mill in Welland. Rolland Canada, Canada's second largest fine paper producer, is restructuring its manufacturing and distribution operations, including converting the Montreal mill to produce specialty industrial products.

Proctor and Gamble of Canada made a number of investments in its Canadian operations to take advantage of the FTA. I think the Minister for International Trade read more detail on that. It has now designated Canada as its source for a number of personal hygiene products for Canada.

Freightliner of Canada, a truck manufacturer, is planning to build a production facility near St. Thomas.

Those are just a few. There are more than going on every day.

When I talked about Freightliner, it caused me to stop for a moment because Freightliner is owned by Mercedes Benz, and that opens up another door of how the automotive industry is globalized.

Mack Truck is owned by Renault of France. General Motors no longer produces trucks on its own. It made a deal with Volvo and Volvo produces trucks and buses for General Motors. Volvo bought out White Motor Company. Ford Motor Company brings cars from Korea, Japan, Taiwan and Mexico. It brings in diesel trucks from Brazil, the 7000 series. Ford and Volkswagon have just got involved in a joint venture production in Brazil.

I mention these things to show how the automobile industry, as a typical example, is very globalized. General Motors produces automobiles and trucks and purchases some from Japan, Korea and Europe. Chrysler has cars made in Korea, Japan, Thailand and Mexico. It just goes on and on. That is the way trade is moving and developing as a result of GATT and the globalization of industries in general.

I am not disturbed about the Mexico–Canada–U.S. suggested trade link. To me, it is an opportunity for us to look at a larger market again. I think it would be foolish if we were not there.

I agree with my friend from Kingston and the Islands that it would be foolhardy for Canada to sit on the sidelines and allow a negotiation to go on between the Mexicans and the Americans involving trade and not be there to see what is going on.

I support the initiative announced on February 5, my birthday, by the Prime Minister, President Bush and President Salinas of Mexico. I believe it will be an historic event when this comes across.

• (1530)

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Madam Speaker, I would first like to commend the member of Parliament for Haldimand—Norfolk, who has been leading the response on behalf of the Liberal Party and the Liberal caucus in his capacity as a critic in the area of international trade.

I am also pleased to be given the opportunity to debate an opposition day motion put forward by the New Democratic Party, our friends to our left. I am wondering, however, how valuable it is to have a motion that basically fantasizes where the New Democratic Party would like the government to be. We can always get involved in a debate on whether the government should or should not take a seat at the trade talks between Mexico and the United States. However, I think they are a bit late on that, very similar to the last election, Madam Speaker, as you no doubt will recall as you were in the trenches fighting for your re-election. We recall the hesitation in which the New Democratic Party fought that particular campaign. Among the multitude of issues in that federal election obviously the one major issue that dominated all other issues was whether the Canadian government ought to pursue a free trade arrangement with the United States.

At the opening press conference the former Leader of the New Democratic Party did not even mention the two words "free trade". We all know what happened to the New Democratic Party during that campaign. Obviously we were not successful, as evidenced by where we are sitting, however let it be said that when we objected to

the agreement that was signed between our two countries we said it loudly, forcefully, clearly, and we put it squarely to Canadians. It was not a case of: "Well, we are not sure, perhaps we will talk about child care as well, maybe we will talk about this or that."

The New Democratic Party, following the last election, had a post-mortem review and the party was found to be wanting in many of the New Democratic Party's natural constituencies.

We do not need a lecture on where the party stands or stood. I think Canadians were testimony to the type of temperament that the New Democratic Party lent to the free trade debate in 1988. Now it comes with an opposition day motion. Perhaps there is great intent, perhaps there is genuine intent, but there is a lot of academic intent as well. The debate should not be "should they or should they not be" because Canadians are expecting their politicians to be discussing not flights of fantasy but flights of reality.

Whether we like it or not this government has made the decision to place itself at the table. Rather than engage Canadians in what could have been or perhaps even what should have been, I think Canadians want to be engaged in: "Okay, now that we are at the table New Democratic Party, Liberal Party, Conservative Party, what is it that Canada should be saying from its seat? What is it that Canada should be saying to the Americans and to the Mexicans who will be negotiating around that long table?" That is worth debate in this Chamber.

I would like to correct a few things, because during the course of the debate we have heard members from various sides say: "You're not in favour of freer trade". "You didn't want to go to the table". "You wanted to go under the table". The NDP say that I want to pull the chair out.

The party of which I am very proud to be a member historically has been a party that has always favoured freer trade. If there were times in our history when political parties were very much opposed to opening the road of trade between the countries of the world community, it was clearly the Conservative Party. History does not lie. Therefore, our party has always found itself trying to reform, to open, and to liberalize, in the best sense of the word, trade. We regard trade to a certain degree as the lifeblood of this country, as an encouragement to stimulate the economy and jobs.

Where we distinguish ourselves from our hon. friends on the other side is the type of agreement that we would want to enter into with the United States of America or with another country. Therefore, the distinguishing feature should not be that this party was against freer trade but that this party fought with no apologies in 1988, led admirably by our former leader, the right hon. member for Vancouver Quadra, for a very different kind of agreement. The type of agreement they had put their signature to was an agreement that we hoped would not materialize. Unfortunately, as we look across the land we see that our prognosis was correct, as we try to see, in the aftermath of free trade, where the success stories are.

The members on the other side pointed to "All the Fallen Sparrows", that was a quote used by one of my colleagues. Listening to the hon. member who spoke before me, the member for Burlington, when he referred to some factory making cookies, you would figure that every cookie that gets baked is because of free trade. That is an argument we should discount pretty readily. Therefore, we ought to be taking a look at what the adjustment has been after the trade agreement that was signed by the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States.

I am hard pressed to see where the success stories have been. I am hard pressed to believe that it has helped us more than it has hurt us. I see, in my own backyard in Toronto, that not every job that is lost can be blamed on or pinned simply on the free trade agreement. I have talked to many businessmen, I have had calluses on my hands when I worked in construction putting myself through university, I am also the son of a Canadian who owns a small business himself. I am able to meet, as I have, with business interests in my community and outside my community of York West, and I am trying with those Canadians to see how free trade has encouraged a greater number of jobs, encouraged greater expansion of our industry. It has done the opposite in the grand scheme, whether in the case of energy, in the case of manufacturing, in the case of furniture, or in the case of many industries that I have in my own industrial parkland in York West. It was supposed to be a bonanza, it was supposed to be a Messiah for the creation of thousands upon thousands of jobs, for the American firms to come here and build their factories. Instead, what we have become is a warehouse economy.

The Americans do not have to come to our country and build factories to produce products and therefore create jobs; they are not doing that. What are they doing in some of their industries? What they are doing in the States where they have their plants is augmenting their production by a number of hours, they produce incredible quantities of those goods, then they ship them to Canada where they rent a warehouse and we become truck drivers. We become distributors of products under that free trade regime. Where are the job spin-offs in Canada? Certainly not in the truck industry. They are being produced in the States, where they are augmenting the number of hours and production lines to meet the Canadian market.

Where is the research and development in driving trucks and in setting up warehouses? There is none. Where is the wealth creation that we spoke about, that we were promised? Instead, those industries that cannot compete with the Americans, which cannot possibly compete with the economies of scale, flowing against logic, are going out of business. They are beginning to downsize. They are beginning to consider going south of the border. That is a reality that has been born in the advent of the so-called free trade Messiah between our two countries.

• (1540)

Who speaks for the workers 45, 50, 55 years of age when a plant closes because it says it cannot compete any longer? What does the hon. member for Burlington and other members of Parliament who face such people in their constituencies tell the person who is 55 and has worked 30 years in a plant which all of a sudden gets shut down? No one wants to invest in a 55-year-old, or not readily so, despite a wealth of experience.

That 55-year old Canadian still may have a mortgage to pay, still may have kids going through university, still may be required to work another five, to seven, to ten years to make ends meet. What do we tell a worker after this Prime Minister promised the country during the last election that he and his government would deliver the best transition programs the world has ever known?

An hon. member: Another broken promise.

Mr. Marchi: It is not only a broken promise, but it is absolutely unacceptable and irresponsible to say those things without fulfilling those promises. Men and women who are displaced at least had a hope that if things were going to go wrong in the free trade agreement, if there were firms and industries and sectors of our economy that were not going to be able to compete as well or as strong with the Americans, at least had a glimmer of hope that there would somehow be some catch, some adjustment program, some capacity to take them and say: "Look, under the free trade agreement your business or sector did not have the technology, did not have the manpower, did not have the know-all to compete. That firm or sector is going to fall, but we are going to take you and employ you in this other industry".

On the one hand, we do not have the economic wealth being generated that was promised. On the other hand, we have unemployed workers across this country who are hurting and hurting badly.

It is also not solely free trade. It is a comprehensive situation facing the Canadian economy and the Canadian worker in that Canadian economy. We could combine the advent of free trade that has hurt us more than it has helped us. One of the reasons I question our friends in the New Democratic Party so that perhaps there are two options to that table with Mexico. Their option is not to be there, even though the government said it will be, but the other option if we are there is to stop the misery that they speak of in their motion which says:

> This House calls upon the government to avoid a worsening of the social and economic hardship—

My preferred option is to give the Government of Canada a set of marching orders to utilize at that table, to reopen the existing agreement between the United States and Canada, and to say to our friends on the government benches that we are hurting and we are hurting badly in these sectors; that now they have a golden opportunity, as our trade critic has said, to reopen the deal and revisit energy, for instance.

Who in their right mind would treat Americans as Canadians in times of energy crisis? Show me one country that has agreements of that magnitude in terms of energy self-sufficiency, and I will sit down in my place. There is not one country that would give away its energy to another country and treat it as it would its own citizens and its own economy.

I find it completely irresponsible for a Canadian government to treat American sources as its own nationals. That is a giveaway. However, what I am suggesting is perhaps we can convince them to reopen them. How do we reopen it if we are not at the table? How do we revisit something if no one is talking, no one is debating, and no one is negotiating? How would they suggest that the misery stop, if we don't try to ask this government to use the occasion to tell the Americans that on a number of fronts we would like to cross the *t*'s and dot the *i*'s in a very different way?

When the question of the free trade agreement is put together, we also have to add to the equation of our economy the question of high interest rates, the question of our high Canadian dollar, the question that we are now going through a very bad recession that makes the 1981–82 period virtually a cakewalk with whomever we speak to. The real cost of interest rates now are higher costs. The difference between American interest rates and Canadian interest rates in 1982 was negligible; right now there is a differential.

In 1981 and 1982 Canadians were still working. Ask people in the construction industry, ask people in our trades industry, ask people in the housing market, ask whomever you wish, wherever they are, a very simple question, whether this recession is worse than the one in 1981–82 which happened to be an international one, unlike this "made–in–Canada" recession, especially by Tories.

Mr. Sobeski: Tell that to first–time buyers who are finally getting into the Toronto market.

Mr. Marchi: It is nice to have the members opposite awake finally. It took us six hours but they are finally awake.

The final variable, or another one, is also the question of the tax structure in this country, the question of the GST. When we begin to put all those variables together, is it any wonder that we are in a recession? Is it any wonder that the economy slowly but surely and gradually and consistently is being strangled?

To make matters worse, we just came off the heels of a budget some three weeks ago. Did the budget offer inspiration? Did the budget offer some employment stimulus? Did the budget try to inspire a nation out of the pit of recession into which it was placed by this government?

The Minister of Finance always gets up and says: "Oh, boy, when those Liberals were in government during 1981–82 they threw money at their problems".

Mr. Milliken: We had good government then.

Mr. Marchi: We did not throw money at our problems. The government of 1981–82 recognized that we were living through an international recession. Rather than do nothing, as this government advocates in its budget, the government of the time created labour intensive and capital works programs.

Why? Because it tried to assist its citizens to survive and live through the recession of 1981–82. Then we had unprecedented growth in 1984–85–86–87.

What does the government do in its recession that it got us into? The responsibility of a government is to say: "If we have to spend a few dollars to help Canadians get back to work, if we can inject some inspiration into the economy, if we can kick–start the engine, then we are a government that is showing leadership".

Where is the leadership of a government that throws the country into a recession and then pulls a Pontius Pilate and says: "We can't spend. If you are hurting we feel bad, but we can't do anything about it"?

Canadians deserve better. Canadians would want us to try to inject the economy with some stimulus, because if we are stimulated as an economy then the revenues come back. If no one is working, if plants are closing two to three weeks at a time, if they are downsizing, if Canadians are walking the streets unemployed and we are paying UIC, when will we come out of our recession? When will we put Canadians back to work? When are factories going to hum again? When are we going to get the 24–hour cycles again in factories?

We won't, as long as this government persists in taking the stand of simply backing off the problems rather than trying to help Canadians survive the dark times.

Yes, there will be good times again. We need to recognize that. There are cycles, but let us help Canadians during the down cycles and then reap the fruits of their labour during the good cycles.

I would love to go on a little further. I seek unanimous consent. If I do not receive it, it has been a pleasure and I will see you next week.

• (1550)

Madam Deputy Speaker: Are there questions or comments?

The hon. member was seeking consent to continue, but I see there are some members rising on question and comment.

Mr. Pat Sobeski (Cambridge): Madam Speaker, just a very quick question.

The hon. member referred to a budget three weeks ago that he thought was extremely regressive. Last week, we saw the province of Newfoundland and its Liberal premier come out with a budget that seemed to follow the same types of spending controls as exhibited by the finance minister. I would like the hon. member to explain to me how that Liberal government's budget is going to turn things around when he also seems to recognize that there is a tremendous debt burden.

Would the hon. member please explain to Canadians why Premier Wells, a hero across Canada, is taking a tough stand just like this federal government.

Mr. Marchi: Madam Speaker, first, let me say two things.

Premier Wells, in his own riding, is much more popular than the Prime Minister. Second, if the gentleman was somewhat more honest, he would have also told Canadians that the budget of Newfoundland came after a federal budget that basically slashed and passed on the deficit reduction to the provinces.

We were not surprised. We said, on the night of the budget, through our finance critic, Mr. Gray, the hon. member for Windsor West, through our Deputy Leader, Ms. Copps, the hon. member for Hamilton East, and through subsequent speakers, that when the government talks in the federal budget about deficit reduction, when it talks about the medicare system and the cutbacks that it would be pushing the problem to the top.

Mr. Attewell: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, I believe the hon. member called my hon. friend here dishonest. I would like him to withdraw that remark.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Of course, I will give the hon. member for York West the opportunity to explain or withdraw.

I would also bring to his attention, if I may, that he has been in the House at least as long as I have been in the House. He knows that members do not refer to their colleagues by their names, but by the name of their ridings. Giving the name of their ridings after does not make the first line correct.

Mr. Marchi: You are absolutely right, Madam Speaker, I should know better.

In terms of my use of the word "dishonest" I did not mean it against the hon. member at all. I withdraw that word completely and without any problem.

What I tried to point out is that the question of the Newfoundland budget was not an initiation but a response to the economic tightrope that was left after the government in Ottawa presented its budget which pushed deficit reduction on to the provinces and which cut the amounts of moneys with which provincial governments can administer their health and higher education systems.

I predict that the Government of Newfoundland will not be the only provincial government across the land to do this. That is part of the problem. We are going to see a domino effect as a result of the federal Government of Canada that has been sending the wrong signals and imposing the wrong commitments. The provincial governments will have to take care of their provincial treasuries and respond accordingly.

That is where the lack of leadership comes from. That is why it is important for a federal government to have a breadth of vision of the country it represents and leads. It has to have a sense that governments such as the Government of Newfoundland, given the difficult economic straits that it finds itself in, that every action in this place has a reaction elsewhere.

I am suggesting to the hon. member that the actions of provincial governments, be they Newfoundland or Manitoba or in other provincial capitals, when they present their budgets have the seed planted in this federal budget.

That is why we have been waging this debate in this Chamber, to try to bring the government to its senses, change its budget and do things that are going to kick–start the economy rather than continue this recession.

[*Translation*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: It being 3.55 p.m., it is my duty to inform the House that pursuant to Standing Order 81(17), the proceedings on the motion have expired.

Therefore, this House stands adjourned until next Monday at 1 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

The House adjourned at 3.55 p.m.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, March 18, 1991

The House met at 1 p.m.

Prayers

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S. O. 81—FARM INCOMES

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma) moved:

That this House call upon the Government to take immediate action to deal with drastically reduced farm incomes resulting from the 1990–91 crop year and to make required assistance available in time for spring planting to ensure viable returns for grains, oilseeds and horticultural producers.

He said: Mr. Speaker, this motion before the House today calls to the attention of the government the drastic and urgent need for emergency farm assistance this spring. It calls upon the government to provide this assistance in time for the planting season. This assistance should not only be clarified and made concrete, but should be provided to farmers in time for the planting season. We would suggest at least by the middle of next month.

It would be hard to over-emphasize the need for this assistance for the 1990–91 crop years. Clearly, I do not think anybody can remember the price of grains and oilseeds at a lower level than they are in the current crop year. Clearly, this results from a number of factors, mainly the world grain price war between the United States and the European Economic Community. Prices have been below $100 a tonne in many months of this crop year.

In fact, the chairman of the Canadian Wheat Board pointed out one sale of United States wheat subject to a subsidy program there, the export enhancement program, where the wheat was actually sold for around $70 a tonne. If you remove the transportation costs, the actual value of the shipment dropped to something like $35 a tonne.

• (1310)

Clearly, this crop year has seen the lowest prices in real terms since the 1930s, perhaps ever. Those amounts of payment are clearly inadequate. As a result of this, the government's cutback and its support programs for the 1991 calendar year, total net farm incomes are projected to drop by 54 per cent.

In some provinces, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, that drops the total net farm income to below zero. There is no net farm income. Other provinces like New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Ontario have a very serious reduction in total net farm income, down by percentages in the upper teens. In the case of Ontario, it is around 20 per cent. Clearly, this is the most difficult year as far as cash flow that many producers have ever faced. The executive director of the Ontario Corn Producers Association projected that its incomes would be lower than at any time in the 1980s. That takes in all of those extremely low years of the late 1980s.

In fact, representatives of the Ontario Corn Producers told the agriculture committee just last week that farm incomes would be something below $200 million for the grains and oilseeds in the province of Ontario below what they would project or hope would be the portion provided by government if GRIP is implemented in the coming year.

The impact goes far beyond just grains and oilseeds. It affects the whole range of agriculture commodities, but especially horticulture crops. The chairman of the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association last week told the agriculture committee that it is in the most desperate situation that he can recall in the 35 years that he has been a fruit and vegetable producer.

He has described the need as something like $70 million of emergency or bridging assistance before some more permanent kind of program of assistance such as GRIP, the Gross Revenue Insurance Program, is put in place. He says that it is absolutely essential that that

bridging assistance be provided this spring, before the growing and the planting season.

That was the report from only one producer. It does not take into account the tremendous problems that our potato producers in Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick are facing with the virus problem there. We are told by my colleague that the need for assistance there may be of the order of $25 million.

Prairie Pools has called for assistance in the order of $1 billion in the Canadian Wheat Board area. The Third Line of Defence Committee, which the minister appointed several months ago, has been reported to say that the need is in the order of $1.2 billion as an upper figure.

The important thing to remember here is that not only are we facing a drastic world situation for grains and oilseeds prices, but we are also facing a drastic cutback in government support programs.

Figures released by the government in December show that projections for government support programs, compared with 1988, dropped by $1.8 billion.

More recent figures show a reduction in support programs, between 1989 and 1991, of $1.6 billion. We have coming together here a terrible market situation and a government policy which has reduced those support programs which are necessary if agriculture is going to survive in the current world subsidized global grain warfare which has been going on for the past five or six years.

Why the government has chosen to reduce those support programs during the last two or three years is not clear, but it certainly is causing tremendous hardship. Figures like a 54 per cent reduction in net farm income—in some provinces 100 per cent total net farm income reduction—are only cold statistics; they do not speak of the tragedy of young farmers losing their land, of family breakups, of all kinds of difficulties that are faced in the rural community. Clearly, producers who five years ago were in a very healthy or reasonably successful position are facing difficult times now.

It almost seems like the government's plan was to reduce these support programs from those that were available in 1987, 1988 and 1989 in order to create this crisis, to bring in its GRIP and NISA programs, to bring pressure on the producers. Many producers believe that a world trade war in agriculture commodity is the responsibility of the federal government. In the United States the federal government assumes the responsibility for most its support program. In any event, whatever the game plan of the government in this regard, the resulting GRIP program that the government has proposed for the 1991–92 crop year will see the provincial governments putting up something like 60 per cent of the premiums for those programs. We have been inundated with talk of the GRIP and the NISA program across the country, but in fact GRIP—and probably NISA, with the exception of Saskatchewan—will not help out in the 1990–91 crop year. In this crop year we will see very low returns.

The crisis is now; the assistance needed is now. If farmers are to know where they are at and what their future is going to hold, they need the government to give a commitment as to the funding it is going to provide, clearly identify what basis that funding is going to be on, and make the payments before the crop season starts. The GRIP is designed for a payout in the fall of 1992. There may be interim payments later this fall and there may be interim payments next spring. We don't know about that. Clearly for the planting season, it is essential that this plan be put before the producers this spring.

When we talk about GRIP we see some provinces, like Saskatchewan, facing tremendous contributions for a province that is predominantly agriculture, with a very small non-agriculture society to pay the benefits. The question is: Can the cost to that government and to those producers be sustained over the long haul, a cost that has been estimated at something like half a billion dollars per year?

• (1320)

When the Minister of Finance presented his budget, he talked about $1.3 billion of assistance for agriculture. If that amount were provided immediately on a basis on which farmers would be able to calculate what assistance they were going to receive before the planting season this year, I am sure that everybody would think that was a very fair and equitable proposition.

However, the Minister of Agriculture has put out a press release stating that the $1.3 billion could be used for a number of things. It might be used for federal government premiums for the GRIP and NISA. It might be used for the deficit and the Canadian

Wheat Board initial payment. It might be used for the debt in the Western Grain Stabilization Fund.

All those things do not put new money into farmers' hands this spring. What farmers need is an emergency payment or pay-out, assistance now which will provide seed, fertilizer, diesel fuel, equipment repairs, help and so on, in time for the growing season this spring.

Clearly the Canadian Wheat Board account has been variously portrayed, that it will have a deficit of $750 million or a billion dollars. The federal government's share of the GRIP and NISA premiums are large amounts as well. In the Western Grain Stabilization Fund we do not know what the deficit is. We are told that it might be several hundred million dollars. If the $1.3 billion which the Minister of Finance announced in his budget is an interim payment under the western grain stabilization fund, of course that would be immediate help, provided it was made this spring.

What we are saying is that the program should be spelled out clearly, that we should not have this shell game going where there are three or four possibilities where the funds might be used, the funds mentioned in the minister's budget but not spelling out exactly how much funding is going to be made available in the current crop year in time for the planting and seeding period.

We say to the government that it should give up on that shell game. It should make it clear exactly what assistance is going to be made available. Paying off the deficit in the Western Grain Stabilization Fund or the Wheat Board account is of interest and concern to parliamentarians and to farmers, but what farmers want to know this spring is: Are they going to survive? Are they going to be able to put a crop in the ground? Are they going to get assistance on the same basis as they did in 1987, 1988 and 1989, in those years when they were facing similar deficits and similar losses of benefits from the marketplace itself.

We call on the government to provide this assistance to end the uncertainty as to whether or not there is going to be assistance, how much, and how it is going to played.

Last year the government announced some interim support. I believe it was in the order of $500 million. It called on the provincial governments to come forward and match that amount of money.

The battle raged on for two months. It was not until the end of May that there was actually some kind of an agreement. It was not until late August or some time in September when many of those payments were made, and they were relatively small payments proportionately.

Surely we do not have to go through that spectacle again this year. Surely the Minister of Agriculture can announce what the support is going to be and make it in a timely way, where it will do some good and there will not be this long game of procrastination or the long battles with the provincial governments as to whether or not they are going to match the funds, many of which would be hard put to match, especially for a province like Saskatchewan. They are already facing a premium in the new crop year of something like $160 million for GRIP. They would be hard put to match the special interim assistance that is needed for the existing crop year, 1990-1991.

We are saying that the time has come for the government to provide this assistance. It is needed now. There is no question that we have the worst situation as far as total net farm income this year, 1990, is concerned. The crisis itself has been partly created by the government drastically reducing its support programs between 1989 and 1991, the last two years. It is even lower than those previous years. It is time that provincial governments are facing the off-loading by the federal government because GRIP will require them to put up a sizeable support amount of funds to pay their share of the premiums, as will producers.

We do not think that any assistance is being provided. Many groups made the point before the agriculture committee that emergency assistance for the 1990-1991 crop year should not be coerced by signing up for GRIP.

There is going to be enough coercion because the Minister of State for Grains and Oilseeds has announced that he is not going to give the initial price until late July or toward the end of the crop year. Producers will not have the knowledge they usually have early in the spring as to what the initial price will be. There will certainly be

enough coercion there. We do not think that assistance should be tied to GRIP, as many producers have already requested and suggested.

We believe that there needs to be equal support for the horticulture industry. I mentioned earlier the requirement of Ontario fruit and vegetable producers who said that their shortfall is in the order of $70 million. The assistance required in the P.E.I. and New Brunswick areas for their difficulties has already been spelled out as well.

We think it is time that the government made a firm decision, announced it; not blame the province but just come clean and tell farmers how much the assistance will be, on what basis, and make it available in time for the planting season so it can do the most good when it is needed.

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to participate in the debate on the motion sponsored by the opposition that deals essentially with the farm income problem and calls upon the federal government to provide assistance to help the grain and oilseeds and horticultural sectors.

I must say I welcome the motion, but I question the timeliness because it comes precisely at a time when we are dealing with one of the most comprehensive income measures in 50 years. To back that up, I am going to quote some individuals who have been quoted in this place before, the five economists who have taken issue with certain parts of the GRIP and NISA proposals: Messrs. Gray, Weisensel, Rosaasen, Furtan, and Kraft. They said in a document that they presented: "The proposed GRIP and NISA programs represent the most significant Canadian agricultural legislation in the last 50 years". They indicate that it makes it the largest agricultural program ever. They go on to say that it represents a number of significant improvements over similar income support programs implemented in the past. They go on to cite that it includes payments on farm-fed grains and, second, that there is not a requirement to sell grain within a particular crop year to be eligible for a pay-out. The range of eligible crops has been expanded. The payments are more predictable and a 15 year average of prices provides more support during periods of low prices when compared to a five-year average of prices.

• (1330)

While they have some reservations, the over-all scope and comprehensiveness of the program is very valid and most acceptable. "GRIP", they go on to say, "has been designed to provide income support for agriculture producers across Canada in response to unprecedented low incomes in the agriculture sector".

We are dealing with it at a time when the very issue the hon. member raised is being dealt with in a very comprehensive fashion. After a series of *ad hoc* responses, which members on all sides of the House criticized and indeed the industry criticized, it is time now to come forth with some policy framework that provides a future for agriculture and provides some kind of an income safety net which producers can rely upon before the fact rather than after the fact.

The fact that huge amounts of money have been paid in *ad hoc* assistance, we still have a problem. It does speak to the requirement of having a comprehensive approach to this series of problems. That is what the farmers want and that is what industry wants. I think that is the kind of signal we must send to the international community, that we are going to continue to stand by our farmers, and that is what the safety net legislation is all about.

I am disappointed that I heard nothing new from the Liberal side. It is the same old litany and the same old rhetoric: just send money. There was nothing new. It is basically a collection of all the requests that have been made by various members in the community. There is nothing there, there is absolutely nothing there.

Let us look at the farm income picture, not to suggest for one minute that we are not going through difficulties, and put the whole thing into perspective. It is a problem that is multifaceted in nature. If we were to look at the 1980s, the last half of the 1980s showed that realized net income on average rose by 39 per cent, from an average in the first half of the 1980s of $3.1 billion realized net income to $4.2 billion realized net income. That is a 39 per cent increase in the period 1981-85 to 1985-89.

Western Canada in the last half of the 1980s experienced an 30 per cent increase over the first half, with the average realized net income rising from $1.6 billion to $2 billion. In eastern Canada there was a 47 per cent increase in realized net income in the last half of the

1980s versus the first half of the 1980s. Again, those figures were $1.5 billion versus $2.9 billion.

It is true, as the hon. member pointed out, that in 1990 we experienced a drop to around $3 billion, approximately a 25 per cent drop in realized net income. In 1991 we are projecting a further reduction. It is in anticipation of this very fact that the safety net programs were in fact designed, were brought into being and were brought before this House in a timely fashion so that we could deal with this issue not only in the short term, but indeed in the medium and long terms.

The effect of this program will reduce the shortfall by something in the order of $2.5 billion to $3 billion. It is a program designed to help producers to help themselves by providing some predictability, by providing some level of income assurance on an acreage basis, and by providing some security and stability over the long haul.

The important feature is that it has to be looked at as a package, GRIP and NISA together. The Net Income Stabilization Account will provide that long-term stability and security. I am concerned about the fact that we have become too preoccupied with one component of the program. If we go back and look at the recommendations of the task force on safety nets, we find that it was developed as a package. I hope hon. members will recognize the importance of speaking to this issue as a package, because the two are complementary to each other.

Simply put, the Gross Revenue Insurance Program is really a management tool that allows producers to use it in part of the management of their farms. It provides a shield and a safety net from the uncertainty and the disaster that have affected particularly in grains and oilseeds and that have become all too common in the past five or six years.

This government, this Prime Minister, this Minister of Finance, my predecessor, the former Minister of Agriculture, and myself have stood by farmers in the past and we are going to continue to do it in the future. There can be no doubt about that.

The bill before us is one of the most comprehensive farm income measures that has ever been introduced in the House. It is living testimony to that fact. We are going to attempt to continue, as best we can, to shield farmers from the difficulties and misfortunes caused by circumstances beyond their control.

Mr. Milliken: Created by this government.

Mr. Cardiff: Never.

Mr. Mazankowski: In terms of direct program payments in support of agriculture in the period from 1981 to 1985, let us look at the Liberal record. In the period 1981 to 1985 the average direct program payments in support of agriculture was $921 million per year. The 1986 to 1989 average was $2.7 billion, a threefold increase.

That speaks volumes about the priority, about the compassion, about the concern for the agricultural industry. That they did not need any help when they were paying 24 per cent interest rates as a result members associated with the government in 1980 to 1984 is nonsense. The problems we have in terms of debt and the level of debt is still a carryover from the good old days of 24 per cent interest rates, the 1981 to 1984 period.

In the period from 1986 to 1990 the revenue from the marketplace in agriculture accounted for only 20 per cent to 25 per cent of the realized net income. Eighty per cent of it came from governments, federal and provincial, and 80 per cent of that came from the federal government. In western Canada, particularly Saskatchewan and Manitoba, about 90 per cent of government support came from the federal government.

If we take all the support, direct and indirect programs, in 1987-88 federal and provincial support of agriculture across the country was $8.1 billion. In 1988-89 it was $7.5 billion and in 1989-90 it was $6 billion. As a matter of fact, in the last five years, 1985-86 to 1989-90, some $22.6 billion worth of federal government support was provided to agriculture and an additional $10 billion was provided by the provinces.

In the grains and oilseeds sector during that same period of time, $13.7 billion was provided in federal support. If we were to look at it another way, on per farm basis, if we take the average farmer in Saskatchewan for the period 1987-88-89, it worked out to $20,000 per farmer.

Mr. Milliken: They didn't need any help in 1981 to 1985. They were doing that well.

Mr. Mazankowski: In 1982 it was $2,600 from the Liberal guys, and in 1983 it was $3,200 from the Liberals.

Mr. Ferguson: We had $7 wheat, Don.

Mr. Mazankowski: Yes, $7 wheat for a few. How much $7 could you sell in the international marketplace today? You know you couldn't.

Let us look at Quebec in 1987–88–89, the same period. On a per farm basis, the level of direct program support from the federal government works out to $14,000 per farm. What was it in 1982–83? It was $7,000 per farm. What misery, what cheapskates.

• (1340)

Mr. Speaker, no compassion, no care. Let them sink or swim. That was their approach.

In spite of this massive infusion of support, we still have a problem. It needs a more comprehensive approach and we need to address some of the structural problems that exist. We must spend wiser. We do have fiscal constraints, and we must adjust to some of the realities that exist. Above all, we must provide an appropriate policy framework within which farmers can plan, knowing there is a program in place, knowing there is a long-term policy in place, knowing there is a national perspective on the issue.

The multi-faceted problems we face require multi-faceted solutions. The many forces at play have been recognized under the agriculture policy review process. We have to identify them and respond appropriately, and we have, through a partnership process which I think has worked very well.

We recognize there are changing market demands. We recognize there are changes in trading patterns; changes in technology; new emphasis placed on food safety; different emphasis placed on the environment; political and economic reforms occurring throughout the world; military wars. All of these things recognize the importance of agriculture in the international marketplace. Fifty per cent of our farm income is extracted from the international marketplace. We recognize that we have to make the necessary changes. It requires a timely response in an appropriate fashion.

That is why we launched the agriculture policy review and the 11 task forces that have been at work. We are now implementing a number of the recommendations. One of those is the GRIP–NISA safety net proposal. I am not going to go into detail today, because the issue is before the House and I will be appearing before a committee this afternoon. However, I would re-emphasize the importance of this package as a program that will provide stability, predictability, bankability and some confidence for the future.

It is a national program and it is our hope that it will cover a broad range of commodities. Horticulture has been mentioned. It would be our hope that horticulture would be incorporated into this program as soon as we possibly can. There is nothing to prevent the program NISA being implemented, provided the provinces can see fit to become a party to it.

There has been a suggestion that forage should be included in 1991–92. It is very difficult to incorporate it in the transitional year, but it is our intention to ensure that it will be incorporated into the permanent program, hopefully starting in 1992–93. To the extent that we can accommodate the forage industry, either through a third line or through some add-ons that might make it appropriate for the forage industry, to ensure that there is some semblance of equity in it, we will certainly try to do that.

The potato issue is one that we are deeply concerned about. The eradication program has been outlined, in co-operation with the producers and the provincial government. We are now working on an appropriate compensation program, and that we will be in a position to announce it in due course.

I know hon. members across the way have expressed some concerns and raised some issues with regard to the legislation currently before the House. I will be in committee this afternoon. I will be addressing a number of those areas and indicating some measure of flexibility in terms of trying to accommodate some of the concerns of the members opposite.

To repeat again, this program is fundamental. It is a fundamental building block to restoring strength and vibrance to the industry. Without long-term objectives, we cannot achieve the long-term stability Canadian farmers so desperately need.

We recognize that while GRIP and NISA are good programs for the future, they will not solve all our problems. We have never suggested they would. We have suggested they were a comprehensive approach to developing a framework that would help producers manage more effectively, and provide some stability and security for the future. We also recognize that some bridging assistance will be required until the programs

produce the intended results. We have set up a third line defence committee.

The hon. member suggests we should announce our programs right now. We have been getting some criticism from the people we are consulting over the fact that we are rushing into this without giving them a full opportunity to develop options and suggestions.

We have set up a committee of some 41 people, 19 of whom are farmers. Others represent the trade, the provinces and the federal government. On March 1 and 2 in Regina, at our federal–provincial meeting, we did establish a set of principles and guidelines that would govern us in the developing of the third line of defence, (a) that the program be multi–faceted reflecting the multi–faceted nature of the problems; (b) that it be built on the objective of the new safety net program and be linked as far as possible to participation of the new safety nets; (c) that it be directed at providing a transition from income levels attained during the pre–GRIP–NISA period based on those expected with the GRIP–NISA period; (d) that it be tied to longer term adjustment measures; (e) that it be announced as soon as possible in 1991; (f) that to the greatest extent possible delivered through the GRIP–NISA delivery programs; (g) that there we should respect the need for equity among producers, commodities and the provinces; and (h) that it be funded by the federal government, conditional upon industry and provincial government commitment to address the long–term structural needs.

The committee I referred to has produced a number of options and suggestions which we are now looking at. I will be meeting with farm leaders on March 20 here in Ottawa to further flesh out some of the thoughts and ideas with respect to this.

Our objective is to tie this into the longer term program we are putting in place under GRIP and NISA and also a longer term measure of adjustment necessary to deal with some of the forces of change that are being thrust upon us. It is not a matter of just simply tiding us over until tomorrow, it is a matter of providing something that will carry us into the future. We expect that by mid–April we will be in a position to announce something concrete.

Mr. Speaker, 1990 was the year of examination and analysis; 1991 is the year for implementation and action. In addition to the launching of the safety nets, which was a priority under the agriculture policy review, we have a number of things that we must do based upon the recommendations that have been flowing from the 11 task forces. They range all the way from strengthening the management capability of our industry and improvements in long–term financing, reduction of production costs; looking at new ways to provide adjustment support when necessary—here we are looking at enhancing the Canadian rural transition program—broadening our agricultural base through diversification and value added; maximizing our trade opportunities; aggressively challenging unfair trade practices; strengthening our regions and rural communities; strengthening our processing sector; taking steps to enhance the industry's competitiveness; and freeing up the system by reforming regulations that have created barriers to competitiveness.

These approaches are all doable in a very comprehensive way because we have had that very major internal examination of our industry. We have had the kind of recommendations brought forward that are non–partisan, and are in the interests of the total industry. We are committed to that process. We are committed to acting upon those recommendations, to give real meaning to the process of the agriculture policy review.

I invited all hon. members to participate in the process, as they have. I must say that over the period of my being Minister of Agriculture I have always found them somewhat partisan but always constructive.

Mr. Dennis Mills (Broadview—Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, first of all I want to say to the Minister of Agriculture that he seems to have great respect and support in cabinet. Over the years it has been unmistakable that he has always managed to get the substantial funds necessary for the farming community of this country.

• (1350)

He started off his comments by saying that we on this side of the House were not looking for creative solutions, that we were not looking at a new policy framework and

that we were not looking for safety nets. I wanted to ask the minister a very specific question.

In 1989 the general conference of the Agricultural Institute of Canada adopted two resolutions relating to water and the free trade agreement. I am sure the minister is well aware of that institute's concerns. I was wondering what his views were in us making sure that water was, in fact, exempt from the free trade agreement and that maybe it could be used as one of these safety nets he talks about for future negotiation for the agricultural community of this country. I wonder if the minister could comment on that.

Mr. Mazankowski: Of course, I will comment on it. I do not know what the hon. member is fishing for. He knows the policy of this government.

The export of water in the massive quantities he is referring to is excluded under the provisions of the free trade agreement. There is nothing wrong with selling bottled water. I hope we sell a lot more of it. There is provision for that as a commodity, but there is certainly no provision for the export of water under the free trade agreement.

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Saskatoon—Humboldt): Mr. Speaker, the minister has indicated that the government will do something about the bridging requirements for farms for this spring.

In his speech of March 1 and again today, the minister said that those bridging requirements would be tied to enrolment in GRIP and NISA. Is he implying by that statement that farmers who do not sign up in GRIP or NISA cannot expect any help in the bridging period?

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, the guidelines that were developed were couched in terms that would hopefully lead to the enrolment of more rather than fewer people in the GRIP and NISA concept.

For the benefit of the hon. member, I will reread the principle to which I think he is referring. One of the criteria is to:

> b) build on the objective of the new safety net program and be linked, as far as possible, to participation in the new safety nets;

With respect to delivery, "to the greatest extent possible," programs should be, "delivered through GRIP-NISA delivery systems". That is not only a set of principles which I think we can live with, but the provinces have endorsed those principles. I am pleased to note that many of the farm organizations which have commented on those principles have also supported them.

It is very difficult when we are trying to develop the basic three lines of defence. The first is the management and operational capabilities of the producer himself, and the responsibility that he or she must take in that regard. Second, the safety net programs which are funded through a sharing arrangement between the federal-provincial and producer communities. The third line of defence effectively kicks in when the first and second do not apply, and when there are unforeseen disasters or problems that are not envisioned or covered by the first two lines of defence. Obviously, if some people believe that the third line of defence is going to be a substitute for the second line of defence, we are going to be back to square one.

I think the hon. member would agree that what we need is a longer term solution to provide the kind of stability and security we need, and hopefully to re-establish the kind of confidence the hon. member and I both want to see in the agriculture community.

Mr. Hovdebo: I want to explore the same point a little further.

I can see acceptance of the fact that the GRIP and NISA are the first or second line of defence, but the implication in the speech on March 2 was that if a farmer did not have GRIP then he should not expect any help, even if by not taking GRIP he gave up the opportunity for a certain level of support.

However, what we are talking about here is the bridging period. There may not be any payment from GRIP at the end of the year if the prices are high enough, but the bridging period is here and the need is here for that period of time. Any suggestion that if a farmer does not enrol in GRIP he will not get any assistance for the bridging period eliminates all of the voluntary factor in the particular programs, because they are both considered voluntary. They do not become voluntary if we say: "No money for you for last year if you don't enrol in it this year."

Mr. Mazankowski: I could pose the question to the hon. member: What would you do next year if we ended

up in the same situation, where a person was not enrolled and he again found himself in difficult circumstances, and a good portion of the rest of the producer community became involved in the GRIP and NISA program and found protection? Would the hon. member expect the federal government to come out with another line of defence just to meet the needs of that individual?

That is the balance we have to weigh. We are not attempting compulsion here. What we are trying to do is invite farmers to become part of the solution. We are giving them a mechanism to help themselves. Every time a producer signs up for the program, the federal government is picking up 41-2/3 per cent of the premium and the province is picking up 25 per cent of the premium. The producer is buying 100 cents on the dollar insurance for 33-1/3 cents. It seems to me that it is a pretty good deal.

If we are going to have the kind of stability over the long term, if we are going to have the kinds of management tools that will allow producers to become more self-reliant, that will allow them to make their decisions in advance rather than put their crop in and hope for the best and maybe the federal or provincial government will come to the rescue, it is important to have these kinds of instruments in advance so they can be used as a management tool, as well as the farmer's own expertise and wisdom in terms of the operation of his farm unit.

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Saskatoon—Humboldt): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to say a few words on this resolution.

The resolution asks for immediate action on the part of the government to ensure that funds are in place for planting this year. That is exactly the question I was asking the minister just a few minutes ago in the sense that if this fund is dependent on enrolment, we only have a couple of weeks or a month until the actual seeding begins.

As the minister suggests, if this is to be a tool for survival in farming, then there are a lot of decisions to be made relative to enrolment in the gross revenue fund. If the farmer cannot be sure that he is going to have money to plant this year, there does not seem to be any value in enrolling in GRIP if he is not going to put any seed in the ground. He is obviously not going to be one of the farmers taking his crop off this year.

What I have been asking is: What kind of assurance can we have from the GRIP or NISA, or from the government outside of GRIP or NISA, that there is going to be something in place this spring?

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. member. It being two o'clock p.m., the House will now proceed to Statements by Members, pursuant to Standing Order 31.

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 31

[*English*]

CITIZENS' FORUM ON CANADA'S FUTURE

Mr. Peter L. McCreath (South Shore): Mr. Speaker, the citizens' forum is an experiment in the public consultation process in Canada. It is an honest attempt, whether perfect or otherwise, to respond to widespread public demand for broader and more open public participation in the process of constitutional reform in Canada.

Along with other vehicles, such as the Edwards—Beaudoin committee and various provincial task forces, the citizens' forum is trying to do a job to help make Canada work.

Those who seek to destroy the forum and with it the government that established it, without themselves offering constructive, implementable alternatives may in fact be contributing not just to the demise of the citizens' forum but to the demise of Canada.

The future strength and survival of Canada and the quest for unity are legitimate topics for differences of opinion among Canadians. They are not appropriate subjects for partisan politics.

In 1864 a great Liberal leader, George Brown, abandoned partisanship to make Canada work. It is time the opposition in this House did the same.

* * *

WORLD FIGURE SKATING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Mr. Doug Fee (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, last week Canada watched as the best figure skaters in the world competed in what has been recognized as the most challenging and artistically pleasing championship ever.

All Canadian competitors deserve to be commended. We also salute the new women's champion. Although an American, Kristi Yamaguchi trained in Alberta.

The men's final saw unprecedented prestige for Canadians as three men excelled. Michael Slipchuk was seventh, Elvis Stojko was sixth, and once again we are pleased to congratulate the world champion, the first Canadian to win three consecutive world championships.

Caroline, Alberta, is not where you would expect a world champion in figure skating to come from. It is a pretty small town, but its pride is as big as the Rockies and I join them in congratulating three time World Figure Skating Champion, the pride of Caroline, their favourite son, Mr. Kurt Browning.

* * *

LANGUAGE TRAINING

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona): Mr. Speaker, on Saturday I had the opportunity to attend a rally at Tech Voc High School in Winnipeg, which was attended by thousands of new Canadians who were protesting the cutbacks in funding for English as a second language training in Winnipeg.

They are particularly concerned about funding for the ESL program that has been put on for years by Winnipeg School Division No. 1, that the funding be fully restored and the services which that program has provided to new Canadians continue into the future.

They ask the federal government and particularly the minister of immigration, to reconsider the decision to reorganize the ESL training in the way the minister appears to be doing.

There were members of the government present there, along with the hon. member for Winnipeg South, who made some commitments, but they were vague. We hope that in the very near future the government will take an opportunity to say that it has changed its mind and that it intends to fully restore the funding for English as a second language training in Winnipeg School Division No. 1.

* * *

RED CROSS MONTH

Mrs. Christine Stewart (Northumberland): Mr. Speaker, the tradition of dedicating March as Red Cross month dates back to 1943. In designating this month, the Red Cross Society in Canada is able to focus its public education campaign to remind people about the very worth-while and necessary work undertaken by the Red Cross, its dependence upon volunteer support and its reliance on the generosity of the public in maintaining services.

Last year alone, an estimated 4 million Canadians benefited from emergency response, health, safety and community programs provided by the Canadian Red Cross. As well, Canadian funds went to relief operations in more than 66 countries including funds to help refugees in the Persian Gulf, and victims of famine in the Horn of Africa.

It should also be noted that the Canadian International Development Agency, through its International Humanitarian Assistance Program, will contribute $1.4 million to the Red Cross for use in Kuwait and Iraq for basic health care needs and water purification equipment.

The Red Cross has as its purpose the alleviation of human suffering. When help is needed in Canada and around the world, the Red Cross responds.

Let us salute the Red Cross, a truly humanitarian international organization.

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[*Translation*]

VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. Jean-Marc Robitaille (Terrebonne): Mr. Speaker, there are many volunteer organizations in this country dedicated to improving the living conditions of the disabled.

I would like to take this opportunity to draw your attention to the work of one organization in my riding that has worked with tremendous dedication to this cause ever since "La rose bleue" was founded, which was ten years ago last weekend. During that time, the organization has worked very hard, day after day, to promote the cause of the disabled through fund-raising, public awareness campaigns and other means.

I want to take this opportunity to commend the dedication throughout those ten years of the president, Jocelyne Demany, who is herself disabled and the heart and soul of this organization.

Her perseverance, typical of many others in her situation, in defending the rights and interests of the disabled was rewarded in the latest federal Budget, because, Mr. Speaker, this government listens and has taken concrete and positive measures to help the disabled.

I urge them to keep up the good work, because that is how we can bring about change to make this a more just society.

* * *

[*English*]

MEMBER FOR LAVAL–EST

Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Nunatsiaq): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to condemn the remarks made by the hon. member from Duvernay on CBC's *The Journal* last week about aboriginal people.

The member's statement has impugned aboriginal people in this country. His explanatory press release of last week does not repair the damage which has been done. Behind his discriminatory and inflammatory comments is an attitude prejudicial to the aboriginal people.

Mr. Speaker: I hesitate very much, especially on a subject like this, to interrupt the hon. member. There is a rule that Members' Statements ought not to be used as a personal attack on another member. I understand the hon. member is going to raise this matter later on in the House and that probably would be the place to deal with it. I very much regret, but I am bound by the rules just as all hon. members are. I am sure that if the hon. member wishes to raise this issue further he will have an opportunity to do so.

* * *

CANADIAN COAST GUARD

Mr. George Proud (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, today I speak of a memorandum from the Emergency Operations Unit of the Canadian Coast Guard to its personnel sections.

The memo states:

> Due to the present Federal Government Budget restraints, we may be forced to operate under present student wage employment programs.

This program is a seasonal rescue program. They work in six separate maritime locations during tourist season.

This program affixes hourly rates of pay to levels of education. For example, a third year community college student in his last year is eligible to only make the equivalent wage scale of a first year university student.

What type of message does this send to the Canadian trades people, the very people who make the country work? A third year community college student warrants only the same wage scale as a first year university student?

This is what the federal government is doing. It is offending and humiliating three–quarters of its population and widening the gap between the rich and the poor.

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[*Translation*]

TRIBUTE TO ISABELLE AND PAUL DUCHESNAY

Mr. Gilles Rocheleau (Hull—Aylmer): Mr. Speaker, I want to extend my warmest congratulations to Paul and Isabelle Duchesnay, who won the world figure skating championship dance title. These gold medal winners who skated for France are citizens of Quebec and residents of my riding.

I want to congratulate them on their performance in Munich, and I thank them for showing us that we Quebeckers have what it takes to achieve excellence. And what it takes is perseverance and confidence in our abilities.

We often hear about Francophones being disadvantaged in Canadian amateur sport. The Duchesnay's are a case in point. They would have liked to skate for the Canadian team, but according to the coaches they were not good enough. However, their courage, determination and talent showed that they were right and that those who did not believe in them were wrong.

This is one more example that proves we Quebeckers are different. This is one more instance of Canadian federalism stifling our identity and preventing us from developing as we should. This proves once again that sovereignty is in the best interests of Quebec.

Bravo, Isabelle and Paul!

S. O. 31

[*English*]

TOURISM

Mr. Greg Thompson (Carleton—Charlotte): Mr. Speaker, the results of a recent study should bring smiles to the faces of business operators in the tourist industry. According to Sharon Pond of *The Saint John Telegraph Journal*, reporting on the study "Price, Value and Perception" conducted by Coopers and Lybrand, visitors from the U.S., Britain, France, Germany and Japan say that they like coming to Canada and do not foresee the country as being too expensive for a holiday.

Debra Beck, Director of Communications for TIAC, the industry's spokesperson, said that this week the results are contained in several huge volumes that will take some time to digest by all of the groups concerned, but she called the highlights of the report very interesting and very positive.

* * *

• (1410)

UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr. Mike Breaugh (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, some have said that this government never thinks of the unemployed, that it does not care about double-digit unemployment in Canada, that it claws back at the benefits that are due to the unemployed.

Some have said that this government does not care about the civil servants who will have to work in the unemployed centres and look face to face with the unemployed of this nation.

None of that is true. The government does think of the unemployed. I was witness to that from yesterday's *Ottawa Citizen*, a quote from "Government Business Opportunities" that the government is putting out a tender for a crowd control system. It is calling for tenders on the ropes and posts necessary to bring order to big line-ups.

It is true. The poor and the unemployed will have something to hang on to. It will be a rope at an unemployment centre. I am not convinced that it was a really good idea for them to supply the people who are out of work in this country with ropes and posts, but time will tell. Time will tell.

GROSS REVENUE INSURANCE PLAN

Mr. Ken Hughes (Macleod): Mr. Speaker, during recent days I met with many farmers in the riding of Macleod. Of course, right now many questions are being asked about the new GRIP program or the Gross Revenue Insurance Plan.

GRIP was designed to protect grain and oilseed producers from shortfalls in revenue, caused by either poor yields or low prices. GRIP is designed to provide protection in an effective, predictable way by basing coverage on individual circumstances.

The program does not mask long-term market trends. Rather, it provides farmers with a buffer against sudden and drastic price changes. It is a welcome long-term response to the needs of farmers. I will continue to work to ensure that this program meets the specific needs of farmers in southwestern Alberta and other parts of Canada.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Joe McGuire (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, there is a crisis in the agriculture industry today and Canadians do not know about it.

Canadians do not realize that the year 1991 represents a turning point in the Canadian food industry.

The success or failure of this crop year will determine whether or not Canada will have a secure future in agriculture.

Statistics show that there will be a minus 54.5 per cent change in total net farm income in 1991. What industry can sustain such a loss and remain in business?

Yet Canadians demand cheap, environmentally friendly, attractively packaged food on their grocery shelves.

We cannot have it both ways, Mr. Speaker. We cannot have cheap food and profitable farms without assistance from the taxpayer.

We as a nation must realize that unless our farmers survive, we will be dangerously dependent on foreign food supplies. Whether it is the grain industry in the west, the horticulture industry in Ontario, the dairy

industry in Quebec, or the potato industry in P.E.I., our food producers have to survive.

Immediate assistance must be made available now if our food industry is to survive into the future.

* * *

[*Translation*]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Gilles Bernier (Beauce): Mr. Speaker, multilateral trade negotiations on agriculture will soon resume in Brussels, as part of GATT.

We hope the European Community will want to start serious negotiations on questions affecting agriculture. The Canadian government is convinced, however, that GATT member countries are determined to resolve their differences.

Canadian farmers need improved trade regulations that apply across the board. We must achieve the following objectives: reduce substantially the subsidies that distort world markets; facilitate access to international markets; and verify and reinforce article XI of GATT, in accordance with the proposal made in March by Canadian and Quebec farmers, including minimum levels for access to the Canadian market, in accordance with international obligations.

In concluding, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that we Canadians must defend our position which demands better safeguards for our supply management system. We have made sacrifices, we are disciplined, we have acquired some very valid structures, and we want to keep them.

As far as article XI of GATT is concerned, Canada has so far been able to rally a number of countries to its official position, which is to clarify and strengthen this article.

* * *

[*English*]

PORT OF CHURCHILL

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, as another spring approaches, supporters of Canada's only inland sea port at Churchill are again gearing up for a fight to ensure that a fair share of prairie grain is shipped to our overseas customers through this port.

With the government's dismal lack of financial and moral support and its willingness to encourage rail-line abandonment in the west, it is a wonder how the port has survived. Churchill has tremendous potential as a transportation staging point for shipping goods to Canada's northern communities. Churchill has a role to play in not only maintaining the north, but also in developing it further. Yet last year the government's air terminal was almost forced to close down completely due to neglect, resulting in it being declared a fire hazard.

Many remember the rocket range in Churchill. The National Research Council's site has had a growing interest in the science sector. We have a government report that indicates that with a reasonable marketing strategy, the range could make a profit. But we need a government that is willing to invest in our north.

I call upon the government to start paying attention to what is happening in Canada's north. The community of Churchill is but one example of how hard it is to struggle with resources but without a government with a vision. How many more Churchills are out there in Canada's north?

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): My question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. Over the weekend unemployed Canadians were shocked to see government ads in newspapers from coast to coast to coast, distributing an eight-page brochure saying how great the budget is.

I want to ask the Deputy Prime Minister, why is the government spending millions on propaganda to promote a budget at a time when it says it does not have a cent for people lined up at food banks and when it is actually cutting back on funds for the unemployed?

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): Mr. Speaker, the budget brought down by the Minister of Finance in February was a recovery budget designed to get people back to work, designed to get the economy of this country going again.

One of the things that has been made loud and clear to us, as parliamentarians, all of us, is that the public needs more information on what the government is trying to accomplish. That has been shown time and time again.

We hear that in our constituency offices. We need more information.

The government has found that the best way to communicate and the most inexpensive way to communicate with the Canadian public is through the tabloids. I believe that if the hon. member takes time to read it, she will find it to be a very objective piece. I hope that all the citizens of Canada take that opportunity because it is a very important piece of communication with the Canadian public.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, I think unemployed Canadians across the country are indignant about this waste of money, and I would like to direct my question more specifically to the minister responsible for economic policy in Montreal.

Since the government spent $1.5 million on publicizing a budget that has cut funds for the unemployed by $100 million, does the minister responsible for economic policy in the Montreal region agree with the fact that money spent on this advertising campaign was wasted?

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Labour and Minister of State (Transport)): Mr. Speaker, I don't think it is a waste of money, quite the contrary. As my colleague just mentioned, this is very important information that is intended to help Canadians understand the situation the government has to deal with.

As far as the Montreal region is concerned, if the hon. member is interested, I could make a list of all government investment in the Montreal region over the past years, to raise the economy to a level more acceptable than it was when the Liberals were defeated in 1984.

[*English*]

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, not only is this advertising campaign a complete waste of money, it is also factually wrong. If the minister is so concerned about informing the public, why does this ad not mention that there is a $100 million cut in spending on job creation programs? Why does the ad not mention that there is a $1 billion cut in cash transfers for medicare? Why does the ad not mention that the government is completely withdrawing from unemployment insurance benefits?

In fact, if the budget is so good, why do taxpayers have to foot a bill in excess of $1 million to try to sell it from coast to coast to coast?

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): Mr. Speaker, it is not a matter of selling the budget. The budget has sold itself and has been well received right across Canada.

Second, in research that has been done, 76 per cent of Canadians that have been polled say that this is the most effective way to communicate with the Canadian public.

• (1420)

Third, it is costing 15 cents per household to communicate with the Canadian people. I think that is money very well spent.

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, this 15 cent per household adds up to more than $1.5 million to distribute what is essentially Conservative propaganda which should be paid for by the Conservative Party and not by the taxpayer.

The ad asserts that the budget itself brings about "direct program spending increases to the unemployed and the elderly".

The minister must know that this is not true and the program spending increases are a result not of the budget but of legislation passed by this House years before the budget.

Why will the minister not admit that the ad is factually wrong and misleading? Why will he not withdraw the ad and the accompanying brochures and apologize to Canadians while he is doing it?

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): Mr. Speaker, if anybody should apologize to the Canadian public, it is the hon. member who said that he would resign if interest rates go up and he did not resign his seat at all. How can he stand there and make those claims?

I might say that there is an increase of some $1.6 billion going to senior citizens in 1991–92 and some $3 billion more going to unemployment insurance. Factually there is more money going to those people who need help in these tough times. That is factual. That is not misleading at all.

May I also say there is information in the mailer that has gone out regarding the streamlining of government management, the transfers to provinces which have not been cut. There are increases to the provinces that are going next year. There are tough new measures on expenditure control plans. There is controlling spending by law.

Which ones does the hon. member object to? Which ones is he going to fight? Why is he not in favour of better control over government finances? He was in the government that threw it away.

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, not only is the government's ad false and misleading when it comes to the elderly and the unemployed, it also says: "The government will channel all GST and privatization revenues to a debt servicing and reduction fund".

This cannot be true, because the government's own budget document says on page 78 that "only any above projected revenues from the GST will make a contribution to deficit reduction".

Why has the government printed something in its pamphlet and brochure which is contradicted by its own budget document? Does this mean that the Minister of Finance and his colleague are in the running for the Governor General's award for fiction?

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): A flash of humour. Mr. Speaker, the hon. member talks about the mailer going out and costing $1.5 million. I can tell the hon. member that the Liberals holding up unemployment insurance and the GST legislation in the Senate cost millions and millions of dollars; a waste of the taxpayers' money, a waste of the taxpayers' money.

I can tell the hon. member that the information here is accurate. It is clear. If people want further information there are telephone numbers to call. The Canadian people have requested that information.

Mr. Young (Acadie—Bathurst): Of whom?

Mr. McDermid: I find it rather amazing that the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra says I am history.

Mr. Young (Acadie—Bathurst): He never said a word.

Oral Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

This week Canadians received this very costly eight-page pamphlet justifying the failed economic policies of this government. At the same time we learned that the government is advertising for crowd control measures which it wishes to put in at unemployment insurance offices.

This weekend we saw thousands of unemployed Canadians in Toronto saying: "We don't want unemployment insurance; we want jobs".

I would ask the Deputy Prime Minister: When is this government going to respond with a real employment program for Canadians instead of dismantling the Canadian economy? If this government wants to communicate effectively with Canadians, it should get Canadians working.

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the hon. member that she is the one who delayed for a long time Bill C-21 which put 500 million more dollars into training this year.

I think it is time that the NDP woke up and smelled the coffee about what the future is in this country. This budget is a plan for economic recovery for Canada, as my hon. colleague has said. We have learned and learned and learned, time and time again under the brain dead former government and the NDP, that make work projects do not help workers.

What helps workers is training. What helps workers is education. What helps workers is growth in the economy. What helps workers is lower interest rates. What helps workers is lower deficits. I would think the hon. member should have learned that by now.

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Deputy Prime Minister.

Canadians who are looking for a job, looking for some hope would wonder then why this government chose to cut $100 million from the Canada Jobs Strategy and chose to cut back on transfers for post-secondary education to get the Canadian population trained.

What we see the government saying in this pamphlet is that the debt is causing many of the problems we have today. The debt is important, but what we hear the government saying is that Canadians should share the burden. Instead it is the Canadian unemployed who are carrying the burden all by themselves.

There are reports of a recent Statistics Canada study which says that 44 per cent of the Canadian debt is caused directly by tax loopholes and letting the wealthy not pay their fair share in taxes.

When is the government going to stop those tax loopholes for corporations and make the wealthy pay their fair share, instead of blaming the victims and the unemployed for the state of this country?

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): Mr. Speaker, first of all, that last statement is just not accurate at all. We are not blaming the unemployed and the poor of this country at all for the situation that we find ourselves in, and she knows that. That is a very unfair but typical statement from the hon. member.

I want to remind the hon. member that the Minister of Finance over the last number of years has removed a lot of the tax loopholes. Corporations are now paying their fair share. Banks are paying income tax for the first time.

My hon. friend talks about capital gains. He does not believe in investment in this country. It is the farmer who has the capital gains and the small business people have the capital gains. He proposes that he is a great supporter of the farmers and small business, yet he wants to wipe out the exemption for capital gains for those people. What facetiousness.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, this government keeps repeating the economy is already on the road to recovery and that with a little patience it will get there.

Mr. Speaker, people throughout the country know that is not true. It isn't like the situation in 1982, because most of the jobs that have been lost are gone forever.

What will this government do to help all those people who can't find work because there is no work?

[*English*]

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): Mr. Speaker, some jobs have been lost permanently through increased productivity, with new equipment, and so on.

However when the economy grows, so does the manufacturing base. We have seen the manufacturing base in this country grow since 1984 by 9.5 per cent, and that will continue. New industries will come and new permanent jobs will be created.

The hon. member says that this government is saying that the economy is back in full swing. We have not said that at all. What we have said is that there are signs of recovery starting, that it is going to take until the middle of this year before we can experience very good signs of recovery, and that we will be back in full swing in 1992.

That is what the Minister of Finance said in his budget, and that is what this government is saying.

* * *

• (1430)

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture.

The Deputy Prime Minister knows that total net farm incomes are slated to drop by 54 per cent this year. In provinces like Saskatchewan and Manitoba there will be zero net farm income. This will be caused by world grain prices being very low in the 1990–91 crop year and by the cutbacks in government programs.

I wonder if the minister can tell the House and Canadian farmers today if there will be an emergency assistance program this spring to assist those producers. I ask him if he will spell out the details. Will the minister say when that financial assistance will be made available to those producers?

I ask this especially because the Minister of Finance seemed to suggest late last week in Saskatchewan that there would be no more assistance. I wonder if the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture can clarify the situation for our farmers.

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, the House is currently considering the Farm Income Protection Act, a very important and comprehensive piece of

legislation that will provide security, predictability and some stability for the agricultural industry, particularly the grains and oilseeds sector because it is primarily designed around that and that has been the priority of the safety net task force.

I am sure the hon. member is aware as well that since the low prices of January 1991 there has been some strengthening in world wheat prices of $10 to $12 per tonne, and that is clearly welcome.

We recognize that while the 1991 transitional Gross Revenue Insurance Program and Net Income Stabilization Account will not have an immediate effect upon producers' incomes. We recognize that the process of a transition or a bridging program is being defined by a third line of defence committee comprised of some 41 people, 19 producers and representatives of the federal-provincial governments.

At the present time we are designing a program that will meet the multifaceted nature of the requirements. I will be meeting with farm leaders on March 20, later this week, to develop further options in that regard.

I assure the hon. member that we are seized with this issue in a very serious vein. We hope we will be in a position to make some indication to the producers prior to mid-April.

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, I asked that question because last year the government announced a program at the end of March, did not give the criteria until the end of May and did not give the cheques until early in September. I hope that will not be repeated, and I hope the minister can give that assurance.

In view of the presentation made by Ontario horticultural producers last week that their industry needs a $70 million bridging assistance program before a long-term program comes into effect some time next year, can the minister give some assurance that short-term assistance will be provided to horticultural producers right across Canada, not just in Ontario but in P.E.I and other provinces, which are facing a very serious shortfall in their net farm income this year as well?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, the problem at hand is multifaceted.

Clearly the horticultural sector is one that is experiencing some difficulties. That as well will be taken into consideration by the third line safety committee.

Mr. Foster: When?

Mr. Mazankowski: The hon. member says: "When?" He just criticized us for announcing the program without the criteria.

We have established the criteria. We have the producers and the two levels of government sitting down with the industry trying to devise a program that will meet the need.

As the hon. member suggested, we are going to take a little more time this year to see that it is done right. Hopefully the hon. member will be on board and support it when we announce such a program, rather than pooh-poohing $500 million which was announced a year ago when he said it was insufficient.

In a period of tight fiscal restraint, we obviously have to spend our money wisely and we have to devise the kinds of programs that will be effective. That is precisely what we are doing.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, my question is also directed to the Minister of Agriculture.

Today, under the Agricultural Stabilization Act, dairy producers receive a subsidy of $6.04 per hectolitre. Is the minister prepared to commit his government today to providing a federal contribution that is at least that high under the new Farm Income Protection Act?

[*English*]

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, unlike the Liberal Party when it was in government and provided a one-year dairy policy, we have put in place a five-year policy. When that policy expires, it will be reviewed in consultation with the industry and the provinces, as is customary by this government.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, it is not the Liberal government that cut back in the area of dairy support; it is the Conservative government across the way.

[*Translation*]

I have a supplementary for the same minister.

Last week, horticultural producers in Canada said that before the Farm Income Protection Act is passed, at least $70 million in assistance would have to be paid in a given province for the industry to survive, pending implementation of the minister's new program.

The minister said earlier that there would be a bridging program, pending the new legislation. Could he inform the House today when this program will be implemented and when Canadian horticultural producers can expect to receive their cheques?

[*English*]

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, before the horticultural producers can expect cheques, they have to become a party to the program. Those discussions are still going on, and there is some concern about whether in fact the horticultural industry will become members.

Mr. Boudria: Bridge financing.

Mr. Mazankowski: Before there can be bridge financing, there has to be a commitment to engage in the GRIP and NISA programs. Those discussions are ongoing right now. If the hon. member would like to get an update on the whole process, I would be glad to send him, in chronological form, just where we are at in terms of our discussions with the horticultural industry.

* * *

MEMBER FOR TRINITY—SPADINA

Mr. David Barrett (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

It concerns a colleague of mine and a member of this House, the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina, who went as a member of this House to observe elections in Mexico and has now had his visa cancelled because of the Mexican government's view, probably, that he was against the free trade agreement and the fraud in that election.

What does the minister intend to do about this incident? Will he tell members of the House whether or not he is prepared to protect the members of this House?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I look forward to hearing from our colleague when he returns.

The hon. member knows that Mexico has a right to revoke visas which it thinks are used for purposes other than the purpose for which they were granted, just as Canada does. When our colleague in the House sought a visa, he did not indicate to Mexican authorities the purpose for which he was planning to make use of that visa. He is still in Mexico. He is there with a tourist visa. He is allowed to stay in the country so long as he respects the term of the visa.

That is the kind of treatment that Canada would apply to people from other countries coming here to whom visas apply. Surely we should not complain if that same kind of treatment is accorded to Canadians who go to countries regarding which visas are required of Canadians.

Mr. David Barrett (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca): Mr. Speaker, I regret the embarrassment to the minister, but somebody has misinformed him and should be made aware of the fact that on March 4, this year, the member concerned sent, with a copy to his department, a letter to the Mexican ambassador stating as follows: "I am writing to request a visit to Mexico from March 12th to March 19th as part of a delegation to monitor elections in Morelos State. I will be visiting at the invitation of the PRD."

This is why the Government of Mexico gave him the visa, contrary to what the minister says.

I ask the minister to make a commitment to this House to come back and tell us who misinformed the minister. Second, what will the minister do to protect an MP who said clearly what he intended to go there for in the first place?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I will certainly look at that, but let me make a larger point to the House. If it turns out—

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): The little point first and then the larger point.

• (1440)

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): I am glad that the former Leader of the Opposition, the former Prime Minister is back in the House advising us of little points. I welcome him back.

If I was misinformed in my answer, I will certainly advise the House of that fact.

There is the other point I want to make. One of the important developments now in the world is that there is an an increasing willingness on the part of countries whose democratic systems Canadians have criticized, to invite election observers in. Canadians are responding formally to that kind of request.

When we have instances where individual members of Parliament go on their own and undertake the kind of activity in which unfortunately two members of this House have been involved in the last week, that can raise serious questions about the effectiveness and the willingness of Canada to take part in what most of us regard as a very welcome new development in countries whose regimes we have criticized being prepared to invite in observers to oversee their electoral processes. We would not want to see that kind of willingness on the part of—

Mr. Speaker: I think we should move on. The hon. member for York West.

* * *

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the transport minister, I address my question to the Deputy Prime Minister. It concerns the upcoming negotiations with the United States on the new open skies treaty.

The Deputy Prime Minister is well aware that the Canadian parliamentary committee which examined the open skies question unanimously rejected the inclusion of cabotage for American air carriers, namely the ability for American airlines to freely and fully cover the Canadian airspace and in between points.

I ask the Deputy Prime Minister this question. Why did the Minister of Transport last month give a major speech in Washington encouraging a new treaty, including full cabotage rights? Will the Deputy Prime Minister now give the government's assurance that the Canadian negotiators will not accept, under any circumstances, the granting of cabotage rights to American air carriers?

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Labour and Minister of State (Transport)): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the hon. member that negotiations on open skies have not yet begun, so we cannot have violated the principle of the committee's observation concerning cabotage. The committee stated in its report that it did not want to tie the negotiators' hands. Am I to understand now that the hon. member is asking me to do so?

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, my question is again to the Deputy Prime Minister who also was a Minister of Transport at one point. The minister knows that the Canadian air industry is already hurting badly; that thousands of jobs have been lost; that the market is in the hands of duopoly; and that Canadians and our regions are paying a price. We should not make it any worse.

Given that the option of allowing the giant American carriers to operate freely throughout Canada would mean the death knell for our Canadian industry because we simply cannot compete on an even scale, why will the Deputy Prime Minister not say no to any deal that would include cabotage rights for American carriers? Before going into negotiations, why will he not make cabotage a bottom line for the Canadian interests?

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Labour and Minister of State (Transport)): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transport has given the assurance, as was reported in the media, that we have no intention of signing a new agreement that does not ensure the continued viability of the Canadian air transport industry.

Cabotage, as my hon. friend should know, is a market entry tool just like seats and gates and he should not get off his rocker until we negotiate the two agreements.

Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I have another question for the Deputy Prime Minister, the former Minister of Transport. Given that the quality of air service in the regions has deteriorated due to this government's agenda to privatize, and that jet service has been lost in many regional centres, does the Deputy Prime Minister really believe that American carriers will give a hoot about serving Canadians living Dryden,

Sydney, Timmins, Stephenville, Val d'Or, just to name a few.

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Labour and Minister of State (Transport)): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member certainly knows that the safety record in Canada is one of the best in the world. A prime concern of the Minister of Transport and the Department of Transport has been to maintain that safety. We will continue to do so under any circumstances.

Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West): An artful dodge, but we are not talking about safety. We are talking about cabotage rights, the only bargaining chip the Minister of Transport has when he goes to bargain with the Americans, for gates and for routes. That is the only chip he has—cabotage in Canada.

"All aboard", says the minister of privatization. This whole issue smacks of what happened during the VIA Rail debates. What the minister is now telling Canadians and regional air travellers is that no matter what the cost, they are going to use it or they are going to lose it.

Witness again the government's claw of cost recovery. The regions have already lost their post offices. The regions have already lost their train services and are going to lose their air service.

The question is very simple. Why is the Deputy Prime Minister abandoning the regions of Canada?

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Labour and Minister of State (Transport)): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transport and this government have no intention of abandoning the prosperity of any of the regions of Canada. We are entering into this open skies discussion to make sure that the prosperity of Canada is insured. Of course, I understand that the hon. member would not want to tie our hands before we start discussions.

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NATIONAL REVENUE

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

He will know that the Minister of National Revenue held a press conference in Vancouver an hour and a half ago, indicating a new government pilot project, where for a $10 pass, Canadians will be able to travel to the United States, do their shopping and come back across the border without having to stop at customs.

Recognizing the plight of small business and retailers generally in the border areas with the United States, the tremendous loss of business as consumers take advantage of bargains in the U.S., will the Deputy Prime Minister explain how this fast lane back into Canada without stopping at customs at all is going to assist small business and retailers in Canada?

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Mr. Speaker, it is really quite simple.

We have thousands and thousands of tourists from the United States who want to come to Canada. As a matter of fact, recent research that has just been tabled indicates twice as many Americans plan to come to Canada in the next two years than even the most optimistic Canadian tourist operator thought existed. As a result of that, we are putting in place a system whereby it is easier for American tourists to get into Canada. I think it is a pretty good idea.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, I can only emphasize that this is a pilot project, so presumably the government is testing this for all the border crossings in Canada.

May I suggest that rather than facilitate Canadians shopping in the United States, would it not be more appropriate for the government to reduce the GST, reduce the interest rates and reduce the high cost of the Canadian dollar. In other words, make it more attractive to Canadians to shop in Canada as opposed to finding ways and means to facilitate Canadians shopping in the United States of America.

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has the whole problem in reverse, which is frequently the case for the NDP.

Mr. McDermid: Right on.

Mr. Hockin: The problem is, as Canadian retailers, restauranteurs, hotel owners, resort owners, how do we

get Americans to come to Canada? We did two things. We said we would rebate them the GST on accommodation and the things they wanted to buy and now we are making it easier for them to get into the country.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SCIENCE

Mr. David Berger (Saint-Henri—Westmount): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Finance, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. Last Thursday, the Minister of Finance acknowledged he had been unable to persuade his cabinet colleagues to provide adequate financing for training young researchers in natural sciences and engineering. The question is this: If the government is unable to take the lead, how can we convince young people to pursue a career in science?

• (1450)

[*English*]

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister for Science, who is not here today, I have to remind the hon. member that we have 2,000 students a year in the Canada Scholarships Program, one-half of them female. A large number of them are going into the sciences as a result of that program. That is a new program started by our government.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Hockin: So that this pool of young people will have attractive, vital scientific opportunities, we have given $240 million to the Networks and Centres of Excellence Program. That is a new project under our government.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Hockin: For young people wanting to go into science I remind them of not just those two things, but this government has increased spending from $4.1 billion in 1984-1985 to an estimated $5.5 billion in 1990-1991. This is a real increase of 8 per cent. This government puts S and T above just about any of its priorities.

Mr. David Berger (Saint-Henri—Westmount): If that is the case, perhaps the minister can explain how it is his colleague admitted that funding for the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council has declined. It has gone down as a percentage of our Gross National Product since his government took office. His colleague admitted it last week in committee. He admitted himself that he has not been able to obtain enough funding from his cabinet colleagues.

My question to the minister is the following. Will the government at long last commit to providing the urgently needed funding for university research and the training of the next generation of young scientists across Canada?

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Mr. Speaker, in the last six years, until the middle of last year, the Canadian Gross National Product has been growing at record rates. Because of that, government spending has also had to be trimmed back in order to make sure it did not have an inflationary impact to this tremendous growth of the Canadian economy.

The numbers that I quoted have the NRC being increased 5 per cent in this coming fiscal year which is far better than the average spending for government increase across the board.

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HEALTH

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. An American woman has been awarded $4.5 million by a U.S. court as a result of cancer caused by the foam of a Meme breast implant. This court has obviously decided there is reasonable doubt about the safety of the Meme. In addition, Laval University scientists have also released a study showing this foam to be carcinogenic.

Canadian women demand that the minister pull this device from the Canadian market immediately.

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I assume that there is a question—

Mr. Speaker: There is not a question but there certainly is an issue. If the hon. minister would like to respond he has the floor.

Mr. Beatty: Mr. Speaker, I assume that the question was: "Is the government prepared to withdraw the Meme from the market in Canada?"

As the hon. member will be well aware, studies have been done in Canada which indicate no threat to the health of women who use the Meme. We are continuing to follow research that is being done in the United States and to ask for further information about breast implants in Canada.

Should we come into possession of any information suggesting a threat to women's health as a result of breast implants, we would obviously take appropriate action.

I should mention with regard to the Laval studies that, as the hon. member knows, we have attempted to replicate similar studies at the University of Ottawa to determine whether or not toxic agents are released under conditions found in the body, and at body temperature. Mr. Speaker, such experiments could not be replicated.

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the same minister.

It seems odd that the U.S. food and drug administration is taking steps to protect women and yet this government is not prepared to do so. The U.S. has already implemented new regulations and the minister responsible for health and welfare has done nothing.

Is the minister more concerned with protecting a U.S. company than he is with protecting Canadian women?

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Of course not, Mr. Speaker. The assertions made by the hon. member are simply false.

First of all, what is happening in the United States is they are examining all breast implants, not just the Meme. We will, in turn, be getting that information from the Americans, and looking closely at anything that comes forward. We will also be looking at the decision of the court in New York city as well.

In addition to that, we have taken independent action in Canada to seek information. We will take any action that is necessary to protect the health of Canadian women. That is the commitment we make and it is one that we have kept.

I have also offered to the hon. member and to all other hon. members in the House that if they would like a full briefing on the subject by the scientists in my department, we would be pleased to make arrangements for that.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Brian L. Gardiner (Prince George—Bulkley Valley): Mr. Speaker, the Fraser River in British Columbia is under considerable pressure from pulp mill pollution, agricultural run-off and the Alcan project. The river will die unless action is taken soon.

In the Green Plan, the Minister of the Environment committed the government to a Fraser River Basin Action Plan. He also promised to double the fish population of the river.

My question is to the minister. Can he confirm news reports that he cancelled an announcement concerning the Fraser River on Friday? Why the delay? When will he make an announcement supporting a complete management plan for the Fraser River?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to reconfirm today the government's intention to move ahead with the clean-up of the Fraser River. An announcement had been initially scheduled for last Friday. It was not delayed; it was postponed because there were further consultations to be had. Those consultations will be ongoing this week and I hope to have the announcement ready very shortly.

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NATIONAL REVENUE

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the minister of small business and tourism.

I wonder if the minister would like to come down to Windsor and explain to the people of Windsor this idea he has to increase the number of Canadians who are shopping in the United States, how making it easier for Canadians to shop in the United States is going to help the one-third of the downtown retailers who have closed their stores and how it is going to help the people of Windsor who have seen $150 million in retail purchases go to the United States. I want him to explain to Windsorites how this cockamamie idea of increasing

Canadian shopping is going to help Windsor businesses or businesses in other border cities in this country.

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Mr. Speaker, the hon. members knows I would very much like to come to Windsor at any time. He is also criticizing the report from the Windsor Chamber of Commerce which was brought to Ottawa last week and which argued for the very thing that he is arguing against.

The Chamber of Commerce in Windsor wants more business for Windsor. It wants better flow through the tunnel and better flow over the Ambassador Bridge. The way to do that is to have a quick method and an extra lane and that is what they recommended.

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[*Translation*]

MONTREAL'S ECONOMY

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the minister responsible for the Montreal region. Not long ago, we heard that Montreal is the unemployment capital of Canada. Last week, we were told that in January alone, retail sales dropped by 20 per cent in Montreal. Could the minister, who is responsible for the Montreal region in cabinet, put pressure on the Finance Minister to introduce measures to put Montreal's economy back on track and provide jobs for 250,000 unemployed workers in that city?

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Labour and Minister of State (Transport)): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Saint-Léonard for his question, which shows his abiding interest in the Montreal region and especially in East Montreal.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform the hon. member that the government did not wait until the last few weeks to take some very concrete measures to improve the economic climate of Montreal Island. We have invested millions and millions of dollars in the Montreal economy in the past two years.

In particular, we developed a measure called Bill C-21 to get more money to the unemployed and help them adjust to the new technology jobs that are being created, and it is too bad the legislation could not have been implemented sooner, because of the Liberal senators who blocked the bill for so long in the Senate.

Point of Order

• (1500)

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for a supplementary, but a very short one, please.

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard): Mr. Speaker, the minister says millions of dollars were invested, but I may remind him that in Montreal unemployment rose from 10 per cent to nearly 15 per cent in one year. It is time to act. When will the government introduce policies to deal with this very distressing situation in Montreal?

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Labour and Minister of State (Transport)): Mr. Speaker, it seems the hon. member for Saint-Léonard doesn't realize that before creating jobs, and especially with the new technology we have nowadays, we must ensure that people are properly trained to use that new technology. We have been repeating this in the House fore twelve months, Mr. Speaker, to urge the hon. member to ensure that his colleagues in the Senate would adopt Bill C-21 so that we would have the requisite funding. We have it now, and we are on the job, Mr. Speaker.

* * *

[*English*]

THE LATE SEAN O'SULLIVAN

Mr. Speaker: I would like to remind all hon. members of the dedication ceremony for our former colleague, Father Sean O'Sullivan, in the meditation room that has been established in his memory, that will take place today at four o'clock p.m. in room 237-C. That is the Reading Room, Centre Block. This will be followed by a reception in the Railway Committee Room.

[*Translation*]

I hope all members will attend at 4 p.m. today.

* * *

[*English*]

POINT OF ORDER

COMMENTS DURING QUESTION PERIOD

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In answer to my colleague for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, I was wrong in an answer I gave him. I should make it clear that I was wrong because I misread a briefing note prepared for me by officials. Our colleague for Trinity—Spadina did in fact specify the purpose of his application for a visa to Mexico. The Mexicans issued the visa on March 6. That is surprising because the Mexican Constitution prohibits any participation by foreigners in the

Mexican electoral process. On March 15 the Government of Mexico sent a diplomatic note to Canada saying it had made an error. The Canadian Embassy advised our colleague for Trinity—Spadina, indicating that he was nonetheless able to stay in Mexico on a tourist visa so long as he did not violate the Mexican Constitution and take part in the electoral process.

As I said, we will look at the matter. I apologize to the House for inadvertently misleading members, and I will report to the House if there is further action we should take, although I should indicate that it is not surprising, even if it was late in doing it, that Mexico should follow a policy that adheres to the letter and the spirit of its Constitution.

Mr. David Barrett (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca): On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the minister for correcting the information given to this House. But it still begs the question; the question that I raised was the fact that there was an invitation by an official opposition party, clearly stated in the letter. Furthermore, it went through your department, Mr. Minister. Someone in your department should have been aware of this as well.

Mr. Speaker: I am not going to cut off the exchange as it is an important matter. However, I would ask hon. members to put their questions through the Chair.

Mr. Barrett: Mr. Speaker, I apologize to the Chair.

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): Point of order.

Mr. Speaker, during question period I inadvertently named the right hon. member for Vancouver Quadra for heckling. It was not him, and I apologize to the right hon. gentleman.

WITHDRAWAL OF COMMENT

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, while we are on a run, on Friday, March 15, 1991 I rose in the House during Question Period on questions regarding the budget and letters that had been sent by the Secretary of the Treasury Board the day after the budget. I said that the government deliberately misled the House. That may not go against the strict rules of the House but for the peace, order and good government of this House, I withdraw those remarks.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, I would like to designate tomorrow an allotted day.

* * *

POINT OF ORDER

QUESTION PERIOD

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I have a point of order respecting Question Period. At least three different questioners from the Liberal Party, the hon. member for York West, the hon. member for Hamilton West and the hon. member for Saint-Henri—Westmount, prefaced their questions with "in the absence of this minister", and "in the absence of that minister".

As you know, Mr. Speaker, it is against our practices and rules to indicate the presence or absence of any member. By continuing this practice, which admittedly has been widely used, they are in essence doing that and if it is going to be a *quid pro quo* situation, then presumably that is to invite members from this side to stand up and acknowledge who is not present on the other side. I do not think that would contribute to what Question Period is all about.

I would also like to express concern about a situation I also feel is inappropriate, given the strictures in Beauchesne as to what Question Period is supposed to be. Questions by the hon. members for York West and Hamilton West were directed to the Deputy Prime Minister in his role as a former Minister of Transport. I think there are submissions by your predecessors in Beauchesne which make it clear that questions in terms of former capacities are out of order.

I see the new member, newly elected and not aware of past practices, is chuckling over there. Perhaps he would learn a little bit.

Mr. Speaker: Just a moment. The hon. government House leader has risen on a question of order with respect to the way we conduct our Question Period. It is not the first time this matter has been raised in the last

very recent interval. I think hon. members would want to extend the same courtesy to the hon. minister that have been extended to other members when the matter has been raised.

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, I believe it also not to be in keeping with the strictures of Beauchesne to insist, as did the hon. member for Hamilton West and the hon. member for York West, that this must be answered by the Deputy Prime Minister.

Again, Beauchesne makes it very clear that the purpose of Question Period is for all members of the House, opposition members, and backbenchers, to have an opportunity to seek information from the Chair. I agree that we have separated a long way from that in recent years.

In view of comments by yourself the other day in terms of decorum in the House and what should be appropriate in this House of Commons, in view of comments by the House leader of the Liberal Party last week in terms of his concern about the number of people who have an opportunity to rise for questions, I would like to bring to the Chair my concern about Question Period and the way questions are being answered. I would refer again to Beauchesne. May I humbly suggest that all of our goals as responsible parliamentarians interested in pursuing the public interest in a way that does not bring disfavour and disgrace on all of us by way of the antics in here might in fact be well served if we agreed again to honour these practices, have the Chair enforce them, or, if not, to then agree to look at them, see which we do agree to, and again ask the Chair to enforce them.

Mr. David Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, it is somewhat humorous to have the government House leader stand in his place and lecture members of the opposition with respect to decorum and ways in which we pose questions to government ministers.

I do want to thank the hon. member opposite for allotting tomorrow a supply day. There will be no real discussion with regard to House leaders on that matter, but I want to thank him for his co-operation on that.

• (1510)

With regard to Question Period, the points that have been raised by myself and others in this party on previous occasions had to do primarily with the time both of the question and of the response.

I want to tell the Chair and all members of this House that we have complete confidence in the Chair. We do not wish to lecture the Chair in any way in terms of the rulings of Beauchesne. It is rather somewhat unique that the government House leader would want to quote—

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps I can assist. I did not take anything that the hon. House leader said as a lecture to the Chair.

There has been discussion going on back and forth now for a while. I think the discussion is sincerely meant to try to handle the affairs in this place as well as we possibly can. I do not take these comments, whether they come from either side, as a lecture to the Chair.

Mr. Dingwall: Mr. Speaker, we certainly appreciate your interventions.

However, those of us on this side of the House would conclude that the government House leader is once again transcending the bounds that we believe to be appropriate and fitting in the circumstances by lecturing members of the Opposition as to what is precisely in Beauchesne and what is not in Beauchesne.

From time to time, we have deviated from Beauchesne as government members have deviated from Beauchesne from time to time.

If the minister's comments are made in the light of trying to perfect some of the discrepancies which occur in Question Period, fine, if that is the light in which they are given, but I would hope that the minister would take under active consideration the point of the matter that ministers of the Crown repeatedly and regularly stand in their places and give long, verbose answers to questions which we believe are succinct and to the point.

I would hope that the hon. member opposite would give active consideration to that. I know that the Chair will give active consideration to that because Mr. Speaker has instructed the Clerk to gather information for us

that we may want to use and discuss at future House leaders' meetings on that particular point.

Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order I would hope that the government House leader will stand again in his place, perhaps tomorrow after he has reviewed *Hansard*, to issue a retraction. This member for Hamilton West did not refer in his remarks, as the minister said I did, to the absence of the Minister of Transport.

In fact, I directed a question to the Deputy Prime Minister, who was once Minister of Transport. I apologize if I was to lend any credibility to the Deputy Prime Minister as well as his official duties as the Deputy Prime Minister to also be a knowledgeable gentleman on the facts as they pertain to transport.

I would hope that correction is forthcoming. If I have made any incorrect statement in the House, to my own defence I would only say that as a new member, and having heard the line of questioning for the past two years, I would only assume that that was the correct procedure.

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to rise on this point order.

Just a few minutes ago, I got up and withdrew my comments of Friday. I did not think I had broken the rules, but I recognized that the nature of what I had said had upset some members of the House. I think I also upset the person in charge of the mikes too, since they keep going off and on.

Mr. Speaker: Let's see if we can get started all over again.

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, I believe I am speaking to the House.

I have had many occasions when I have not been allowed to speak in the House, but this is one of the more unusual occurrences in which this is happening.

Mr. Speaker: Don't push it too far.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, what is happening in the House right now with regard to the mikes actually illustrates what I was trying to say in the House, that the government House leader is correct in some ways in saying that we should not be referring to the absence of ministers or any other members of the House. However, I think the nature of the questions that are asked quite often is not referring to the absence of a minister in a derogatory sense, but is referring or trying to explain to the House why a question is being deferred to another minister.

I recognize that any member of the cabinet can get up and answer a question and that there are ministers designated from time to time to answer questions in the absence of another minister. However, sometimes it makes sense if the person asking the question gets up and says: "In the absence of the Minister of the Environment, I am asking my questions of the minister of energy". There might be a very logical reason for doing that.

I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, as we do quite often, recognizing that we do have rules of the House, that sometimes it makes a lot more sense for common sense to prevail and that in the case quite often when members get up, make reference to the absence of a member or a minister that it really assists the House and certainly assists those people who are watching in the public.

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, let me first respond to the member for Hamilton West who indicates that he did not state: "In the absence of the Minister of Transport", he may well be right. If I inferred otherwise, I apologize to him.

In terms of his other comments, he made perhaps a very relevant point in commenting that as a relatively new member he is following the examples set. I understand that and it is quite appropriate. I guess my point is that in a variety of ways, through things happening and being duplicated and triplicated and becoming the norm, we have established practices which are being criticized by our own members in terms of the opportunity to ask questions and to respond, and by those who watch in terms of the relevance to the governing of Canada of some of the actions that occur.

In the context of the question raised the other day by the House leader of the Liberal Party as to the question of time, I rose then, and I just repeat today and raised examples today of wherein it may well be appropriate for us to re-examine the definitions of what Question Period is, as stated in Beauchesne, or with those things that are no longer relevant and adopt and enforce those which would be appropriate to what we want to see.

Again, the member for Churchill is still here, I would comment with regard to what he suggested, that sometimes it might be appropriate to ask a question "in the absence of", the difficulty is in terms of what it does for the minister who is not there. It says to everybody who is watching: "The minister is not in his seat. He is not in Ottawa." The question, in order to protect the reputation, if you will, to establish that he or she is bona fide involved in government business, presumably invites a session where somebody stands up and says: "While the Minister of the Environment is currently touring the Fraser Valley", and so on and so forth, and to go through that exercise.

My understanding is that is why Beauchesne, and based on previous Speakers' rulings, indicates it is inappropriate to raise the question of the absence of ministers from the House. All I am asking is that until we change that rule, let us enforce. it.

Mr. David Berger (Saint-Henri—Westmount): Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat perplexed by the comments of the government House leader today. It has been the practice of this House for some time to put a question in the fashion that he objects to today, to say that in the absence of such and such a minister, I put my question to the Prime Minister or to the Deputy Prime Minister or whatever. I have never heard anyone object to this. Indeed, this formulation is intended to assist cabinet. We know very well that ministers are given the task of responding for other ministers. To me, it has always been the common sense way of drawing attention to the responsibility and getting the attention of perhaps the cabinet minister who had been asked to respond for another.

• (1520)

I really do not know what alternative there would be. I would seek your suggestion, Mr. Speaker, or the advice of the government House leader in this regard. Perhaps one would say my question relates to science and I bring it to the attention of cabinet in the hope that there is someone who is qualified to answer. Maybe he would prefer that.

I think you would agree, Mr. Speaker, that it might be a bit longer and it might take up more time in Question Period to put questions in that fashion.

Again, I really wonder what is behind this. Why did the government House leader raise it in this fashion? Perhaps he has a legitimate point. It seems to me that this kind of matter ought not to be raised without warning on the floor of the House of Commons. These are the kinds of questions where there are other fora for consideration of matters of this nature.

I ask the government House leader perhaps to reconsider his manner of dealing with questions like this.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps I can be of assistance. When some of us who are in this Chamber first came here, including the government House leader, myself and others who are here—it is getting to be a long time ago—and something happened during Question Period with which another member umbrage, Question Period could be interrupted with a point of order. That was eventually done away with by agreement of all hon. members in order to get on with Question Period.

I am as aware as anybody else in this place that from time to time there are complaints about Question Period, or at least suggestions for its improvement. It comes not only from both sides of the House, but it also comes from the country.

The hon. government House leader has raised a matter and I think the appropriate thing to do is to go back a few days. I certainly appreciate the hon. member for Saint-Henri—Westmount and the very cordial and courteous way in which he has approached this matter. I think it would be helpful if there were some discussions about some of these matters. Certainly I do not think it is appropriate for me today to lay down any dictates. If hon. members want to go back into the past, there were some very clear statements made by past Speakers as to exactly how Question Period should be conducted. Those statements gave a certain degree of constraint on both questions and answers. If the House wishes to come to me and suggest that we make some adjustments to our present practices, as I said the other day, I would certainly be prepared to listen.

I do want to remind hon. members that once upon a time the practice was that if there was a complaint it was taken up in the middle of Question Period. We decided that it ought not to be done at that time. The hon. House leader has raised it subsequent to Question Period, as is the right of all hon. members and he of course has the right to do.

I would hope that we could have some discussions. I think there is a genuine feeling in the House that Question Period is perhaps a unique institution of our country and a very important one but that we want to make it as effective and as fair as we possibly can. I will look forward to hearing from hon. members in this regard.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PRIVILEGE

CLARIFICATION OF STATEMENT MADE ON *THE JOURNAL*

Mr. Vincent Della Noce (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House to clarify a statement I made on March 14 on the CBC program *The Journal*. I apologize for the fact that part of what was broadcast last Thursday may have given a wrong impression of my opinion of native people. I am very sorry if my comments gave the impression that I was referring to native people as a whole. I can assure the House that such was not the case, because what I had in mind was the behaviour of certain warriors during the crisis at Oka last summer, a crisis that left its mark on us all.

I may add that these remarks were made in the context of a conference meeting with a group of social agencies. The meeting was about federalism and Canadian unity. The agencies had an opportunity to talk about the past and about their concerns for the future. It was an open, friendly and public discussion, the kind I regularly have with my constituents and certain business groups.

I want to emphasize that I never expressed any threats of any kind towards any group whatsoever.

And how could I, Mr. Speaker, since these people are important members of my community. Many of them, with whom I have worked for many years, I consider as my friends, because their efforts have helped me to improve the social conditions in my riding.

Mr. Speaker, this array of opinions expressed by 19 groups—not 190, a figure that was referred to out of context in the House and outside the House—may have set the rumour mill going in Ottawa, but we should not judge these opinions out of context. They should be judged in a context that leaves no room for any misunderstanding.

I only went so far as to mention or point out that curiously, some anti-federal groups have no compunction about cashing cheques from the federal government and wearing a "Participation Québec" badge. Those are facts, facts that can be checked and were checked.

In concluding, Mr. Speaker, I can give this House the assurance that I am still determined to defend the cause of a united Canada with a strong Quebec, and my efforts will continue, with due respect for all ethnic groups and all persons concerned, and especially for all Quebeckers.

[*English*]

MEMBER FOR LAVAL-EST

Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Nunatsiaq): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege for which I have given notice.

I would like to quote from *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, Sixth Edition, citation 27, which reads:

> A genuine question of privilege is a most serious matter and should be taken seriously by the House.

I take this matter very seriously. It pertains to the comments just made by the hon. member for Laval-Est, in which I heard no apology to the aboriginal people of Canada.

I would like to quote from the transcript of the comments of the hon. member, which reads:

> It's like the Indians. They don't like our laws, they don't respect this, they don't respect the Constitution, but they want to have the money.

This matter deals with remarks about aboriginal people made by the hon. member last Thursday, March 14, on CBC's *The Journal*. I respectfully submit that my privilege as a member of Parliament has been breached and that a contempt of Parliament has thus occurred. The hon. member's statements reflect on the House as a whole and reflect on individual members thereof, namely the aboriginal members of this House.

According to *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, Sixth Edition, at page 11, parliamentary privilege is enjoyed by individual members and by each House for the protection of its members and the vindication of its own authority and dignity.

I submit that the hon. member's statements impinge on my ability and that of the other aboriginal MPs in this House to do their jobs properly. We have been misrepresented, and these remarks are derogatory not only to us but to the dignity of the entire House of Commons.

Mr. Joseph Maingot, in *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, stated at page 213:

> There are actions which, while not directly in a physical way obstructing the House of Commons or the member, nevertheless obstruct the House in the performance of its functions by diminishing the respect due it.

I respectfully submit that respect for this House has been diminished in two ways by the comments of the hon. member for Laval–Est. Again I refer to the transcripts of *The Journal*, and I would like to table this with the Clerk.

First, the member's comments were racially based and discriminatory against aboriginal people in Canada. The elimination of racism and prejudice—

• (1530)

Mr. Speaker: Not to take anything away from the issue, whatever the member's complaint is, an hon. member has got up and said that under no circumstances did he mean it to be a slight against any of the people of Canada.

Second, I have to apply the rules in this as I would have to apply them in any other case. It is very difficult for me, despite the complaint the hon. member may have, to see how this in any way impinges upon his ability to do his duty as a member of Parliament in this House or anybody else's ability to do their duty.

What we have here clearly is a remark. The hon. member has stood in his place and we have to accept in this place the hon. member's word that he was not referring to all of the aboriginal peoples of our country. He was referring to a specific thing and he has made it very clear. I certainly have accepted what he said as making it very clear that he is not insulting nor is he casting aspersions on any group of Canadians, and certainly not aboriginal Canadians.

I have to say to the hon. member that the complaint is made. I see the hon. member for Shefford wants to rise on this matter. It will have to be a very pertinent statement indeed because I am in the midst of saying that there may be a complaint here. If there was, it has been met by an hon. member on the other side and it is not a question of privilege.

The hon. member for Shefford, very briefly. I am bowing of course to the fact that he is a senior member here.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, I think that if you look at the comments made by the hon. member for Laval–Est, you will realize that he withdrew his insulting remarks about certain native people but did not withdraw all comments that were specifically directed to sovereigntists, a group to which I belong. In his comments, he said they did not respect the Constitution—

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker: He may or he may not have. This place is an adversary forum and we all know that. There are going to be lots of things said that are political. We once had a member here, a gentleman in whom I hold very high regard, who said: "The trouble with this place is it is getting too political". It is a political place, but as far as I am concerned the hon. member, if there were any question of privilege, has made it clear there is not. I do not think there was a question of privilege in the first place. That does not mean that there might not have been a complaint.

The hon. member has certainly got up and, to my satisfaction, has said that he did not mean an insult and if that is the way it appeared he clearly did not want it to be so.

The fact that we have arguments about different people's political positions in the country is something which takes place here at all times. That is the end of the issue.

COMMENTS DURING QUESTION PERIOD

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, on Friday I informed you of my intention to review *Hansard* and, if necessary, raise a point of privilege arising from Question Period.

In my view, members must be vigilant when replies stray into derogatory personal remarks and away from the substance of the issue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lapierre: We do respect the Constitution, but he fails to see that.

Members of the Parti Quebecois are citizens who pay taxes like anybody else.

[*English*]

Mrs. Catterall: It is very difficult to understand that I do have the floor, Mr. Speaker.

If I may go back to my previous question and ask my colleagues to be somewhat more polite, in my view members must be vigilant when replies from ministers stray into derogatory personal remarks and away from the substance, as the government House leader did on Friday. Such remarks diminish the House and diminish the member.

Mr. Speaker: Just a moment. What exactly were the remarks and in what way is it a question of privilege?

There is a big difference between complaining about something and having a question of privilege. The essence of privilege which goes back hundreds of years is: Has somebody done something that makes it impossible or makes it less likely or less able for an individual member to carry on his or her duties as a member of Parliament to speak freely? That is what privilege is.

Hon. members may complain about all kinds of things that we say about each other in this place. It is not necessarily privilege. I would ask the hon. member to tell me just exactly what was said and why it is a question of privilege.

Mrs. Catterall: Mr. Speaker, in fact having reviewed *Hansard* I may find some unwarranted insults and something that peaked my umbrage, but no specific breach of privilege and I therefore withdraw my request to you.

Mr. Speaker: I appreciate very much the hon. member's comments. Perhaps it will help us all.

There are other places and other ways to carry on the debate. I want to say to the hon. member my very sincere thanks for helping the Chair. I appreciate it.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

CANADIAN GRAINS COMMISSION

TABLING AND REFERENCE TO COMMITTEE OF ANNUAL REPORT

Mr. Murray Cardiff (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the annual report of the Canadian Grains Commission for the crop year ending July 31, 1990 and the fiscal year ending March 31, 1990.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 32(5), this report is referred to the Standing Committee on Agriculture.

* * *

PETITIONS

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the honour to present a petition signed by several hundred residents from my riding and adjacent ridings, in which they point out that 85 per cent of visa and immigration activities in New Delhi take place from people living in the Punjab, that the Canadian consular service in New Delhi is now overly burdened, and that it is difficult for the people travelling from the Punjab because they must travel for three days into a city that is often dangerous for people from the Punjab to be in.

The petitioners ask that the Canadian government open a new Canadian consulate and immigration office in the Punjab to provide the level of service required for immigration, visitors' visas and related services.

RURAL CANADA

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Saskatoon—Humboldt): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour and duty to present a number of petitions.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, a number of rural Canadians is disturbed at the deterioration of the quality of life in rural areas.

These petitions are signed by a large number of constituents and people from rural areas. They call upon Parliament to support Canada's rural way of life by immediately implementing new economic and social policies to enable rural Canadians to continue to work and live in their communities while still being able to provide a decent quality of life for their families.

The petitioners call upon us to take some action in that form.

PETRO-CANADA

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Saskatoon—Humboldt): Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of other petitions to present, one which may be a little late in arriving but which calls upon the government to deal with the privatization of Petro-Canada so that Petro-Canada can remain a Crown corporation, acting in the best interests of all Canadians.

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Saskatoon—Humboldt): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by a large number of people from Saskatoon and surrounding communities.

They call upon Parliament to urge the government to consider restoring proper funding to the CBC so that it can fulfil its mandate and its role as the heartbeat of Canada and to re-examine its priorities in terms of decreasing funding for Canadian institutions and its insistence on privatization. All of these have an impact on the quality of life in rural Canada.

• (1540)

RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Mrs. Christine Stewart (Northumberland): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the honour to present a petition signed by many constituents of my riding of Northumberland.

The petitioners state that whereas the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child sets the standard of protection and care to children far superior to anything we know and experience in Canada and countries world-wide, and whereas the convention will address the basic health, nutritional, social and economic problems that are the cause of much child suffering throughout the world, my constituents want to encourage the federal government to speedily review its legislation and policies in order to achieve consistency in our policies here with the UN convention and to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as soon as possible.

THE SENATE

Mr. René Soetens (Ontario): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today pursuant to Standing Order 36 to present two petitions. The first is signed by many constituents of my riding and relates to the Senate.

The petition indicates the very clear purpose under which my constituents believe the Senate was established in 1867 and the valuable purpose that it then served. It goes on to indicate that they do not believe that purpose is being served today and they therefore call upon the Parliament of Canada to abolish the Senate outright.

FOOD AND DRUG REGULATIONS

Mr. René Soetens (Ontario): Mr. Speaker, the second petition presented under Standing Order 36 is signed by many constituents of the greater Toronto area and deals with allergy information.

Many people in Canada suffer from allergies. They are concerned that restaurants and food packages are not required to disclose all of the contents of food. Therefore the petitioners have requested that the Parliament of Canada enact legislation amending food and drug regulations to require manufacturers to list specific food ingredients and additives used in prepackaged foods in place of the general classifications now permitted. They further request that restaurants and food retailers be required to provide on demand to customers a list of all food ingredients and additives in prepared foods.

Both these are respectfully submitted.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

(Questions answered orally are indicated by an asterisk.)

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 437 will be answered today.

[*Text*]

WESTRAY COAL MINE PROJECT

Question No. 437—**Mr. Murphy:**

Were any calls or correspondence exchanged between the Prime Minister's Office and any (a) person (b) organization inside or outside the government regarding the Westray coal mine project in Pictou, Nova Scotia and, if so, (i) on what dates (ii) with which parties?

Mr. Leonard Gustafson (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister): Correspondence and calls received by the Office of the Prime Minister regarding the Westray Coal Mine project are noted and forwarded to the Ministry of Industry, Science and Technology for his information and consideration.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The question as enumerated by the parliamentary secretary has been answered.

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STARRED QUESTIONS

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, would you be so kind as to call Starred Question No. 408. I ask that it be printed in *Hansard* as if read.

[*Text*]

ROYAL COMMISSIONS

*Question No. 408—**Mr. Milliken:**

What is the total forecasted cost of the (a) Royal Commission on National Passenger Transportation (b) Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies (c) Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing?

Mr. Leonard Gustafson (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister): As indicated in Part III of the 1991-92 Estimates for the Privy Council office, the total forecasted costs are as follows:

a)	Royal Commission on National Passenger Transportation	$ 23,100,000
b)	Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies	$ 24,700,000
c)	Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing	$ 19,900,000

[*English*]

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Shall the remaining questions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S. O. 81—FARM INCOMES

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Foster (p. 18577).

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): At the suspension of the debate at 2 p.m. the hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt had the floor. He has 18 minutes left.

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Saskatoon—Humboldt): Mr. Speaker, the motion before us is one calling on the government to take action regarding the lack of income for this particular year. It puts before this House the problem of funding for the seeding of the crop in this particular year.

It is a laudable motion, something that we would support. However, if one looks at the record of the government, one also has to think that maybe it is a motion that is a little bit futile. Last year when this government promised that we would have a certain amount of assistance by spring work, many of us were still waiting for it when we harvested the crop that it was supposed to help seed.

The minister, in answering a question just before Question Period, when he made his presentation to this House, also indicated that there was likely to be a considerable hold-up, because he attached all of the bridging funding to the GRIP and NISA programs. Therefore, it is a little difficult to believe that this government is going to do anything for the farmers in time for them to be able to use the assistance for the planting of crops this year.

This government has made it clear that what it intends to do as far as agriculture is concerned is to commit the industry to a market system, a trading system, and a financial system which makes it unlikely the first two of these three systems will allow the farmers enough income so that they can make a living comparable to most other parts of the economy.

The Minister of Agriculture and the government generally make a great song and dance about the fact that we must be competitive, we must fit ourselves into the market system. They make a great song and dance about getting away from direct support to the farmer. Their theme has been to put in place a safety net which

would guarantee the farmers enough return for them to survive in farming.

Mr. Speaker, it all sounds very good, and it may even help somebody. But the government, for all its great propaganda about how it has always come to the aid of the farmer and how it will do so in the future—and we heard that again during Question Period today—it has not improved the position of the farmer relative to income in the last six years.

If you were to look at the structure of the income of farmers in today's dollars, you would find that it has gone down considerably—the income has gone down considerably—even with the increase in aid that the government has given them. I am sure you would find it very difficult to find a farmer who would say they are better off today than they were six years ago. I am sure if you went out and asked, that you would have no one volunteer that they are in a better position now than they were six years ago. Certainly, there is no one in the industry who would indicate that is the position they would take.

During the last six years, this government has dispersed among farmers a considerable amount of help in the form of debt review boards, has written off the deficit for the Western Grain Stabilization, and has also expended the amount of money it has given in direct assistance.

But, after all that, we find an industry that is much worse off than it was six years ago.

So, Mr. Speaker, we come to the position that we find ourselves in today. We look at last year's income and we find that it was considerably less than the cost of production. In other words, a large portion of the farmers who were in the industry last year did not make as much as they spent. Even after the government assistance was in place, they did not make as much as they spent. It is predicted that the 1991–1992 crop year will also produce less income than it did last year. The GRIP and NISA plans are supposed to take that up, but the GRIP and NISA plans do not come into effect until the end of this year.

• (1550)

Most industries, if they had that kind of return for several years for their efforts would have curled up and quit. The farmers are a different breed. They go on producing. They hope that society recognizes they are contributing something of considerable value and will, therefore, make sure that they can survive.

I suppose, to a certain extent, we have done this. However, there are far fewer farmers now than there were a few years ago. The quality of life in the farm communities is lowering considerably each year.

As I said, society should recognize that farmers contribute considerably to the community. They produce much of the food we eat. There is good reason to believe society would do this. Besides the fact they are producing a considerable amount of the food eaten in Canada, the agricultural industry contributes what we call—I cannot quite come up with the word—but for every dollar paid to the farmer, there is about $7 generated within the general economy. Multiplier is the word I was looking for. This multiplier factor should be recognized by society as a good reason to keep the farmers on the land producing food.

Every farm job kept in place produces quite a large number of other jobs. I can give some examples. These are not direct multipliers, but they give some indication of the effect the farm community has on industry in Canada.

For instance, bread is usually the main product we think of from the farm community. A grain producer gets about 4 cents for the wheat used in a loaf of bread that costs anywhere from $1 to $1.50. That gives a multiplier of something around 33.

A farmer gets 1 cent for the barley used to make a $2 bottle of beer.

Cooking oil, from canola—which is one of the healthiest cooking oils on the market—the farmer gets 60 cents for the canola used in a litre of canola oil which will sell at something over $2.

Even something as simple as sugar cookies, the farmer gets 2 cents for the wheat used in cookies and those cookies are usually worth about $3.

Rye whisky produces a considerable amount of income for the government; it is more often called Canadian whisky in this part of the country. The farmers get 1 cent for the rye that is used in a 40 ounce bottle of whiskey. Most of that multiplier, if you wish, is paid as taxation to the government.

I grant that these multipliers I have mentioned here are not direct, because other products are used in the making of making of the products sold. Consequently, there is not a direct relationship.

It gives us an indication of the impact agriculture has on other industries. For instance, the oats that are used in a $4.88 package of oat bran flakes will only bring the farmer about a cent and a half. Society should recognize that we owe a lot to the farmer in other jobs and in other activity in the community.

To a great extent, the point that is being made here by most of us who are part of the agricultural industry is that agricultural production is important. If we do not pay enough for the product for the farmer to survive, it means that we are reducing the effectiveness of the economy to some extent.

As long as the farmer keeps producing, the rest of the industry can survive. We cannot expect farmers to go on indefinitely producing at a loss. Consequently, eventually we will be looking to other countries for the products that we now buy at home.

If we think of a multiplier factor of seven times for every dollar paid to a farmer, we recognize that agriculture has a major impact upon the economy of the country. Also, it is one of the major suppliers of foreign currency to our government.

The government tells us that it has been helping the farmers with special programs and in other ways for many years. We will grant that it has, but its plan was not to help the industry. It has not helped the industry, because the industry is still going downhill.

For example, during 1989-90, even with government help, the farmers did not recover all of their costs. In 1990-91, unless the government gives them some direct help, the amount of income will be less than it was last year. What they need now are contributions directly, which will give them enough cash so that they can plant their crops this spring.

When the Minister of Agriculture spoke a little while ago in answer to a question we put to him, he said that the government will do something when it is able to do so and when it has enough involvement in the GRIP and NISA plan.

On several occasions over the last year, farm organizations had pressed the Minister of Agriculture to make a statement on whether or not he was going to assist the farmers in bridging the gap between last year's shortfall in income and the establishment of the GRIP and NISA programs. It was well known for some time that that gap in income was going to be there. The farmers have been asking the minister and the Government of Canada what they intended to do about this gap. Again, that is what is being asked today in this motion.

The minister stated: "Leave it until after we have solved the safety net problem." That might have been some relief to somebody, but it did not assure anybody that they were going to get any funds.

The minister also stated: "We have always helped the farmers when they needed it. We will do so in the future." He made that statement again today, and again there was no commitment to funds for the bridging process.

• (1600)

Later on he said that any answer to this question would be correlated with the GRIP or the NISA program. In the process of making that statement, he indicated to us that he was making it dependent upon the GRIP or the NISA program. In fact he almost threatened—and he did not renege from that position when I asked him the question today—that if people do not join GRIP, they cannot expect to have any assistance. The assistance required is for this year. GRIP is going to pay for next year. It is very unusual or very disturbing to find the government saying that if you do not sign up for GRIP and NISA, which will do you for next year, it will not pay you anything this year.

The first ministers have announced that the GRIP and NISA papers will be complete for the spring work. They also said that if the farmer needs help, the government will pay it. I am sure that John Wise, who promised these GRIP and NISA programs back in 1985—not in those particular words—must be breathing a little easier, because after all this time we have them in place. However, there is nothing in the programs that deals with the basic fact that money will be there when they need it this spring.

Mr. Derek Blackburn (Brant): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague's speech on the motion today. I could not help but reflect that over the years that I have had the privilege of sitting in this House, we have

experienced and participated in many debates with respect to problems within the Canadian farming community. Almost all of these problems revolve around scarcity of money, lack of funds, lack of income, or incomes that are falling and have been falling over a period of many years.

Today a way of life that at one time, and indeed historically in our country, had a great deal of built-in security based almost entirely on one's ability to work or determination to work has changed to a way of life that is pretty much on the fringe, materially speaking. Farming today is almost a way of life to be avoided. It is very sad and tragic that one of the great pillars of Canadian society, the rural way of life, and farmers in general, is in such an unstable situation and that young people, by and large, born on farms today do not want to continue farming. I should not say they do not want to continue farming; they fear going into farming because of this lack of security and this inability to live a reasonably secure life based on one's determination and ability to work.

In what way or ways would a New Democratic Party government in Ottawa be different in its approach to assisting farmers, both individually and through their organizations, in respect of these various funding programs that we have debated from time to time in this Chamber? We have seen both Liberal programs and Conservative programs and though they have had the immediate stop-gap effect of preventing ultimate disaster on the farm front, they have not in terms of long-term solutions amounted to very much.

In what way or ways would our party's farm policy differ basically from that of the Liberals and the Conservatives?

Mr. Hovdebo: Mr. Speaker, I agree that there has been a lack of long-term programming. I give credit to this government for suggesting the GRIP, a program which suggests that there may be long-term assistance in place.

The shortcoming of the GRIP program which is placed before this House is that there is not written into it any cost of production. It will only supply the needs of the farmer as long as the moving average of 15 years is higher than the cost of production. There is no guarantee that is going to happen; in fact, it looks as if within two or three years that moving average will be lower than that.

We have a program that we have had as a policy for a good number of years very similar to this, except that the basis of it is the cost of production. For a minimum amount produced by each farmer, a certain portion of his crop, he would be assured the cost of production. Beyond that he would have to depend on the market. Only his insurance would allow him to survive, or to be sure he was going to get some return beyond that, if there was a drought or a bad year.

I suppose one could say that the program we would put in place is not that much different than the GRIP, except that it would have built into it a cost of production, and would have a cap which would not allow a situation as they have in the United States where 85 per cent of the funding from these kinds of programs goes to approximately 10 per cent of the farmers. That kind of a program has a tendency to eliminate more farmers than the number it assists.

The approach that we have been suggesting for many years, and which we hoped John Wise would suggest back in 1985—because we had talked it over with him on many occasions—would establish a program that would allow a return to the farmer at a cost of production level for a certain portion of his crop. He would always be sure that he was going to get some return.

This program does not do that. GRIP does not do that.

NISA under the government is really only a glorified savings plan, and again is only there for the farmers who have extra money. It is so glorified, in fact, that I have had farmers come to me and say: "You know, I think I am going to borrow some money and put it into this NISA plan, because the return on it is better than what it would cost me to borrow the money". That in itself is a discredit to the reason for the plan being put in place.

Basically our plan would not be too much different. But it would assure a return to the farmer based on his cost of production and would assure that some farmers were not able to take advantage of it more than others.

Mr. Geoff Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a comment to my hon. friend from Saskatoon—Humboldt and perhaps pose a question.

Let me say first that I appreciate his recognition of the fact that there has been some considerable magnitude in the dimension of support to Canadian agriculture by this government, and that he does see elements of merit in the long-term safety net programs which are presently in front of the agriculture committee even as we speak, and soon hopefully back in front of this House.

I want to ask the hon. member a couple of questions relating to the idea of a cost of production formula, and also the idea of some form of support being based on, I gather, the first *x* number of bushels of production.

In the latter case, I am wondering how he would ensure that there would not be such a proliferation of permit books that in fact all of the production would be qualifying for the additional support that he envisions. I am also wondering how he could apply a cost of production formula into an area like the production of wheat where we are dependent on export for probably 82 per cent or 83 per cent of all of the production in Canada. How is it possible to apply a cost of production and recover that from an international market where, because of factors that lie beyond our borders, there simply is not the return at the present time?

• (1610)

Mr. Hovdebo: Mr. Speaker, the proliferation of permit books or quota books is a concern that this government is having right now and will have with the program it has put before us.

I would first point to the U.S. programs of conservation where they have managed, very successfully, to control the number of acres. Now they have not managed to control the production particularly well but they have managed to control the number of acres that a particular farm seeds and puts on the market.

We have discussed the questions that he talks about on many occasions. We have felt that it was a minor concern, but the situation where one unit produces or farms 100,000 acres and gets the cost of production for all of that would not happen. That is the main concern for what may happen under the GRIP program.

The second question that he asks is the extent to which the program can be dependent upon. We feel that its greatest weakness is the fact that it is bound to go below the cost of production within two years unless the price of grain goes up. What you do by putting in place a market controlled level is guarantee that within a certain number of years the price that the farmer gets for his grain will be lower than the cost of production. It will not make any difference how well you farm or how good you are at it. You will still lose money.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Before resuming debate, it is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Lambton—Middlesex—Agriculture; the hon. member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley—Softwood Lumber; the hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond—Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

Resuming debate.

Mrs. Christine Stewart (Northumberland): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to continue the debate this afternoon on the Liberal opposition day resolution. To refresh the memories of those here, it reads as follows:

> That this House call upon the Government to take immediate action to deal with drastically reduced farm incomes resulting from the 1990-91 crop year and to make required assistance available in time for spring planting to ensure viable returns for grains, oilseeds and horticultural producers.

It is my pleasure, as I said, to speak to this issue, an agricultural emergency that exists in our country at this time. As others have said, although we have dealt in this House many times over the years with issues of agriculture, we always seem to have an agricultural industry that is in a state of emergency. The state of emergency derives, I believe, from many factors, but one of the major factors for the emergency that exists today is the lack of understanding on the part of the Canadian public in general to the importance of agriculture as a part of our Canadian economy.

Agriculture in Canada today is a $43 billion industry. Since 1988, it has declined from about a $50 billion industry. At the base of that $43 billion industry today, the basic pillar is comprised of our farmers across this country. It is my regret and the regret of many of us who are concerned about agriculture in this country that the number of farmers is declining rapidly and drastically. Western farmers across our prairies had not too bad a

year last year only because of good growing conditions and a good crop yield as a result of that.

As we know, before last year they suffered very severely from drought. It is not to say that this past year, for being a better year, has brought them out of the serious financial crisis that they experienced the previous years. They are still suffering from that and they still need considerable assistance in order to survive. The fact is that many have gone bankrupt and many are on the verge of bankruptcy.

I have heard from colleagues in my own caucus, colleagues who represent the ridings of Essex—Kent and Haldimand—Norfolk, as well as ridings in southwestern Ontario who are experiencing severe agricultural problems at this time. Farmers are giving up because they have lost crops and the prices for their commodities have dropped considerably. They do not have the funds to produce crops this year; vegetable growers to get seed into the ground and fruit producers to get the spray on their fruit and other crops that they might have.

We are in serious trouble across this country. We have heard of the potato farmers in Prince Edward Island as well as other horticultural producers in the east part of our country. They all are crying and begging for assistance.

This government has tried in different ways to address the needs of farmers across this country. At the present time, with spring planting coming on, particularly for horticultural producers, there is a gap. There is an emergency need, a crisis at this time, for our government to address this issue and to allow our horticultural producers to get on stream to get their crops yielding for this current year.

Within the last couple of weeks we started a debate on Bill C-98, the Farm Income Protection Act, a comprehensive act which includes insurance programs, income security programs like GRIP and NISA. I think, as I sit here as a non-agricultural expert, one of the reasons perhaps that the Canadian public does not seem to understand and stand behind agricultural producers, our farmers in this country, is that we use terminology which is really unknown to most Canadians.

As I speak today, I will try to avoid using terms like GRIP and NISA, but simply to explain that, as I said before, these are income security programs, insurance programs meant to help and assist with income security for farmers across this country. Those programs are very important.

I stood here last week and applauded the minister for the method that he used in bringing the bill forward in the House. He combined farmers and provincial and federal government officials in the discussions out of which came the proposed Farm Income Protection Act, that we will presumably be voting upon within the next week or so.

The Farm Income Protection Act, although it might have many points of great merit within it, does not provide the type of assistance which horticultural producers in this country require at this time. There are 20,000 horticultural producers, producers of vegetables and fruit, in this country. Half of those producers, 10,000 of them, reside in Ontario.

Last week, as has been mentioned here in the House before, the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association appeared before the Standing Committee on Agriculture and outlined the problems that their industry is facing at this time. They indicated that the Ontario producers alone require $700 million this year in order to produce their crops for this year.

• (1620)

They do not see how they can be assisted at this time by the Farm Income Protection Act that is before the House right now. It is an act which provides for insurance and income security programs for the year 1991-1992. They want to be assured, as well as the grains and oilseeds producers who will benefit from that program, that if they receive any income support this year or insurance coverage this year it will not be seen as a prepayment for the 1991-1992 crop year, because we are talking about the needs of the previous year and we cannot be continually playing catch-up.

On the other hand, producers do not like the *ad hoc* programs that are constantly being put in place and have had to be put in place to help them. At this point there seems to be no other possible, but yet there is one more *ad hoc* program for this year, particularly for horticultural producers who have such great need.

From what I can understand, one of the problems with the producers is that under one section of the Agriculture Income Protection Act the GRIP is fairly easily

defined for grains and oilseed producers, but it is much more difficult to define for our horticultural industry. Our fruit and vegetables growers produce over 100 different crops and each crop has different parameters. They must work out a separate type of program of insurance and income security. They have not even yet determined what the premiums would be for the various crops that might be covered under that program.

We heard from the minister today—and it would be of concern to the horticultural producers—that they may receive nothing this year in emergency assistance unless they become part of the GRIP program now for 1991–1992. Even if horticultural producers have the funding in hand to pay a premium, they do not know how that program will benefit them and the crops they produce. There are definitely problems and deficits in the legislation as it stands at this time, particularly for horticultural producers.

On the weekend I was reading the newspaper put out by the Ontario fruit and vegetable producers called *The Grower*. It had an article which referred to our agriculture minister's video speech to the B.C. Fruit Growers Association last month via satellite. We heard different members talk in the House today about a third line of defence committee, but for the average Canadian citizen I am afraid again that this would just be so much Greek and they would not really understand what that was referring to. I did not understand completely what it was referring to until I read this very good article in this agricultural newspaper.

It mentioned the first line of defence, which our minister referred to today, the second line of defence and the third line of defence. Our horticultural producers are saying that they need assistance from the third line of defence committee immediately in order that they can work this spring.

Just to explain to the Canadian public who may be tuned in to the House of Commons today, the first line of defence refers specifically to what is possible for producers themselves to do for themselves to promote their own self-sufficiency, and programs the Canadian and provincial governments can become involved in as well to help support our farmers across this country to become more self-sufficient. It looks toward farmers being as efficient as they possibly can be in production. Certainly it has been seen in past years that farmers have indeed become much more efficient in their production methods than was perhaps previously the case.

However, in line with the first line of defence there are responsibilities the government must take as well. One of the most important ones in this era of free trade with the United States is for our government to help our Canadian farmers to be able to compete in the international markets on a level playing field.

Last week, when horticultural producers came before the Standing Committee on Agriculture, they outlined some of the problems they experience that cause them not to be able to compete fairly with American farmers. For example, we cannot get registered in Canada certain chemicals used on fruit to help the preservation and quality of crops that are grown in United States but are imported into this country.

In the United States they have a spray that deals with a disease called the pear psylla. This spray has not been registered here and cannot be used by Canadian pear producers. We are in serious condition of losing pear production in this country because this fact alone is causing our pear farmers not to be able to compete.

I come from a region that is famous for its apple production. I invite members and the Canadian public to come to the great riding of Northumberland to experience our delicious apples in the fall. Apple producers in Northumberland have come to me and have spoken of their problem of not being able to acquire in Canada registered chemicals that are available in the United States. This therefore lowers the quality, the saleability and the pricing. It is a detriment to them when it comes to selling their product in Canada, to say nothing of trying to export and sell their product abroad. It must be remembered that although we have a $43 billion agrifood industry in Canada, we export about 25 per cent of that agrifood production. That in itself accounts for about one-third of Canada's trade balance.

We are not talking about a minor economic sector in our economy. In fact the food industry from farm to supermarket is one of Canada's largest economic sectors. The sector, the bottom tier of which is our farming community, includes many other workers in the agrifood industry as has been mentioned before. It would include our transportation of food sector, the producer sector,

the marketing sector, the advertising sector, and the sales and supermarkets of which we are all aware.

For $1 of produce at the farm gate there is an additional $7 brought into the Canadian economy as a result of that $1 of farm production in this country. The importance of farmers to the economy of this country simply cannot be underestimated.

Many Canadians do not really understand the importance of agriculture in this country and the fact that there are so many farmers who are going out of business and experiencing bankruptcy in these days. Statistics were referred to earlier here today, that Agriculture Canada predicts the total net farm income in Canada will drop by 54.5 per cent this year as compared with last year, and that only three provinces in this country will have a positive net farm income in 1991. Saskatchewan and Manitoba will have the most difficult time. well. Ontario and Quebec will also have very difficult times.

From my point of view it is very difficult to start comparing sectors in the farming economies that are experiencing rougher or tougher times than another. If a farmer cannot make it, the situation is critical. It is of great concern to me that in my own riding of Northumberland I have seen several farmers in the last few years go out of business. These are farmers who have good university education. Some of them are fortunate enough to have come home from university to land that was held by their family for generations. With good equipment, with all of these resources in hand —and I know these people to be excellent business people—they are unable to make their farms economically viable and have had to leave their farms.

• (1630)

Much earlier in my life I came from the Burlington region. I watched that region of our country get gobbled up as farm land was sold by farmers who found it more economically feasible to sell their land to developers. I personally never want to see that happen to other areas of our country, but unfortunately I do continue to see it happen. It is something that we must stop as quickly as possible.

The agricultural industry in Canada faces many challenges, not least of which is the challenge of international trade. Canada does subsidize its food industry, but it is not recognized by the Canadian public that in fact we pay very little for our food in comparison to its actual costs. But as we subsidize our industry we are competing with the U.S. and European countries that subsidize even more heavily. It is very hard for Canadian farmers to receive less; it is impossible for Canadian farmers to receive less for their production than they do nowadays.

I know this government is aware of the difficulties and is trying to deal with international trade issues, but we cannot stop. We must continue to do everything possible to try to support and help our agricultural food industry.

We laugh when we hear children being told or coming forward with the understanding that the stork brings babies. I very much get the impression that many citizens in Canada do not think beyond the supermarket when it comes to thinking of where food comes from, what the source of their food is.

Canadians must regard the crisis we have in the agricultural industry in our country at this time as their crisis and something that we all together must understand and try to do something about.

I have had the good fortune of browsing through a book called *Farming the System* by Mr. Barry K. Wilson, which gives a very good review of how politicians and producers shape Canadian agricultural policy. It is something I would recommend to all Canadian citizens to read in order to understand more about the agricultural industry in this country and what we can all do to help to improve the policies that we have in support of our farmers. They need our help. They need our understanding.

Politicians are going to be able to respond in a better way if all Canadian citizens become better informed and let politicians, decision makers, legislation makers, know that they understand the needs of the agricultural industry in this country and the enormous importance of agriculture to the economy and security of this country.

Mr. Geoff Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to pick up on a comment that the hon. member for Northumberland just made. I think she quite properly raised the matter that there is a lack of understanding or a gulf between urban dwellers and farm people or producers today.

She used the analogy of the stork bringing babies. Indeed I think when a lot of people go to the supermarket they do not realize that the food and the produce on the shelves come in fact from real live people, most of them Canadian.

If anything, there is a widening of this gulf, a heightened lack of understanding on the part of many Canadians as to exactly where their food does come from. In fact we in Canada enjoy the second lowest cost of food in the world. It is clear that some of the reason for that is the return that Canadian producers receive.

It has always troubled me that every program which the government announces on behalf of agriculture, whether it is crop insurance payments or WGSA payments or even the Canadian Wheat Board final payment, which in fact is entirely the producer's own money, is given a great headline in the media with a suggestion that it is another handout to the farm community. That in turn is seen by urban residents in a negative way.

That is why I rather like the concept of moving to these long-term safety net programs, GRIP and NISA, which are in fact in front of the House now and are moving forward. I wonder if the hon. member for Northumberland would agree with me that those programs will be a step in the right direction not only for their content, but also by lessening the dependence that we have had on *ad hoc* programs and all of the negative publicity that seems to come with each one. I wonder if the hon. member would agree that to the extent these programs will replace ad hockery and to the extent that they are permanently in place they will reduce the need for *ad hoc* programs and thereby reduce the kind of publicity which seems to widen the understanding between rural and urban areas.

Mrs. Stewart: Mr. Speaker, yes, I would agree. Earlier I was talking about the different lines of defence, the jargon used currently around the House. I talked about the first line of defence and the second line of defence being the Farm Income Protection Act, that type of long-term program which I do think is important. I think we have to keep reviewing that type of program, which I understand the minister is prepared to do to make sure that it really does address the changing and emerging needs of the farming community.

What I did not mention was the third line of defence, which is also part of the total farm strategy. The quotes from this paper are saying: "Where the first and second lines of defence do not fully deal with an income problem, the third line of defence would then come into play, the minister explained. This would involve emergency assistance or transitional assistance and it may include input cost". This is the type of program that the horticultural producers in this country today are asking for and are very concerned about.

Although we need solid, long-term programs of assistance, I think that we always are going to require this third line of defence. When the minister meets with the third line of defence committee in the coming couple of weeks, I hope that he will address this urgent need particularly of horticultural producers at this time and understand their needs. They cannot at this time become enrolled in GRIP because of the uncertainty of what that means to the horticultural producers, but in order for them to be able to enrol eventually in that program they need emergency assistance today, which is the third line of defence.

Hon. Ralph Ferguson (Lambton—Middlesex): Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the hon. member for Northumberland, spoke about sprays and chemicals that are used on produce to make it last longer while it is being shipped into Canada. Of course, these usually hit our markets at a time when a lot of our own fresh produce is coming on the market or even during the winter months when some of our greenhouse crops are being harvested.

I am very concerned about this same issue because even though some of these chemicals may be banned in Canada, they are used in other countries. Therefore, we do not allow any tolerance for these chemicals on our domestically produced food, but there is a tolerance allowed on imported food, which naturally gives them a competitive advantage coming on to our markets.

I am just wondering if my colleague would like to comment on this and if she thinks the use of these chemicals should be banned. Should we bring in regulations where all foods, both domestic and imported, should have the chemical content, pesticide, herbicide and so on, listed when they are put on sale in the supermarkets so that the Canadian consumer knows exactly what she is buying?

• (1640)

Mrs. Stewart: Mr. Speaker, I believe that my colleague brings up a very good point. When I was speaking to that particular issue and the role of government, I was talking again about the first line of defence and the need for our producers to have a level playing field. At the same time as we want to have a level playing field, we have Canadian standards of health and acceptability with regard to chemicals.

Some chemicals that may be acceptable by American standards are not necessarily acceptable by Canadian standards. There is an urgent need for the government to act quickly to determine which of the chemicals are used on products in the United States that are imported into Canada are acceptable for consumption in Canada and which ones are not. If chemicals used on products imported into this country from the United States are acceptable, then they must be immediately registered in Canada so that Canadian farmers have equal access and equal opportunity to use them.

I have had complaints, as well, from organic farmers who try not to use chemicals. They use more natural substances. Who knows, maybe they are as toxic as regular chemicals. I cannot be the judge of that. But many people have spoken to me about this serious problem. So it is to have a level playing field, but a level playing field based upon Canadian standards of health and well being.

I also think it is important for all of our food products, whether they are imported or not, whether they are sprayed natural products or processed products, should be well marked in stores what chemicals are used so that consumers know what they are ingesting.

Mr. Geoff Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this debate, actually against the motion put by the opposition and, of course, in support of the government's agricultural record. I will try to do so from the perspective of a member who represents an area of some 25,000 square miles in southwestern and south central Saskatchewan, which is very dependent upon agriculture, especially, the grains sector and particularly the production and export of wheat.

There is no question that Canadian farmers and, especially at this time, the grains and oilseed producers are faced with unprecedented circumstances. There has been enormous pressure to change and to adapt and that, in fact, is happening. We continue to support the farm community as we have always done, to help them meet their challenges at home and in the international marketplace.

There are three particular ways in which the government can assist the grains and oilseeds sector. The first is on the international level, where through the negotiations in GATT and with the Cairns group and with other nations, we try to bring about, if not an end, at least a lessening of the harmful subsidies which have so drastically affected the international price which our producers depend upon.

The second area is in regard to domestic agriculture. We must try to retain those things that were good out of the old agricultural programs and try to repair those deficiencies through innovations such as the GRIP and NISA programs which have developed a new generation of green sector safety nets, developed by the grain safety net committee.

The third area we should be addressing is that of diversification. When I say diversification, I mean within agriculture and, indeed, outside. Agricultural diversification is good, but it is obviously not possible to shift some 600 miles of prairie for which the highest and best use appears to be wheat production, into something else. It is just not feasible and not practical.

Progress is being made through Western Economic Diversification to diversify in a non-agricultural sense. We are trying to support and enable enterprises that have new products, new ideas, new technology, new markets, a possibility of import replacement to flourish on the prairies so that it will be possible to have plants, factories and initiatives which will employ prairie people in areas and occupations and walks of life that are not so dependent upon agriculture, as is the case at the present time.

Since the mid-1980s the federal government has provided an unprecedented level of income support to the grain and oilseeds sector, about $12 billion in direct assistance. This support has been delivered through record high pay-outs under existing programs such as the WGSA, that is the western grain stabilization program and through special programs that responded to unexpected emergencies.

Long-term programs like western grain stabilization were put in place to provide stability to producers and it has served that purpose well. However, it was never intended to deal with the kind of emergencies the industry faced during the late eighties and today. One obvious flaw was that the triggering mechanism was for the entire Canadian Wheat Board area rather than for specific areas. Another flaw was the five-year rolling average of income, which is fine when there is a quantum shift from one year to the next, but is not much good when the prices drop consistently and over a five-year period show very little change.

The problem is that farmers could no longer rely on these programs for predictable support. They indicated they needed a more effective and predictable safety net program, and that is why the legislation enabling GRIP and NISA, the Farm Income Protection Act, is now before this House. It is hoped that these programs, which were recommended to the government by the Grain Safety Net Committee composed in the majority of producers, will answer some of the problems.

The difficulty we find ourselves in, all Canadians and the grain producers in particular, is the trade subsidy war, the grain export subsidy war which has developed through the mid-eighties and late eighties between the European Economic Community and the United States. The Europeans, since the sixties, have been heavily subsidizing the production and eventually the over-production of product, including grain. They have embarked upon programs to subsidize the further export of their excess production.

The United States suffered a diminution of its share of the market for a number of years as a result of the European activities and eventually the Americans took the gloves off and got into the subsidy battle as well. Unfortunately, Canadian producers have been caught in the cross-fire. It has been particularly difficult because, as we all know, the European Economic Community has some 330 million people, the United States some 250 million people. We in Canada have 27 million people.

On the other side of the coin, the Europeans are able, because of that population, to consume by far the greater part of their production, so they are exporting—or perhaps I should say dumping on the world market—perhaps 15 per cent of their production.

The United States is in a somewhat similar position, and I am guessing at this point because I have forgotten the numbers, but I suspect that they export well under one-half of their production.

Canadians remain exposed to the tune of about 83 per cent, to export. We consume, as humans, about 7 per cent of our wheat production. Livestock take up perhaps another 9 per cent or 10 per cent. The remainder has to be exported, and that is where our producers are very much at risk.

This subsidy war is being very much fought with a double-edged sword. The big powers, the Europeans and the Americans, have the population to be able to chew up a lot of their production and at the same time they have the population base and the tax base to be able to afford the kind of massive export subsidies that they are affording their producers. So it is a very difficult situation. As a result, international grain prices have dropped dramatically through the eighties to the point now where, as we speak, as a result of some recent sales, it appears that the international price—if one can call it that—is in the area of $1.50 to $1.75 per bushel of wheat. Clearly, Canadian producers face a major problem. This is something that has been building for some time.

• (1650)

This has not gone unanswered. We, of course, recall the Canadian Special Grains Program in 1986, under which $1 billion was paid out to Canadian producers in addition to the regular government programs. The following year another $1.1 billion was paid out through that program.

Prices did recover somewhat in 1988 so that there was no need to extend the Special Grains Program, but just when we thought we could see some light at the end of the tunnel another crisis arose. In 1988 we had a drought which caused difficulty and suffering to many parts of Canada. The prairies, parts of southern Ontario and Quebec suffered the most severe drought since the 1930s. Crop losses were significant in many areas. Again this government responded with the Canadian Crop Drought Assistance Program which injected some $850 million into the farm economy. In addition, there was a Livestock Drought Assistance Program and a Green Feed Program in western Canada which put out another almost $150 million.

As I indicated earlier, Canada cannot hope to match the treasuries of the United States and Europe but, at the same time, we cannot allow farmers to fend for themselves because farming is a very productive sector. Canadian grain farmers are among the most productive, competitive and, indeed, low-cost producers in the world. If they were ever able to achieve the famous level playing field, they would do quite well without any government assistance. All of us in this House, all Canadian taxpayers and all Canadian producers would be very pleased with that but, unfortunately, it is somewhat like Saddam Hussein, it is not possible to wish him away and it is not possible to wish away these harmful international subsidies at the present time.

Last year this government put forward some $500 million in a special income assistance program. Last fall it announced the Cash Flow Enhancement Program which gave farmers access to advances on their farm storage production interest free. This resulted in about $1.5 billion of cash flow being available.

In addition to these programs, the government, through the Farm Debt Review Process, has assisted a number of farmers in resolving difficulties with their creditors. The Farm Credit Corporation has, through various measures, written off enormous amounts of money. There is the Equity Building Program which is assisting a number of Farm Credit Corporation clients who are experiencing difficulty in an attempt to enable them to build up some equity and to re-establish their farming operations. The other side of it, the Canadian Rural Transition Program, has provided income training and assistance to more than 3,500 farm families.

There is another item, a not inconsiderable item, which was perhaps missed in the middle of the GST debate. The implementation of the goods and services tax will relieve the farm community of some $250 million in sales tax on the purchase of their production inputs; a fairly considerable advantage.

There remains a long list of government initiatives towards the grains and oilseeds sector and, indeed, towards other aspects of agriculture, but I am particularly addressing my remarks today to the grains and oilseeds sector. In fact, during the late 1980s federal and provincial governments contributed significantly to farm income. Direct program payments in fact accounted for 84 per cent of realized net farm income from 1986 to 1989. They more than doubled from an annual average of $1.5 billion during the first half of the 1980s to $3.6 billion for the latter half of that decade. In the prairie provinces where, of course, grain and oilseed production dominates agriculture, the federal share of support averages 86 per cent.

These various *ad hoc* programs I have outlined were certainly needed, but they show that there were gaps in the safety net program which made it impossible for farmers to be able to predict their incomes. Farmers need some predictability to be able to remain efficient and competitive. That was one of the reasons why, back in 1989, the Minister of Agriculture and this government launched the most comprehensive review of agrifood policies and programs ever undertaken in the history of Canadian agriculture, and did so, I might add, in partnership with the provinces and with the various participants in the agrifood industry.

Through this policy review, the government has attempted to move away from inefficient *ad hoc* assistance toward a more comprehensive support structure that is fair, cost-efficient and predictable.

For over a year, federal and provincial governments and representatives of the industry have been working in partnership toward this goal. Together there has been undertaken an historic review of agricultural policies and programs. Through the 11 task forces created under the review many Canadians have worked very hard at putting aside their differences to develop solutions for the good of the agricultural industry.

Nowhere, Mr. Speaker, was this more evident than through the work of the grain and oilseeds safety net committee. This federal-provincial-industry committee was established in the early part of 1990 and had something in the order of 34 members of whom 19 were actual hands on farmers, hands on producers. They were able to bring forward a series of recommendations which have resulted in the farm income protection plan legislation which is in front of the House right now, as I mentioned, and indeed the Minister of Agriculture is in front of the agricultural committee right now dealing with aspects of that bill.

GRIP and NISA were developed from the ground up by farmers working with government. Together they have developed a program which provides farmers with predictable support.

At the agrifood policy conference a couple of years ago, farmers indicated that they wanted new safety net programs that would be targeted more effectively to their own individual situations, to their individual operations. They wanted government to take a whole farm approach, they want a predictable support, and these new programs I believe meet these criteria.

The Gross Revenue Insurance Plan and the Net Income Stabilization Account will deal more effectively than any previous programs with the market and production instabilities that farmers have to deal with. The government has put the development of these programs on a fast track because we know that farmers cannot wait, farmers are asking for a new program and the government has responded by creating the environment in which these new programs can be developed.

Mr. Speaker, under current market conditions we anticipate GRIP to pay out approximately $2.7 billion in 1991–92. The establishment of this program will, therefore, ensure a secure underpinning for the future of the grain and oilseeds sector.

GRIP is a reality, Mr. Speaker. Most provinces have agreed to participate and the federal and provincial ministers of agriculture recently agreed on the formula to establish premium rates. It is a very important program, an insurance program whereby the federal government, the provinces and the individual producers contribute toward the premium. It is individualized, it is based on the production of the individual, not of others.

The second component of the safety net program is the Net Income Stabilization Account, or NISA, a cash stabilization account under which farmers are able to contribute up to 2 per cent of their net eligible sales and will receive matching funds from governments whenever the program formula triggers a withdrawal from the fund. It is important to stress here, Mr. Speaker, that each individual producer in the country will have his or her individual NISA account. The individual will control his or her destiny.

We also recognize that GRIP and NISA will not solve all our programs. It is quite clear that no one is going to get rich on these programs. I believe that what they represent today is an important survival mechanism in the face of an extremely difficult world situation.

• (1700)

A government industry committee was established in February to study options to the grains and oilseeds sector. They build on the objectives of GRIP and NISA and deal with issues such as income shortfall, debt burdens, restructuring, land use, the need for adjustment diversification and so on.

The first line of defence is the farmer's responsibility to manage risk as has been stated before in this debate. Stabilization and safety net programs like GRIP and NISA form the second line of defence. There will be no effective third line of defence without a strong second line in place. That is where the third line involves all of us; federal and provincial governments, and producers alike working together to put in place some solutions that will ensure long-term viability.

That means exploring a series of options that will allow us to deal with long-term difficulties in a planned an organized way.

In the recent budget, the government committed an additional $1.3 billion as further proof that we continue to stand by agriculture. This money will be used in part to finance new and ongoing stabilization programs. Some of this money will have to be used to deal with the anticipated deficit in the wheat pool of the Canadian Wheat Board this crop year.

Some of the money will be set aside for special assistance because GRIP and NISA will not pay out until next year. The grains and oilseeds committee, and indeed the horticulture committee are developing options for delivering special assistance. These options will in fact be discussed with farm leaders when the Minister of Agriculture meets with them on Tuesday, two days from now.

An announcement on how special assistance will be delivered is to be made before spring seeding.

In conclusion, I want to stress again that this government has always delivered in terms of support for agriculture. When the farmers need us, we are there. We

have responded in the past when they needed assistance, and we are going to continue to do so.

Hon. Ralph Ferguson (Lambton—Middlesex): Mr. Speaker, I could not help but notice the member's comment that this government has always delivered in terms of support.

I have a question. I should perhaps go back a little bit. In the summer of 1984 the Minister of Agriculture at the time made a statement that the government was going to seriously support and put in place a program for the development of ethanol blended fuels in Canada. In fact, some research is being done on it at that time.

On August 2, 1984, because we were into a campaign, there was a statement that came from the Progressive Conservative Party that there was a real opportunity for fuel alcohol to be used in Canada as an alternative octane booster in gasoline. The Progressive Conservative Party said that a Progressive Conservative government would set up a special program to encourage the use of alcohol as a lead substitute for octane boosting.

Of course, a few days later, Dr. Gary Gurbin, a former member of this House said: "We would seriously consider mandating the change for environmentally damaging additives to more environmentally acceptable alternatives through federally owned and controlled Crown corporations".

The key is that it is becoming increasingly clear that we have environmental problems that are caused by and as a result of additives in gasoline. We also have great potential in other substances, including both ethanol and methanol.

Of course, on December 2, 1985, the Deputy Minister of Agriculture said: "I support the development of ethanol produced from agricultural resources and forestry products to replace lead as an octane booster for gasoline." He went on.

In May 1986 the Standing Committee on Energy, Mines and Resources reported to this House. The committee recommended the use of methanol and ethanol as blending agents in Canadian gasoline. It recommended that the federal government move more extensively toward research, development and demonstration required to introduce alcohol and gasoline blends on a broader basis and that the federal government co-operate with the provincial governments and industry to establish guidelines and standards for ethanol based fuels.

Does it not make a lot of sense with the low price of grain in the world today to divert a lot of that grain into renewable fuels that are environmentally friendly by the government's own admissions, going back those years, to utilize that grain in Canada in a way that would improve not only the environment but the income to the farmers. It would provide a high protein based livestock feed for the Canadian livestock producers and give them a step up on a lot of the competition. If it was not used for livestock feed, this product could be dried and used as a flour for the manufacture of bread, cookies or biscuits. This particular product is exceptionally well suited for the starving people in Third World countries.

I cannot understand why the government is delaying on this matter. Recent cost studies show that ethanol can be produced for 27 cents a litre. A Canadian company made that statement. Also, in the United States the most economical process can produce it for 38 cents a gallon, with the average price being 47 cents.

I would like to have the comments of the previous speaker as to why the government is delaying on this issue when it can create a market for between 5 million and 8 million bushels of Canadian produced grain in this country.

Mr. Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia: Mr. Speaker, I commend the hon. member for Lambton—Middlesex for what I perceive to be a constructive suggestion. I find it very refreshing and that is why I commend him. Frankly, to this moment I have been rather disappointed by the lack and indeed the almost complete absence of any constructive and concrete suggestions on the part of the opposition. They bring forward a motion, but not much in the way of suggestion, just the usual form of criticism. If I may say, it is sometimes a little hard to swallow, given that the motion emanates from a party whose only legacy to prairie agriculture and western agriculture over the 16-year period from 1968 to 1984 was the LIFT program and the imposition of the capital gains tax.

Perhaps I should add a legacy in the form of approximately a $207 billion national debt as of March 31, 1985, the interest burden of which is the single most significant constraining factor on any government today to be able

to respond adequately to the needs of sectors of the country, be it agriculture or others.

In any event, I do appreciate the hon. member's interest in ethanol. Indeed, while I am far from being an expert, I understand that in fact there have been several initiatives taken under the Western Diversification initiative. I am certainly going to check that out and I will be in touch with the hon. member.

It is important, because his suggestion ties in with one of the three measures I outlined in my remarks that could certainly assist western agriculture, and that was diversification. Diversification within agriculture itself, but also diversification on the prairies but outside of agriculture.

If I may cite an example within my home town of Swift Current which, as an aside, was cited last week by one of the national magazines as one of the 10 most desirable places in the country in which to live. I guess it is that way because, as the magazine indicated, the community spirit and the fairly low cost of housing, low taxes and easy access to a number of amenities.

The one thing we lack in a prairie city which is so dependent on agriculture is a payroll base, a job base. That is where Western Diversification has been helpful. Through Western Diversification and some help from the provincial government, but especially through the initiative of some innovative people, there has been establish an operation impact packaging which will take waste paper and recycle it into environmentally friendly degradable trays for the display of produce. The result is that there will be 135 jobs commencing this summer in this manufacturing plant, absolutely and totally unrelated to agriculture.

In addition, there has already been a spin-off company formed which will employ another 15 constituents in the manufacturing of a coating which will go on the product made by the impact packaging plant.

• (1710)

At a time like this, 150 jobs in a city of some 16,000 people is extremely important. What it means is payroll, it means a spin-off that is unrelated to agriculture. It means, in fact, that some people in the agriculture community who have been relying on straight grain farming will in fact be able to supplement their incomes through the obtaining of jobs in enterprises such as the one I have described, or in others which are being put forward through the innovative results of the Western Diversification program, a $1.2 billion program which makes repayable loans to enterprises which have new product, new market, new technology, that are seeking to replace imported goods.

I agree very much with the hon. member when he speaks in terms of diversification. I think any measures that can be taken which will lead to diversification of the areas that are so dependent on agriculture are most welcome.

Hon. Ralph Ferguson (Lambton—Middlesex): Mr. Speaker, I rise to take part in this opposition day debate at this point. At the onset I will just speak for a moment about some comments made by the minister this morning. When he said there is a 39 per cent net increase in farm income, this is realized farm income.

I should just go back a little bit and point out that during the years 1984–89, the average farm net income increased by only 11 per cent. In 1984–89 the average income of all Canadian families increased by 39 per cent. During this period, due to the lack of farm income, more and more farm families were forced to resort to off-farm income to make ends meet. They had to take jobs off the farm and this level of income, this additional income that came from off farm jobs, increased by 34 per cent.

In spite of those statements, we still have to face reality and realize this government has allowed the people of rural Canada to fall even further behind the rest of society and forced them to take off-farm jobs in order to subsidize their farm operations to grow food for the people of this nation.

On page 9 of the Farm Income Financial Conditions, government expenditures data book, January 1991 you can find these figures. I just want to put that on the record because more and more people are coming to me who are in financial difficulty, people from the riding of Lambton—Middlesex, which is a very large and diversified base of agriculture production.

I have a letter here from four diversified tobacco farmers who are trying to stay afloat. They explain that they are a group of farmers who produce hydroponic lettuce year round. They tell me their product is pesti-

cide free, it is clean, and with the roots intact with moisture, it has a much superior shelf life. I should point out that there is no need to spray this kind of lettuce to keep it fresh on the supermarket shelf. They also advise me that they have five family farms producing their product for the past five years, with private money.

It has taken a lot of determination to produce their unique product and to put together a workable marketing plan which, they tell me, is working well. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult for them to compete with American lettuce, mainly from California, that is being dumped into the Ontario market at prices which, questionably, may or may not cover transportation costs.

I will go on and read the rest of the letter:

> We feel that we are victimized by American subsidization and policies of their produce. We are aware of their irrigation equipment grants, illegal Mexican labour and large corporate incentives, just to mention a few advantages that we, as Canadians, do not have access to. Free trade has also enhanced dumping procedures.
>
> It does not stop there. These big American dealers, with their government money, have obtained methods to encourage major buyers here to always buy American first. As Canadians, are we put into the back seat of our own market? The major buyers in Canada, in general, feel that they cannot be bothered any more by buying from the family farm in Canada.
>
> Our costs to produce our product is determined by materials, labour and other activities that are generated right here in Canada. If we had the same national privileges as the Americans do, we would be more stable in the marketplace.
>
> We want fair action from our government to make the produce marketplace a fair place to deal. If we are at the woes of the Americans all the time then we are headed for a broke country. We cannot pay enough taxes if we cannot produce enough money to pay them.

That is the end of the quote from this letter. I think it tells it all.

Another of my constituents, or close by to the constituency, is a tobacco grower as well. He calculated that his crop, about 90,000 pounds of tobacco, will translate into roughly $9 million revenue for two levels of government this year at the federal level and the provincial level. In 1990 Ontario tobacco growers sold a total of $123.2 million pounds to Canada's big three cigarette manufacturers, worth $181.1 million or $1.47 pound. In 1989 cash receipts added up to $261.1 million. Between them, the federal and provincial governments collect more than $5 billion a year in revenue from tobacco products.

When we look at the revenue income from tobacco products and distilled products in this country, they take in billions upon billions of dollars from that primary producer of this nation and yet, at the same time, this government brags about handing out $1.3 billion to the Canadian farmers to help bail them out of trouble, bailing out the people who lay the golden egg in terms of the department of revenue of this nation.

I cannot help but look back at two years ago now when on the floor of this House I asked the Minister of Agriculture about the no-rolled beef being imported into this country, a million pounds a week at that time. He assured me that he would look into it, but the closure of six packing plants since 1989 is due in part to the government's inaction on no-rolled beef being allowed to come into Canada from the United States.

One of these packing plants has re-opened, but the fact is that the amount of no-rolled beef—a cheap product coming into this country from the United States, most of it dairy cows that have been slaughtered over there after one or two lactations—coming into this country which is not graded, and that is why it is called no-rolled. When you grade a carcass of beef in the slaughterhouse, you run a roll down the side and it tells you whether it is A-1, A-2, A-3 or A-4. If it is cow beef, they call it C-1, C-2, C-3 or C-4. All this is coming in here and the consumers do not know what they are buying. The amount of that has tripled since 1989. The feedlot industry across this province has been decimated.

Yesterday, in *The Ottawa Citizen* there was a story about Ontario's once powerful beef industry taking it on the chin. It is having an impact on our environment, it is having an impact on the income of this country and it is taking away jobs. We have to look to our food processing industry in this nation, whether it is the beef packing industry, the lettuce producers, to see what is happening to this country under this government in allowing imports of products from other countries. While we cannot export beef that is not graded, we are letting it into this country. I ask the government to do something about it, to put a stable foundation under the beef industry in this country so that we know precisely where we stand and what lies ahead of us.

• (1720)

I am going to share my time today with another member. I believe my time is almost up, so at this point I will sit down and turn the floor over to him, and perhaps we can share questions at the end.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Does the House agree with the suggestion of the hon. member that the opposition split its time between two speakers?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Lyle Vanclief (Prince Edward—Hastings): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to address the motion before the House imploring and encouraging the government to take some immediate action to assist primary producers in this country to get over the hurdle facing them as a result of the disastrous prices in 1990–1991.

I will refer first to the situation of grain farmers in western Canada who went through several years of drought. They did not have anything to sell. I would like to draw a little comparison. That is like someone else in the rest of Canada having to sit down at the dinner table every night and saying to the family: "I am sorry, folks, I still don't have a job so we don't have an income", because they just did not have anything to sell, there was nothing in the bin.

If we follow on to what happened in 1990, they got a job or they got an excellent crop. They did. They had an excellent crop, pretty well evenly spread, although there were pockets where it was no so good. That always happens when dealing with mother nature. But they got that crop and because of what is going on in the world in trade wars it was not worth anything. Basically they had a job but they still were not getting a pay cheque.

That is the conundrum they are in at this time of year. They need money to get them through.

We met with the prairie pools the other day. There is talk, I agree, good talk; I just came from a committee meeting in which we were talking about the GRIP and NISA programs. They are not going to kick in for the 1990–1991 crop year. They can and will kick in down the road, but they are not going to provide that bridge financing for the 1990–1991 crop year. That assistance is definitely needed.

The Western Grain Stabilization Act will put some money in there, but the prairie pools tell us that to bring them up even close to the average net farm income they had in the last number of years they need $1.1 billion or $1.16 billion; somewhere in that neighbourhood, a considerable sum of money.

I know money is not easy to come by, and I am not here to say to the government: spend, spend, spend. What I know, what those of us in the agrifood industry know, and what we should all realize as Canadians is that every dollar that arrives at the farm gate will multiply seven times before it is through our economy and our society. That is a lot of money when it goes through.

One out of five Canadian jobs results from what happens at the primary producer level. One out of five Canadian jobs is in the agrifood industry. It is important that that sector of our economy, that sector of our business world in this country, is kept sound. What we are asking the government to do today is to react, to realize that and to do something now.

I wish I did not have to stand here and ask this today, to discuss this with the government, to debate this in the House of Commons, but it is a reality of where we are as a result of what happened in 1990.

I would like to give some examples of what is happening in the horticultural industry as well. In discussions about the agrifood industry we hear about third line of defence, second line of defence, and working back to first line of defence. What I can say and what I am hearing is that there is nothing wrong. There are some good things with the second line of defence, such as the GRIP and NISA programs and the Farm Income Stabilization Act which takes into account the hopefully not needed necessity of a third line of defence. The government also has to move quickly, and quite frankly in some cases has to move, on the first line of defence. That first line of defence talks about border inspection, grade standards, equalizing and levelling the playing field for such things as crop production requirements, be they chemicals or whatever, with our major competitor in the horticultural field, the United States.

The horticultural industry in Canada is a $2.2 billion industry itself and $500 million of that is exported. It is important that our players, our producers, be on an equal playing field and equal footing with those they are competing against.

The Minister of State for Grains and Oilseeds stated last week that action had to be taken within six weeks. One of those weeks is gone already, and we have not seen the action. I just saying that the producers need to know. Producers are looking at a longer term situation, but right now their bankers are saying to them: "What are we going to look at and what is there so that we can get to the 1991 crop?"

Some very startling things are happening out there. In my own riding a food processing facility announced about six weeks ago that it was no longer going to process food. I heard the minister stand last week and say that a number of new food processing facilities are being constructed in this country in the last number of months. I spoke as recently as this morning with the chief executive officer of a major food processing company, and his answer was: "I am in the industry, and I do not know where they are. If we have got new food processing facilities, they must be hamburger and fast food outlets in the city some place". He did not know where they were.

When they pulled out of processing tomatoes, pumpkins and peas in my riding in Prince Edward County, it took out $1.3 million from farm gate prices. If we multiply that by five, six, seven or whatever figure we want, we find that is a tremendous removal of funds from there and the employment that went with it. The chief executive office also said to me this morning: "The rules are changed. The tariffs are changing. We have globalization," et cetera. His answer to me was: "Mr. Vanclief, it is cheaper to buy it south of the border".

I understand that those business decisions have to be made. I am asking the government: What does it suggest that these producers turn to in order to make their living? The neat answer is: "You have lost your job because of competitiveness", but what will the government put in place to allow these people to make a living? What is the government going to put in place immediately to provide the producers who are still there with a financially sound basis in order to get through the disastrous results of the 1990 crop year?

I cannot say it enough: A bridging type of program is needed. Horticultural producers in the province of Ontario have worked their figures. They claim that they need $70 million to get them even close to where they have been on the average in the past number of years. That is one province.

I know all provinces in the horticultural industry were not affected in the same way. British Columbia has been affected, as has the maritimes, but they agree that the main hurt this year have been in the province of Ontario.

I ask the government to react to this as quickly as it possibly can so that producers know where they are at for 1991. I will leave it at that, Mr. Speaker, and there may be some comments.

• (1730)

Mr. Len Gustafson (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to make a comment.

There is no question about the seriousness of the agricultural situation, especially in the grains and oilseeds, but I think there is also a very clear indication, particularly in the farm groups and among farmers, that this government has stood with farmers through difficult times. There has never been a government in the history of this country that has stood with the farmers like the Conservative government, the Prime Minister, and the Minister of Agriculture. There has been strong representation throughout the grains and oilseeds industry, horticulture and agriculture as a whole.

If we look at the numbers, I think we will find that this government put about $22 billion into agriculture in the last six years. I am not saying that is enough, nor that it has solved all the problems, but certainly if there has ever been a government that has been sensitive to the need, it is this government.

What about the present situation? This past winter the Minister of Agriculture called together farm groups from across the country: 19 farm groups, all the wheat pools, all wheat growers. All the organizations were represented. Farmers themselves, with support from the federal government and the provincial governments, brought together programs that are now called GRIP and NISA. They are being well accepted.

I just want to assure the opposition and our farmers out there that if ever there has been a government that will stand with them, this government will, has, and will continue to.

The importance of the strength of this government is that we represent all the regions of this country. We represent Quebec, Ontario, the west, the maritimes, and right across the country. One important point our farmers are making is that it is important this country

stay together as a strong federation so that we can continue to do what has been done in the past: support agriculture. I just want to make the point that our government has stood with the farmers, will continue to stand with them, and these programs will work in the future.

Mr. Vanclief: Mr. Speaker, I do not quarrel with some of the comments of my friend across the floor about the dollars that have been put into agriculture. What he did not address is the subject matter of the motion today.

He talked about what he has done in the past. He talked about what he hopes to do in the future. But farmers want to know what he is going to do now.

The programs and the action taken for the 1989 crop year are not going to take place again. We are talking constructively. We are talking about what will happen or what can happen for 1991 on. However there is a gap or a bridging in there, and we are asking the government what it is going to do.

Today the Minister of Finance says the money is not available, the $1.3 billion increase in the agriculture budget this year is used up for the Canadian Wheat Board for western grain stabilization. He says the money is not available.

The government is making promises to bring. That is what it is saying. The government is giving it lip service. We hear the rhetoric all the time, but it does not have anything.

What we are saying is that we want the government to make a commitment and come out with a program to put it up. Put it on the table. We don't even know where it is going to get the money. Where is it? It is used up.

Is it going into consolidated revenue funds in order to get the money or, because of its importance, is it willing to go into contingency funds to get the money? With what the government has said it is going to do and the dollar value it put on it, it does not have enough dollars even to begin.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Resuming debate. The Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State for Agriculture.

Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, I take the floor today to emphasize the impact of many measures taken by the federal government to enhance the economic situation of Canadian and Quebec farmers. A number of comments have been made and heard today, but let us keep in mind the progress we have accomplished over the past six years. On many occasions this government has shown a concern about the socio-economic well-being of the agri-food producer. Never did the federal government back away from its responsibilities in this sector. On the contrary, as hon. members will admit, the government did intervene whenever the situation called for constructive action. My colleague who is now the minister showed determination and commitment when in the fall of 1989, and this bears repeating, he launched the most exhaustive review of our national agrifood policy ever undertaken in our history.

With that in mind, Mr. Speaker, provincial representatives met here in Ottawa and endorsed a series of major principles, namely agrifood sector autonomy, respect for regions, enhancement of sustainable environment, and market awareness.

The numerous interest groups got down to work. So far a number of people sat on a dozen-odd different committees. They were confident that they would find practical solutions in the interest of the general public and contribute to re-assure the farming community. That is what they did, and they produced entirely relevant reports. The job is not finished yet, I agree, but in most cases these reports have been unanimously endorsed by the participants, be they from the government sector, the processing sector, the academic sector, or any other sector.

One of the first task forces was set up to study the matter of income security, particularly with respect to grains and oilseeds. Having considered the issue from every angle the members of the committee opted for a two-prong income security program. Earlier this after-

noon several speakers said that we have been talking about this for years, and that is true enough. But it is only after consulting farmers, producers, processors and provincial spokesmen that our government launches new programs.

Federal and provincial ministers of Agriculture and almost every farm association, including Quebec's *Union des producteurs agricoles*, approved in principle these two programs, the Gross Revenue Income Plan, usually called GRIP, and the Net Income Stabilization Account, NISA. Unable sometimes to attend federal-provincial meetings, in view of the current political situation in Quebec as my colleagues know representatives of the Quebec government regularly inquire about the policy review process. The many Quebeckers who sit as members on these committees have greatly influenced the debate and its progress.

The government of Quebec had absolutely no trouble accepting some of the measures resulting from the policy review. Such was the case for example with the objective of progressively reducing the countless interprovincial trade barriers which applied to a lot of agrifood products.

More recently, Mr. Speaker, I thought my colleagues would be interested to know that last Thursday, on March 4, the government of Quebec and the federal government reached an agreement allowing Quebec grain producers to participate in the Gross Revenue Income Plan. This program will be in effect for the 1991-92 crop year, which means that one more provincial government joining this national program that was prepared by them and for them. The two levels of government have agreed to let the *Régie des assurances agricoles du Québec* manage the program, hence making its implementation easier, improving communications, and allowing for more positive results for the Quebec farmers.

• (1740)

I am happy to see that public authorities can provide farm producers with such a good safety net which will enhance the current crop insurance and stabilization programs which apply as we know to all Canadians.

We are all aware just how difficult a farmer's life can be, not just because the weather conditions can have such an impact on the expected yield, but also because of the export subsidy war which has now been going on for some time, with the result that all farm producers must face depressed world prices which make it extremely difficult for them to get an adequate income from their hard work.

Recent statistics indicate that in some areas of our country, some producers are better off than others. This makes it necessary—my hon. friends of the opposition will certainly agree—for these programs to be as flexible as possible, so that the regions which are hurting the most, such as Saskatchewan, as well as some regions in Manitoba and in other provinces—may benefit from this flexibility.

That is the way our government has applied and prepared the programs for the farm producers. The purpose was to make these programs flexible enough to provide producers with adequate help when they need it most.

The new safety net will help remedy a situation on the basis of the prices paid over the past 15 years. This program will require the personal involvement of the producers and of the two levels of government. As I said on a number of occasions in this House, a government can no longer keep throwing money at a problem to make it go away Long-term solutions have to be considered and producers themselves must contribute to this long-term effort, as well as the provinces. Statistics show that some of them have made no significant effort to help farm producers.

It is with this objective in mind that for the past two years, federal programs required that the federal and provincial governments as well as producers do their share.

Mr. Speaker, I now want to tell you about the dairy industry. In its effort to deal quickly with a difficult situation, our government, with the invaluable support of the people who devoted themselves heart and soul to achieve this safety net has managed to improve the lot of wheat producers in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada. Several other policy review initiatives focus on other industries which should not be neglected. I refer for instance to the task force on dairy policy and the task force on poultry which were created as soon as the review of the Canadian farm policies were announced and which are doing a tremendous job.

Everybody will agree that supply management is more important in Eastern Canada. I want to emphasize what is being done in each of these industries. Like other food processing industries, the dairy industry is presently undergoing major disruption. In Quebec, particularly, as well as elsewhere in the country, dairy

cooperatives joined forces to realize economies of scale and better compete on the North American market. In this context, the thrust of work of the task force on the dairy policy is toward the adaptation of the dairy industry to change. It is up to the industry to determine of its future. Even then, the days are over when the government would decide everything for the agrifood sector. It is now up to the sector to set its objectives and find the means to achieve them.

The government of Canada fully intends to follow the recommendations from the final report to be presented in a few short weeks, on April 1. Of course, these proposals will first have to be agreed upon by the whole group. The policy review process is designed to create partnerships between producers, processors, dealers and consumers. The future of an industry can be managed properly only once a good partnership is established. No one can impose his ideas nowadays. Their consequences on every link of the agrifood chain must be weighed. This need is more and more obvious to everyone.

Earlier this year, the Canadian Dairy Commission was asked by the government to set the support prices for butter and skim milk powder. This decision was in keeping with the objective of increased independance for the sector. Why would the government have to make such a technical decision? So, our government requested that price-setting mechanisms allowing the industry to exercice greater freedom and responsibility be investigated and reported on. Other subjects of investigation include allocation of quotas, price-setting, competitiveness, research, etc.

I am convinced that the members of this task force will introduce proposals that will strengthen this sector. I was told that the poultry task force's report, which is expected to be very interesting, is about to be released. Another sector that has a quota system! Last May's preliminary report emphasized the need for improving supply management in the poultry industry. What remains to be seen is whether they can agree on how to do this.

We must not forget that we cannot expect the government to deal in advance with every problem that might arise in these industries. It will always be up to the sectors—which are very dynamic, I may add—to establish with us how we can improve things for the future. Perhaps I may remind you, Mr. Speaker, that we introduced a long-term dairy policy, something which had been lacking for five years. There was one when our friends the Liberals were in power, but during the subsequent four or five years, it was treated in a rather desultory fashion. It was just renewed annually, and there were no safeguards for producers.

As my colleague said earlier today, we introduced a long-term policy that passed the test over a five-year period, but before we introduce a new policy, we want to ensure that it will provide an adequate and firm response to the needs of the dairy sector in the years to come.

Another sector that concerns us and which, in fact, has hurt us somewhat in recent years is the pork industry. In September 1989, the U.S. government imposed countervailing duties on our exports of fresh and frozen pork.

The U.S. Department of Trade judged that certain federal and provincial programs in Canada were subject to countervail, including the tripartite national stabilization program which we introduced after consultations with the parties concerned and which responded to the needs of all provinces, producers, processors and the various governments. The U.S. International Trade Commission, however, judged that Canadian exports represented a threat of injury to the U.S. pork industry.

Our government, together with the industry and several provinces, is working very hard to get the countervail removed. We called for two special binational panels under Chapter XIX of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, and we also filed a complaint with GATT. For the benefit of those who criticize the free trade agreement, I would like to say that without this agreement, Canadians would have had no recourse at all. Thanks to the free trade agreement, Canada was able to establish these binational panels to make itself heard. I think that is a very important point. It was quite an event. It was one of the first times ever that we were heard before this kind of tribunal. In fact, and I will get back to this later on, this is an opportunity to defend and obtain recognition of the rights of Canadian producers.

The two special panels ruled in favour—I repeat, in favour—of the Canadian arguments. The number of programs and the value of the support systems that would be subject to countervail were reduced following decisions by the special panel which examined the definition of subsidies subject to countervail. Furthermore, and this is most important part, the other special panel looked into the matter of injury and caused the International Trade Commission to reverse its judgment of threat of injury. This reversal repealed the imposition of countervail, retroactive to September 1989, one and a half years ago.

• (1750)

Finally, a special GATT group ruled that the U.S. legislation applied in this case did not conform to GATT regulations.

Since their original representations were successful, pork producers in the United States recently asked their government to use the last recourse provided under the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, i.e. extraordinary challenge. The United States are to decide by March 29 the middle of next week whether they believe such recourse is justified. If they do, an extraordinary challenge committee must hand down a ruling within forty-five days. Whatever the Americans decide to do, we remain confident that we will be vindicated. We explained our case before the special panels under GATT and the Free Trade Agreement, and we believe that the request for an extraordinary challenge is wholly unjustified. Once this matter has finally been resolved, I am sure that the collaboration among the Canadian parties, as well as our joint perseverance, will prove to be an unqualified success.

In the final analysis, this government has proved it is capable of acting responsibly to help its Canadian and Quebec farm producers.

What I think is very encouraging is that we always act in consultation with the sector and the provinces, and that at the same time we are promoting partnerships within the agrifood sector. I remember the week we met when I was in Brussels last December. There were representatives who were aware of the importance of the agrifood sector for Canada and the provinces. Representatives from all over Canada, from the entire sector, were in Brussels. Everyday we talked and consulted through a number of advisory committees representing the entire industry, not only the agricultural sector but all sectors.

Everyday, we would discuss the issue around the table, and I will always remember the last Friday when we were facing some very serious difficulties in the GATT. In spite of those very serious difficulties, provincial representatives around the table, headed by Premier Devine, Mr. Picotte, the Quebec Minister of Agriculture, and representatives from other provinces as well from the industry said: Never have we been so well represented, never a government represented Canadian interests so faithfully. That is a mark of appreciation for a government which preferred to work with Canadian organizations— I am not exaggerating, I was there. It is on the record, and you know it.

For the past seven years, we have seen a government like none before caring for Canadian farmers and taking the best actions in the interest of Canadian agricultural producers. The agricultural producers have a good memory; they will know who they can trust because this government has always dealt with their concerns.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you that the minister was not shy about patting himself and his government colleagues on the back.

But the reality is somewhat different, and people like me who look at the situation from a more objective standpoint will tell you the same thing. Still I should like to direct a few questions to the minister.

In his remarks he spoke highly of the Free Trade Agreement, emphasizing all the benefits it brought to the agricultural community, or so he said. I wonder whether he remembers the debate we had about ice cream and yogurt just before the 1988 election. Perhaps the minister will recall that, at that time, Canadian farmers asked the government to ensure that ice cream and yogurt would be on the import control list. The government opposite simply said: "Yes, it will be done."

And some of us asked: Fine, but, Minister, dear conservative friends, don't you know that, if you do that, perhaps the other side will object, you will be brought before the GATT and you will lose the argument? Is it

not exactly what happened, in all respects? Is it not true that the opposition was right to warn the government?

And is it not true also that the government was derelict at that time, because when the GATT panel rendered its decision, the government simply accepted it without appealing to the GATT as a whole. We will recall that the government said at the time: Well, we will accept the panel decision and we will implement it after the new GATT negotiations, hoping that, first of all, those will be successful—it is not yet the case, although I also wish it were. But at the same time, for example, in case of failure, what is the government going to do to help dairy producers on the ice cream and yogurt issue, all of which was precipitated by the free trade deal of the minister opposite and his colleagues?

Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell is second to none when it comes to clouding the issue. First I would just point out that since the Free Trade Agreement became operative we have been witnessing a sharp increase in exports, and even in the agrifood sector our export trade with the United States has gone up by more than 20 per cent, a figure which goes to show that the FTA has been a very successful venture, Mr. Speaker. All the fears expressed by those who were dead set against this agreement proved to be unfounded.

With respect to yogurt and ice cream, Mr. Speaker, indeed I vividly recall discussing the matter with dairy producers as well as the federal and provincial federations, fully aware as I was of the danger of adding these two products to the list of controlled exports because the FTA negotiations did not have anything to do with GATT. Sure enough, the Americans won when they took their case before GATT officials. However my colleague would know that we have not yet accepted that ruling, which is still in limbo like many others concerning yogurt and ice cream. We are not particularly pleased about the situation, Mr. Speaker, and I too could have done without yet another debate on the issue.

In any case, we consulted with dairy producers and they were strongly supportive of our position. Not a single word was written nor a single step taken in this matter without the full endorsement of the Dairy Farmers of Canada. When we filed our request with GATT they were behind us all the way. We sought to have Article 11 strengthened and clarified precisely to avoid any future argument over yogurt and ice cream. To this day, Mr. Speaker, the case has been dealt with only after full consultation with and approval of the Dairy Farmers of Canada. Never before had any government held so many consultations with producers, Mr. Speaker, and that is what we will continue to do because we believe the industry can be prosperous only if it gets to have a say on its own future.

Mr. Gilles Bernier (Beauce): Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate my colleague—

Mr. Boudria: Why?

Mr. Bernier: —the hon. minister of State for Agriculture, the member for Bellechasse, which is adjacent to my constituency. His constituency is also half-urban and half-rural. But I would like to say something to my colleague of the opposition who has just spoken of failure. Sure enough, failure is a familiar word when it comes to Liberals. Let me remind him these words by Cervantes, in *Don Quixote*: "He who goes for wool comes home shorn." I believe it is extremely important to give a lot of consideration to the speech made by the Minister of State for Agriculture.

• (1800)

A few minutes ago, the minister mentioned the benefits of free trade for agriculture, and I think free-trade has been very profitable for us. There are 3,000 pork producers in my constituency alone who benefit from a free access to the American market.

So today, because of the decision that well-known panel has just rendered in favour of our Canadian, Quebec and Beauce producers, we are going to get 17 million back. It is our money and I think a good deal of it will end up in Beauce and Bellechasse counties.

But without this court decision that, would not have been the case. In my opinion, our producers are quite aware of the significance of the American market for them. But enough said about the benefits of free-trade to our farm producers, I would now like to talk about GATT.

After displaying a great deal of discipline, we, the Quebec and Canadian producers, have sacrificed ourselves. We have set limits for ourselves without joint programs, marketing boards and quotas.

Today, we are asking for increased protection under Article XI of the GATT, and the Opposition member said that we failed in that regard. I do not think that we failed since negotiations are not completed yet. Is there any reason for producers from Quebec and Canada to believe that, one day, we will have all the protection we want and asked for under Article XI of the GATT?

So our farmers, our pork, egg, milk and poultry producers, are asking themselves some questions and I think they deserve an answer from the government.

Therefore, I ask that question to my hon. colleague.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The hon. minister of State for Agriculture. You have two minutes left.

Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, as to the comment of my hon. colleague regarding pork producers, it is clear that all producers, the thousands of pork producers in Quebec, Ontario and the West, will benefit from that decision, since that industry grew as a result of the requirement to process locally its procucts for export.

Regarding the GATT negotiations, I would like to say, that the Canadian position was nearly unanimous since all groups representing producers, processors and the provinces were supportive. This is a clear victory which proves that the Canadian position was truly in line with what Canadian producers want. I would say that, like the hon. member for Beauce, I am optimistic. I am optimistic and I believe all will agree that these negotiations which are beginning again will require compromising from everyone. This will lead to a settlement which could be near the Canadian position, since if we look at the two extreme positions, the American one and the European one, our position is in between.

So, what I would call the centripetal force, which is tending to pull toward the center, should bring people to be reasonable. And the more they will be reasonable, the closer they will be to the Canadian position. I am therefore relatively confident and I think we must look to the future with optimism, despite the problems. I firmly believe the GATT negotiations will end up with an agreement which will profit the Canadian agricultural producers, Mr. Speaker.

[*English*]

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise on debate to discuss this question of calling upon the House to take immediate action to deal with the drastically reduced farm incomes resulting from the 1990–91 crop year and to make required assistance available in time for spring planting to insure viable returns for grains, oilseeds and horticultural producers. I think this debate was initiated by the tabling of the estimates. In those estimates you will recall that the amount of new money being allocated to handle agricultural problems was set at $1.3 billion. Producers and politicians began to look at what was on the government's plate in the form of new expenditures. We see a bill that was subsequently presented to implement GRIP and NISA, to provide long term assistance to agriculture which would have swallowed a couple of deficits that are existing now by rescinding the WGSA account and the crop reinsurance account.

WGSA had, at February 1, a deficit of about $1.1 billion. The reinsurance account had a deficit of $471 million. We know that the Wheat Board initial price will create a bit of a deficit and a call for government assistance as well in the coming year, covered by this budget. That is expected to be somewhere between $.3 billion and $1 billion. As well there will be premiums for the new GRIP and NISA programs when they come into account.

Out of those expenditures of somewhere in the neighbourhood of $2 billion or $2.5 billion, to find where this $1.3 billion would cover all those things and still provide some assistance for the 1990–91 crop year. That crop year is going to be missed out, it appears. That was the reason, I suppose, that the Official Opposition wanted to raise it in its opportunity today for an opposition day.

The lack of funds for the farm aid program, which has been estimated at about $1.25 billion for a grain and oilseed industry right across the country, is something that is concerning farm communities and farmers in particular.

I thought what I would do, however, today is go back a little bit over the last decade and try to find out why it is that the 1980s were not been a particularly good decade for farmers and what the 1990s might hold for that sector of our economy. The eighties were hard times for farmers. We began the decade with net farm incomes in the range of $4.5 billion to $5 billion. In the last several years that means farm income has dropped to $3 billion or $3.5 billion. We saw in the committee stage of Bill C–98 some departmental estimates that put the coming year's net farm incomes around $2 billion or slightly lower.

We are dealing with net farm incomes that are less than one–half what they were at the beginning of the 1980s and a precipitous drop of more than one–third in this year alone. That is why this bridging money of $1.25 billion is being asked for.

I do not think we have to ask ourselves what that drop in net farm income will buy at the end of the eighties and entering the nineties as compared to what could be purchased with it in the early eighties. The buying power is down almost one–half. In fact, numerous observers have noted that a bushel of wheat this year buys less real goods than it ever has in the history of keeping records. Wheat is at the lowest price it has ever been in this year of 1991.

The question we have to ask ourselves is why is this happening. When we look at global output and think in terms of the old economic thinking where we use supply and demand to try to arrive at what prices are, there are no answers. The old market economics do not work in agriculture right now because when you look at the global output over the last three or four years, you will see that during three of those four years the world failed to produce enough food to meet global needs. Yet, during those four years prices continued to drop even though supplies were falling and the needs of people continued to grow as population increased.

• (1810)

Some economists will argue that that is because of differences between real demand and effective demand, the new population are all children and they do not have any money and, therefore, they cannot affect the market, which is true, but the facts still are there that the supplies are not meeting the demand and yet the price is falling. So we have to look at the market a little more closely than what has been the bent in textbooks.

You can see over the last couple of decades a fairly substantive shift and change in the way that a price is arrived at. We do not have world markets for agricultural products in the way that the textbook looks at a world price. What we have are markets that are very much adjusted and manipulated by active involvement by governments and by active involvement by very large multinational trading corporations. The two often, almost always, are working hand in hand to manipulate these markets and to keep the farm gate price relatively low.

To back that up, I would just like to go through the two major grain and agricultural producing blocs, the Americans and the Europeans, to show how their so–called price support systems work to achieve extremely low market prices or world prices. I say that in the context of a current situation where wheat at U.S. gulf ports is being exported at an effective price of about $80 per tonne even though the cost of producing that wheat in the U.S. is about $150 per tonne.

How does the U.S. do it, you ask. They do it by a system of support prices and loan rates that have been devastating for countries like Canada, Australia and Argentina, countries that have not got similar kinds of programs in place. They begin with a target price, just take it for wheat, where they attempt to have a target price for 1991 of approximately $4 a bushel for wheat in Canadian funds. That is the target that the government attempts to get the farmers and they come very close to it. Farmers have to sign up to the program and they have to comply with certain alleged or so–called restrictions to acreage. Those restrictions to Canadian farmers are a bit of a misnomer because when you look at the U.S. border between Alberta and Montana you will see that these restrictions to acreage, so–called, south of the 49th parallel have resulted in most of the grassland being broke up.

When you look at satellite pictures you will see that the 49th parallel marks exactly where grasslands start on the Alberta side and where farmland continues on the Montana side and there is no agronomic difference between those soils, the weather or anything else on either side of the 49th parallel at that point. Yet, the American farmers have found it profitable to break up those rather fragile prairie soils and put them into wheat

because of the program that the Americans are offering which is sometimes sold world-wide as being a program to restrict production. In effect, it has increased production and put soils into production that should probably never have been put into production.

What does the farmer do if he is an American farmer. After he has harvested his wheat he can take out a loan. The loan rate for this year of $2.04 American translates into roughly $2.40 Canadian.

In effect, the U.S. government has control of that grain at the loan rate. If the price goes up, the farmer can pay the interest and storage charges, buy it back and resell it on to the market. The reality is that there is enough wheat in the United States so that that very rarely happens.

Effectively, the loan rate becomes the price that the U.S. government turns into holdings, which it accumulates over time. The grain becomes theirs and it is then turned over to the multinational grain corporations to market outside of the U.S.

The price of that grain becomes the U.S. loan rate. Those multinational corporations found that the U.S. loan rate of $2.40 a bushel Canadian did not make that wheat really easy to sell. They had to compete against everybody else because the rest of us have cut our prices accordingly. They have convinced the government that they need a second tool, which is the Export Enhancement Program, whereby the U.S. government supplies funds to those companies which lower the cost to those companies by as much as $55 a tonne more.

Hence, the United States is able to offer grain out of the Gulf of Mexico ports at approximately $80 a tonne. Meanwhile, the Europeans have created a system, called the Common Agricultural Policy, which relies on a host of import levies and export restitutions. They try to keep their price of wheat to approximately $8 a bushel Canadian. Any grain products that go into the European community enter at the international price, which is generally considered to be the loan rate in the United States, plus a difference between $8 and that price.

Grain and oilseed products going into Europe have to pay this very large levy which goes into a fund and assists the European community to provide export restitutions to their farmers when they over-produce and have to sell some of their produce outside of the market.

As a consequence, the cost to the European treasuries are not very high, but the cost to importers is quite high. The effect on other exporters around the world is quite devastating because they use their restitutions to roll the price back down to the U.S. loan rate.

Everybody is happy in this system, if they happen to be Americans or Europeans, but the rest of the world is very unhappy with this system.

The multinational grain companies benefit. They do very well by it. They still handle their volumes. Forty per cent of their world trade is in U.S. wheat and grains. Approximately 20 per cent of their business is European grains. As a consequence, the synergy between the multinational corporations and the big power governments in this case has worked very well for them, but it has been pretty hard on Third World countries and farmers like we have here in Canada.

We have no ready way of being able to subsist against that kind of competition. It is often asked: "What can we do about this kind of system?" There are two answers that have been pursued, one with some vigour. There was a proposal which began in the Uruguay Round to try to limit these kinds of subsidized activities as they apply to agriculture. There was an attempt to include agricultural subsidies and trade in the recent GATT round.

That round fell apart in early December. It may be extended for another year or two, but so far that is depending almost exclusively on the reaction in the U.S. with its President and Congress. Currently, there are some discussions going on to tie the new fast track to the U.S.-Mexico trade arrangements so that the GATT fast track and the Mexican fast track will be together, which means that the President and his advisers will be able to use the good that the American economy will extract from the U.S.-Mexican arrangement in getting access to cheaper labour along with the further internationalization of its trade commitments under the GATT. The politics are that they are trying to tie the two issues together for fast-track purposes so that the growing concern in the U.S. about including agriculture in the package will not scuttle the fast track and with it any

agreement the President and his people might achieve outside the country.

• (1820)

The second thing that could be done which very few people are talking about would be to raise the loan rate. There is an awful lot of good that can accrue even to the Americans if they would raise the loan rate. It would reduce the amount of U.S. farmers' dependency on taxpayers. It would help resolve a very large government deficit situation that the U.S. finds itself in. It would reduce the taxpayers' liability and it would increase farm prices. It would not hurt the farmers in the U.S. but it would help farmers outside the U.S.

I contend that is one of the reasons why the U.S. is not doing it. What we have here is not market economics, as I noted earlier, but it is power economics. The Americans seem to want it, as do the Europeans, because they are finding the system works very well for them in international power games. It keeps the rest of the world quite dependent on their political actions.

The people who benefit are their own producers. The people who are hurt are the competing producers in other countries, and Canada is one of those countries being hurt by this program. The Third World countries are being hurt. Not only does this provide access to power on an international scene, but complying governments and complacent governments such as our own continue to go along with this international power game because the multinational corporations are good supporters at times of election. They supply them with free advice, or almost free advice. They pretend to supply them with jobs, always at the expense of local communities and farmers, and they argue that they certain things have to happen or food aid or world debt problems will not be alleviated.

Even on the domestic scene we have witnessed in just the last few years the use of political power over farmers by following and accepting this particular kind of economic gain.

The Canada–U.S. trade agreement was predicated upon this kind of thinking. GRIP and NISA which are supposed to be the key that will unlock our ability to collect third line of defence payments in emergency situations is that kind of program. It is called voluntary, but if one does not sign into the program and agree to fairly substantial levies over the years one does not get any assistance.

It is a little bit like having a gun put to your head by a person who says: "You don't want to commit suicide, do you?" And, if you shake your head, the trigger goes off and they say: "Sorry, he committed suicide". This is the kind of dependency that our government is trying to foster on our communities with this kind of program.

I think it is time we looked at the real solutions to world agriculture and returned to self–sustaining, self–supporting, self–sufficient agriculture, instead of the dependency that this government and other world governments are foisting on us today.

Mr. Brian O'Kurley (Elk Island): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to talk about this government's efforts to give Canadian horticultural producers income stability and predictability. The industry has a farm gate value of close to $2 billion and a processing sector of close to $1 billion and growing. This growth comes from a willingness to respond to the challenges of constant change. This industry is dealing with changes in market conditions, changes in consumer demands, changes in technology and changes in trading patterns. It has proven that it can respond successfully to these challenges.

The B.C. Wine Institute is a clear example of how this industry can turn a challenge into an opportunity. It has responded to changing consumer tastes and competition from imports by aggressively marketing premium B.C. wines under the the Vintners Quality Alliance. As a result, sales in December 1990 were up 61 per cent over December 1989.

What about growth in trade? Other sectors of this vast and diverse horticulture industry are also benefiting from increases in exports. Exports in floriculture and nursery products reached $204 million in 1990, compared with $171 million in 1989. The blueberry industry continues to enjoy a trade boom. Export sales in 1990 reached $23.5 million, up from $20 million the year before.

In 1990 we also exported more apples and apple juice, cranberries, peaches, onions, fresh tomatoes, cabbage and carrots, just to name a few commodities. In all, our fruit and vegetable sales to the United States alone increased to $328 million from $257 million between 1989 and 1990.

There is some exciting news in the processing sector as well. Canada's agrifood processing companies have so much confidence in our primary agriculture sector that they are making new investments. In the past two years some 50 new processing plants have been established, 54 have been expanded, and 26 new investments in modernization have taken place.

Our processors and producers are also recognizing that success comes with working together as partners. Producers need processors and processors need producers.

Ontario's vegetable processing industry is a clear example of the kinds of partnerships being forged. Growers and processors have developed a new bargaining and pricing system that has given the tomato industry a promising future.

Here is what Bob Kerr, a prominent southwestern Ontario grower, said about this industry during the recent annual meeting of the Ontario Vegetable Growers Marketing Board:

> I am really excited about the potential for growing tomatoes for processing. When I look around at all the commodities in Ontario and ask myself "where do I think is the most rewarding place to invest equipment and capital?", I would say it is the tomato industry.

When we review policy we see that partnerships in the agrifood industry have been fostered and strengthened in the past year, thanks to the government's agrifood policy review.

During 1990, more than 300 men and women from all facets of the industry worked through 11 task forces to put our agrifood policies under the microscope. Most of those task forces have submitted their reports and recommendations to federal and provincial agriculture ministers. When the ministers met earlier this month in Regina, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture outlined 12 areas where he believes action must be taken in the year ahead.

These include: properly launching a new safety net program, taking steps to enhance the competitiveness of the agrifood sector, freeing up the system by reforming regulations that have created barriers to competitiveness, broadening our agriculture base by encouraging diversification and value added production, strengthening our processing sector, reducing production costs right through the system, strengthening the management capabilities of our industry, expanding our efforts on the environment, looking at ways to provide adjustment support when necessary, strengthening our regions and rural communities, maximizing our trade opportunities, and aggressively challenging unfair trading practises that hurt our industry.

• (1830)

We have heard much about the safety nets. As members of this House know, the government has introduced the Farm Income Protection Act which will allow us to put in place new safety net programs. The legislation is now before the House agriculture committee. That legislation reflects a new way of thinking in the agrifood business because those safety nets, which I might say were designed in full consultation with producers, are part of a comprehensive strategy for dealing with a full range of farm income situations.

The Farm Income Protection Act will establish the Gross Revenue Insurance Plan known as GRIP and the Net Income Stabilization Account known as NISA. The federal government is offering to make GRIP and NISA available on edible horticultural crops in as many provinces as possible in 1991. We have a government–industry committee looking at strengthened stabilization programs for 1992 and beyond.

GRIP and NISA represent one part of a three–part strategy and form what has become known as the second line of defence. Under the first line, producers are responsible for effectively managing their operations. Government has a responsibility to provide an environment that allows for effective management and, to that end, the Minister of Agriculture wants to strengthen management capabilities by, among other things, introducing a national farm business management program. An industry–government group is developing details for this program, and a discussion paper will soon be circulated.

Until such a strategy is in place, the government is providing funding for the farm management initiative program. The government is also looking at the recommendations of the farm finance task force on providing stable, long–term interest rates and special assistance to beginning farmers. The government also wants to reduce production costs by improving producer access to farm chemicals.

One of the recommendations in the pesticide registration review deals with price monitoring. Work in this area has been fast tracked to ensure producers are not left at a competitive disadvantage with their U.S. counterparts.

The government also wants to put more emphasis on research projects aimed at lowering production costs. The GST is already lowering those costs, a fact that will become more apparent as farmers start making their purchases for spring planting.

The third line of this three-part safety net strategy deals with income situations that cannot be adequately addressed by effective management or programs like GRIP and NISA. A national horticultural safety nets committee is in place and is dealing with issues that span the three lines of defence. It is studying ways to enhance the long-term income stability of the industry and will submit its recommendations to federal and provincial ministers when they have their annual meeting in Alberta in July of this year.

The federal government is also working closely with the Government of British Columbia, the Okanagan Tree Fruit Authority and the B.C. Fruit Growers Association to look at what needs to be done to revitalize the tree fruit industry.

We also plan to work closely with the province of Ontario and its tender fruit growers in looking at long-term solutions to some problems affecting that industry.

In conclusion, clearly this government is concerned about the well-being of Canada's horticulture industry. We are taking the steps necessary to ensure its health and well-being in both the short term and the long term. By working in partnership with the industry, we are taking the action necessary to build a vibrant, durable horticultural sector for this decade and the 21st century.

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the speech of the hon. member opposite with a great deal of interest. I recognize that he has some personal interest in the horticultural sector. I applaud him for that because it is an important part of the agricultural sector.

The main part of the motion put forward today dealt with the government coming up with the required assistance in time for spring seeding this year. One of the things the finance minister, in his February budget suggested, was that there would be additional spending, $1.3 billion in additional funds provided for farmers in need.

In Saskatchewan where I come from, there are a large number of farmers in need, mostly grain producers. I realize the member opposite understands the grain sector as well as the horticultural sector. We have farmers in need who are looking for that $1.3 billion in funding that the finance minister has identified as money necessary right now for spring seeding.

The prairie pools have indicated that if we just take current market conditions, at least $1 billion is necessary in order to ensure that the farmers on the land in western Canada will have enough money to put their seed in the ground and harvest a crop.

The other part of it is the economics, the massive debt that exists in the agricultural sector: $22 billion now exists as the accumulated debt.

I would like to ask the hon. member opposite two questions. We have a massive debt on the prairies and a great need for immediate money, immediate funding. Would the hon. member agree that the money in the budget, $1.3 billion in additional spending, should be earmarked for spring seeding funding for grain producers on the prairies? Would he see an opportunity for the government to put in place a special interest program for farmers who are holding that $22 billion debt in the agricultural sector?

Mr. O'Kurley: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member identified a problem that is certainly an important issue in the region of western Canada, and in particular in prairies ridings where agriculture is an important pillar in their economies, as it is in Elk Island.

As the member from Saskatchewan pointed out, our agricultural sector is experiencing some very difficult times. Those difficulties are to a large extent created by the subsidy trade war between the European Economic Community and the Americans. Certainly it is important that the federal government play a role in addressing that very important difficulty.

The program that was set out by the federal government was a program to include the producers, provincial governments, as well as the federal government. It was also suggested with regard to immediate assistance prior to seeding that any assistance or any type of program

would have to be included in the proposed structure of the GRIP and NISA programs.

I am sure that the government of the province of Saskatchewan will be looking very closely at this issue. I am sure that it will be listening to farmers and trying address the needs of the farmers. I know that Premier Devine of Saskatchewan has done a great deal to address the concerns of farmers in that province. I know very well that he will be working closely with the federal government, with the Minister of Agriculture, with the province and with the farming community to ensure that those concerns are resolved.

• (1840)

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear the hon. member for Elk Island and the hon. member from The Battlefords this afternoon because I think they raised two very important points.

One was the point made by the hon. member for Elk Island about the horticultural industry. We know from those producers in Ontario who appeared here just last week that the shortfall for their industry is some $70 million just this year. That is just in the Ontario region. We know there are other horticultural producers in his constituency in B.C. and certainly in Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick where they are facing some very serious shortfalls because of the special circumstances there.

I wonder if the hon. member is as concerned as I am, when the Minister of Agriculture stands in his place and says: "Look, if the horticultural producers want help this year, they have got to sign up for the GRIP program in the future and indicate they are going to take the program". There is only one little problem there, and that is there is no GRIP program. The one for grains and oilseeds has been developed over the last 18 months by a very hard working group of producers and other officials over a long period of time.

The negotiations for having some kind of gross revenue insurance program, or NISA program, for the horticultural industry has just begun. They hope that by next year at this time there will be a program. That causes a problem.

How do you sign up for GRIP for the horticultural industry if there is not one? The minister is us the sleeves out of his vest. He is saying: "You sign up for GRIP and we will give you an emergency support system. The only thing is you can't sign up for GRIP because there isn't a GRIP for the horticultural industry". I am sure he is concerned, as I am concerned and the horticultural producers right across this country are concerned that they are not going to have any interim emergency funding.

The hon. member for Prince Edward—Hastings related this earlier this afternoon. Four of the prime producers in Ontario sat down last week and looked at their net losses for the last year which totalled over $400,000. The president said he lost $44,000 last year for the first time and it was the largest loss in a 35 year period.

There is great concern as to whether the government is actually going to come through with assistance for the horticultural industry. Likewise, there is very great concern whether there is going to be an immediate deficiency payment or support for the grains and oilseeds system.

The minister of finance in Saskatoon just last week said that there is no more money, that this is to support a number of deficit funds but left in serious doubt whether there is any assistance for emergency deficiency assistance for these those producers who are in the worst financial crisis of their lives.

Mr. O'Kurley: Mr. Speaker, I will do my best to be brief in response to the member's comments and questions. Generally speaking in the horticultural sector, there are some challenges which have to be worked through. I am sure he will recognize, as other members of the House will, that horticultural products fit into categories of edible products as well as non-edible products. When we are establishing a program we have to first recognize the distinctiveness of that sector of the agricultural industry.

Second, it is important that when we are designing a program, we design a long-term program which will ensure a certain sense of stability and predictability and that we do not go for the quick fix emergency funding that does not recognize a long-term structure and a long-term program.

The third thing is that it is important in establishing and designing these programs that we engage in full consultation with members of that sector to ensure we develop the most effective program possible.

Mr. Joe McGuire (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak to the House today about the concerns of rural Canada and primarily the concerns of farmers in farm communities.

A number of my colleagues have already addressed the general problems of Canadian agriculture and have spoken of the specific problems being found in the horticultural industry and the grains and oilseeds sectors.

In addition, there has been an extensive discussion of the safety net program, the national GRIP and NISA programs and a third line of defence. Therefore, I want to confine my comments for the most part to Atlantic concerns, especially those relating to my home province of Prince Edward Island.

Prince Edward Island is basically a rural province. Its economy is driven by two main industries, the farming and fishing industries. The economic health of the whole province is heavily dependent upon the state of these two industries, both of which are our primary industries.

The policies of this government since 1984 have made it increasingly difficult for these two industries to survive, let alone grow. Further impediments have been placed in the way of primary producers in their attempt to make a decent living. For example, in the fishing sector we have been confronted by a refusal to make adequate repairs to wharfs and to keep harbours dredged. The government has forced our lobstermen to increase the carapace size, posing a further loss on their catches.

The dockside monitoring program has now been forced through. Fishermen throughout the whole gulf area have objected to this program and the way the costs are being passed on to them but all to no avail.

In the agricultural sector, we have been confronted by increased user fees, increased inspection fees, cuts in assistance programs, increased crop insurance fees and a cut of $1.8 million over the past couple of years.

These types of policies have eroded the capability of our farmers and fishermen to make a decent living. When these policies and programs are combined with general weak economic conditions, recessionary in many parts of the world, with high costs of production, especially long-term high interest rates and with the increasing levels of competition from foreign producers, Canadian farmers are in extremely difficult times.

Add to that, the subsidy wars between the United States and Europe, of which we are a casualty, and the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, the result is that our agriculture industry is seriously adrift.

At this point, I would like to deal with a problem which directly involves the provinces of New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island and, indirectly, any other province which depends on P.E.I. for their supply of seed potatoes. The potato industry has long been the lifeblood of our agricultural industry in Prince Edward Island.

It has often been said that potatoes are to P.E.I. what wheat is to Saskatchewan. The provincial minister of agriculture made this statement just last week. Given the importance of the potato to the economy of P.E.I., it is not difficult to understand the degree of potential economic devastation being faced by potato producers on the Island. In light of the discovery of the potato virus PVY-N and the ensuing embargoes imposed first by the state of Maine, then by the U.S. department of agriculture and then by the Government of Canada and the Government of Mexico, it has pretty well frozen out all seed potato exports to anywhere in North America.

When producers were informed last October that the virus had been discovered, there was considerable concern among producers whose crops were infected. This concern turned to shock in February when the USFDA imposed a total ban on the imports to that country which meant that even those producers who did not have the virus were unable to sell any of their seed potatoes.

A modification of this ban left only Prince Edward Island seriously affected. The province of New Brunswick, which had three incidences of disease, was cleared.

Right now the industry in P.E.I. is in turmoil and it is feared that many farmers will go out of business. A severe eradication program has been agreed upon. This was a necessary first step, although a bitter one to swallow. A compensation package is now being negotiated.

I sincerely hope, as do the producers and those in related industries in P.E.I., that this compensation package will be a just and equitable one, that it will be one which will keep our growers in business and allow them to rebuild P.E.I.'s reputation of being the producers of

the highest quality seed potatoes in the world. After all, Island growers are the victims of the virus and not the perpetrators.

• (1850)

In view of the eradication plan already agreed upon, it is estimated that losses, whether through the destruction of crops or through drastically reduced prices for both seed and table potatoes, will be in the $25 million to $30 million range. This amount would be the minimum required just to keep the industry afloat.

We must consider the situation in the context of declining farm incomes. Agriculture Canada's estimate is that total farm income has declined by 30 per cent from 1990 to 1991. When we factor in the unexpected potato losses, we can see why the economic plight of potato farmers is so terrible, and we can see why the industry is in such turmoil.

At this point, when a compensation package is being negotiated, there is little point in trying to assign blame. We have to understand the position of those who are directly involved and who find their livelihoods in jeopardy. The question that is being asked by potato producers on Prince Edward Island is: where did the virus originate? No one seems to be able to tell the potato producers where the virus came from and how it arrived on Prince Edward Island.

One of the reasons why the seed potato industry has been such a success on Prince Edward Island is the very fact that we are an Island and it is easier to control disease when separated from the major land mass of the country. On top of that, the stringent inspection and growing standards that we have for seed potatoes, which were forced upon us especially by the European Economic Council, have resulted in the high quality of seed potatoes and the fact that we can export seed potatoes all over the world, to all provinces in Canada and to 22 states in the United States.

Where the virus originated is still a major mystery. Another question people are asking is: When did the officials become aware of its presence and, why did it take so long to react? There is a rumour this disease was discovered last June. Of course, the first question producers are asking is if it was discovered last June, why were the crops not immediately ploughed down in order to control the disease? Why then, as one farm group has asked, was the panic button pushed?

I think Agriculture Canada is well aware that PVY-N virus has been around for many years. Apparently it is all through the United States. It is widely spread in Europe, and there are instances of it being in the province of Ontario as long as 15 years ago. Why all of a sudden has the PVY-N virus become such a major issue? The thinking follows that the State of Maine, which has been harassing our potato exporters for many years on the border crossings and so on, has discovered an opportunity whereby it can take advantage of the P.E.I. markets if the P.E.I. products are eliminated.

It has used this as a political tactic. I think Senator George Mitchell is not shy about saying that he will fight for his people. The question we are asking is who is fighting for our people, especially when our department went to the United States and argued that its ban was unfair. Then in a matter of days it came back to Canada and, without consultation with the provincial government and the producers of Prince Edward Island, instituted the same ban.

The other question producers are asking is why were the producers informed so late in the game? If the producers had been informed earlier on, drastic measures could have been implemented much earlier.

In time, these concerns must be addressed. Hopefully, when that time comes, all our growers will still be in business and none will have to, as one grower put it, drop her keys on the banker's desk. This is one of the many grave problems facing farmers in every region of the country. Our farmers have done everything humanly possible to make our operations effective and viable. We are not competing on a level playing field. Other countries are taking steps to assure their food security. We have to do the same.

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member from Prince Edward Island that I enjoyed listening to his comments about Prince Edward Island potatoes. I certainly have a great love for your province. Prince Edward Island is a part of Canada that I, from Saskatchewan, enjoy visiting probably more than any other area of the country other than my own. I envy you the Island, to a certain extent.

P.E.I. also has a lot in common with Saskatchewan in that the rural nature of your province and the rural nature of my province are very similar.

The government is well aware of the problems that are being foisted upon rural Canada. Prince Edward Island felt the brunt of post office closures before any other part of this country, and now post office closures are affecting communities in my constituency and across Canada.

RCMP budgets are being affected. Emergency vehicle communications are being affected because of increased licence costs. One thing that I have just become aware of with the increased tax on reading materials, the tax on books, is difficulties at some of our regional libraries. I don't know if there are regional libraries in Prince Edward Island but there certainly are in Saskatchewan, and those regional libraries are now having a difficult time buying the books that are necessary to help inform members of our rural communities.

I feel very strongly that this government has launched an attack on rural Canada, with Prince Edward Island feeling it first and those of us in western Canada feeling it next.

My question is for the hon. member who spoke mostly about P.E.I. potatoes. I should mention before I put the question directly that I think Prince Edward Island potatoes are the second best in the whole world. The first, of course, come out of my garden.

Anyway, my question to the member from Prince Edward Island, Mr. Speaker, is; would he agree with me that there is an attack on rural Canada and it is starting with cutbacks in services and decreasing prices paid and attention paid to our primary producers who make up the backbone of rural Canada?

Mr. McGuire: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his complimentary remarks about my province of Prince Edward Island.

I would just like to say that the reason the potatoes in his garden are so good is because the seed came from P.E.I. in the first place.

A lot of Islanders in the past, especially in the 1930s, left P.E.I. and the other provinces in the maritimes, went out to Saskatchewan on harvest excursions. They stayed, made their living there, contributed very much to the economy and to the farming sector of Saskatchewan. One of those people included—and I hope he is watching today from the city of Calgary—is my uncle Ernest McGuire who left in the late 1920s, early 1930s. He is 88 years old, still hale and hearty and living in the city of Calgary.

To respond to the hon. member's concern about rural Canada, there can be little doubt that rural Canada is under siege. One of the main illustrations of that fact is what is happening right across Canada as a result of the free trade agreement with the United States. We find food processing facilities, especially in southern Ontario, are closing, and there is very little hope that these food processing plants will ever reopen. For example, Campbell's Food in Manitoba is closing and it will never reopen as a food processing facility again.

He also mentioned the closure of rural post offices. This hit Prince Edward Island extremely hard, especially recently with three additional post offices closing. This is cutting off in the rural areas one of the few federal presences existing in rural Canada and in rural P.E.I. It is just one example of how this government is contributing to the depopulation and the lack of hope in the rural areas.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): It being 7 p.m., it is my duty to inform the House that pursuant to Standing Order 81(17), proceedings on the motion have expired.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[*English*]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

AGRICULTURE

Hon. Ralph Ferguson (Lambton—Middlesex): Mr. Speaker, on December 17, 1990, I asked in this House if Canada has taken advantage of and is using the instruments available to it under the free trade agreement to call for consultations with the United States regarding the losses incurred by the Canadian Wheat Board and Canadian farmers for the 1990–91 crop year.

I am talking here about article 1804 in the free trade agreement that allows for the government to call for consultations on any other matter that it considers to affect the operation of the agreement. In this context, under article 701.4 of the free trade agreement, the United States is to take into account the effects of its export subsidies on other nations, and how it affects Canada, and to ensure that they do not prejudice our exports.

Therefore, I call on the government at this point to use the instruments provided for it in chapter 18 of the agreement to seek compensation for losses incurred by the Canadian Wheat Board and the Canadian farmers as provided for under articles 1804.3 and 1806.3 of that agreement.

Under these articles, article 705 in particular, there is a provision to open the borders to movement of grain between our two countries. It appears that Canada may be heading in this direction and that border opening may occur this coming crop year.

I ask the government today, because it apparently has not called for consultations, to consider instead revoking provision 705 of the free trade agreement because the United States is using its export enhancement program to buy its way into markets normally filled by Canada.

With the U.S. grain reserves at the lowest point since the early 1900s, there is no acceptable reason to have such low world prices and such high export subsidies. These prices are bankrupting our Canadian farmers and in no way do they reflect supply and demand. Rather, they are prices resulting from export subsidies, acreage set aside programs, deficiency payments, and corporate concentration in the marketplace.

I ask the government now to demand consultation with the United States as laid out in the agreement or withdraw from article 705 in retaliation.

When I see what is happening in the food processing industry with 22 food processing plants closing in the last 26 months in the province of Ontario, I say we have got to stop the haemorrhaging now. Thirty-two hundred jobs have been lost in Ontario alone. I know the government is going to brag about new plants and new investment in Canada in the food processing industry, but I have not yet been able to find out where they are. Perhaps I noticed a new chip wagon a year ago on the corner of Metcalfe and Laurier Streets. Is that a food processing plant? It is the only one I could see in the area.

We have asked the minister's office if it can provide information; we have asked the Department of Agriculture, but it has not given us an answer. Yet there have been 3,200 jobs lost in the food processing industry alone in the province of Ontario in the last 26 months.

Food production and processing is the foundation of this nation. If this government continues to allow those foundations to be undermined, the economy and the agriculture sector of this nation will surely collapse.

I spoke earlier this day about what is happening in the beef industry in this nation, the fact that the importation of no-rolled beef has tripled since 1989 through to the last year, an increase of 20,636,000 kilograms of beef into this country that is not graded. Our consumers do not know what they are buying. Consequently, it is a haemorrhage that has got to be stopped.

I suggest very strongly that because of the fact the minister apparently did not know what I was talking about on December 17 when I asked the question, asked him if the government would call for consultation with the United States into the export enhancement programs and the fall-out effect this has on our Canadian grain markets, I ask him to respond. If it has not made any decision or made any progress with the consultation process, I ask that it revoke Article 705.

The questions are: Has the government started consultations? If not, why not? If the consultations have not been successful, will the government revoke Article 705?

Mrs. Dorothy Dobbie (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has asked for assurances that the Canadian farmer will continue to have the support of the Canadian government. I am pleased to assure the hon. member that Canada will live up to its commitment to support farmers who are caught in the international price squeeze.

Since 1981 federal and provincial assistance to farmers has averaged $2.4 billion a year. This support has been provided through such programs as the two special Canadian grains programs in 1986-87 and in 1987-88 and

by the Canadian crop drought assistance program in 1988.

As well, in March 1990, the federal government announced a $500 million special income assistance program that was cost-shared with the provinces. Then on October 13, the government announced a new cash flow enhancement program which is expected to provide a benefit of $95 million in interest rate relief to farmers for the 1990-91 crop year. As of January 2, 1991, more than $1.5 billion has been advanced interest free under this program. On January 11, 1991, the government announced the details of a new generation of farm safety net programs which will go a long way toward easing the hurt that producers are facing because of this international trade war.

Bill C-98, the farm income protection act, will enable the federal government to implement the gross revenue insurance plan, commonly known as GRIP, and the net income stabilization account, NISA, which is now before the House. GRIP and NISA will provide an estimated $3 billion in benefits to grain and oilseed producers for the 1991-91 crop year.

The federal budget tabled on February 26 earmarked $1.3 billion to agriculture and this money will be allocated in part to pay for the government's share of safety net premium rates. Some of it may also be used to pay for a possible deficit in the Canadian Wheat Board's wheat pool account, a deficit caused by the excessive use of trade distorting subsidies by both the United States and the European Community.

While Canada can cushion some of its producers from the impact of the trade dispute, we cannot support our farmers to the same extent that the U.S. and European Community can with their much larger treasuries. Their actions are unfair and irrational and Canada must continue its aggressive pursuit of a fair set of international trade rules through the GATT multilateral trade negotiations.

Canada has also complained recently to the U.S. over the use of the export enhancement program. Through this program the Americans continue to subsidize grain sales to the U.S.S.R., China, Algeria and other major Canadian markets without the economic rationale of competing Canadian and EC exports.

The government opposes these subsidized sales and continues to work both bilaterally and through the multilateral trade negotiations toward their elimination. While we work toward that goal, we stand by Canadian farmers.

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Brian L. Gardiner (Prince George—Bulkley Valley): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to participate in the debate today and to follow up on a question that I put to the minister, the right hon. Secretary of State for External Affairs, on November 6 last year. It was in regard to questions I was pursuing with the minister about the softwood lumber tariff memorandum of understanding. I questioned the minister on this most important issue and debate to draw attention to how this government, in co-operation with the current Government of British Columbia, sold out our forest policy and the sovereignty and ability of Canadian governments to set policy in the forest area, in particular, when it relates to very important questions of stumpage.

• (1910)

What I was relating in my question to the minister at that time were questions I had placed on the Order Paper to attempt to get some indication of just how far reaching the U.S. commerce department and U.S. administration officials have come in trying to raise and control Canadian forest policy.

It became very clear from the questions raised on the Order Paper, the list of documents and information provided by the government over the course of a year or two, that the commerce department actually ended up providing some 60 directives, comprising over 250 pages of in some cases censored and blanked out orders to Canadian companies and officials. It is a pretty clear indication that we sold out our sovereignty on this issue.

Of course they had a hand in that from the premier of British Columbia who at the time said that the signing of this tariff was a great day for British Columbia. He was helped by the minister of trade, of course the now Senator Carney, who has left us in this ugly Catch 22 situation whereby thousands of forestry jobs in British Columbia and northern Ontario are being lost due in part to the tariff brought on by this government in

co-operation with the Government of British Columbia and signed with the United States government.

The important point I was pursuing was the question of sovereignty, the ability to set our own policy ourselves. I will cite three circumstances that I think the minister should consider in his current round of discussions, in his hopes to get support from the provinces to carry the fight to Washington.

Section 6 of the softwood lumber tariff memorandum of understanding allows the United States to question any policies that are pursued "directly or indirectly, which has the effect of offsetting or reducing the export charges or replacement measures". In my province a new stumpage regime was brought in. The commerce department took it so far as to question under section 6 when Canadian National Railways offered to reduce freight rates on lumber products as a violation of the memorandum of understanding.

In this particular case, I think I have applauded the government because it told the Americans to take a hike, that it did not apply.

Given the powers that obviously the Americans have interpreted in this section—and I hope we have some information on that when the parliamentary secretary responds—what other so-called indirect measures have been taken which may in fact have led to many decisions by this government, largely due to U.S. influence and how we signed our forest policy decision-making ability away.

I refer to a second measure which came late in 1986 when the Government of Canada exchanged notes with the U.S. government. Really the crux of the issue is the question of what is the determination of the replacement value with stumpage from the various provinces. The Canadian government has agreed with the U.S. government to impose an additional tariff again, if in fact the replacement measures, the stumpage systems which have been brought in, are actually reduced. This government has gone hand in glove with the U.S. commerce department in trying to implement this policy.

The final point is the side letter that accompanied the MOU amendments in late 1986. It is a letter signed by the then Secretary of Commerce and the U.S. trade representative and reads: "It is the understanding of the U.S. government that the U.S. government would have to approve any changes in the export charge or calculation of the value of any replacement measures. Any changes made without U.S. government approval would be considered a violation of the understanding".

This government, in co-operation with governments like the government of Mr. Vander Zalm, have sold out this country's ability to set its forest policy in particular on important questions like stumpage. We must at every opportunity now get out of the softwood lumber tariff so that we can set our own forest policy here in Canada.

Mrs. Dorothy Dobbie (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, on November 6, the hon. member requested the tabling of certain documents relating to the Canada—U.S. softwood lumber memorandum of Understanding. These same documents have been provided in response to a request under the Access to Information Act, but I will answer in some detail again.

Like any bilateral agreement, the softwood lumber memorandum of understanding includes a requirement for ongoing consultation. Under the terms of the memorandum of Understanding, Canada has agreed to provide certain information to the U.S. This includes the volume and the value of softwood lumber exports and the value of export charges paid, forestry regulations and statistics on forestry production in Canada.

Such an exchange of information in no way interferes with provincial rights to manage their forest resources. The government consulted closely with British Columbia and with other provincial governments before agreeing to the terms of the memorandum of understanding in the first place.

Most of the correspondence provided to the hon. member relates to routine matters. It is largely intergovernmental in nature, involving such routine things as settling dates and agendas for bilateral consultations or requesting information concerning the implementation of the memorandum of understanding. This can hardly be characterized as dictating how Canada manages its forest resources.

The memorandum of understanding does not give the U.S. the right to approve or disapprove changes in provincial forest management policies. In fact, provinces are free to implement changes to forest management policies as a basis for reducing or eliminating the export charge, subject to the agreement of the U.S. on the

values of such replacement measures in relation to the export charge.

When a policy change is made in provinces which have replaced the export charge, Canada and the U.S. must agree on the effect that these changes may have on the value of the original replacement measures.

On the larger question of addressing the memorandum of understanding itself, the hon. member will know that the Minister for International Trade is consulting closely with the provinces and the industry on this issue. The Prime Minister also referred in this House on March 14 to his productive discussion of the issue with President Bush on the previous day.

The Minister for International Trade has made clear the government's position. The memorandum of understanding never was envisioned as a permanent arrangement. It was understood during negotiations of the Canada—U.S. Free Trade Agreement that the MOU would not exist forever and that the government would want to revisit this issue.

Circumstances have changed significantly since the memorandum of understanding was negotiated in 1986. Stumpage rates have increased in British Columbia and Quebec. These provinces together account for 90 per cent of Canada's exports of softwood lumber to the U.S.

The value of the Canadian dollar has appreciated significantly, *vis-à-vis* the U.S. dollar since 1986. Canada's market share in the U.S. has dropped by six points from 33 per cent to 27 per cent. Based on a reasonable and objective review, the memorandum of understanding has served its purpose. There are no subsidies now to the Canadian lumber industry. The memorandum of understanding is being re-examined in consultation with the provinces and with industry, and a decision to take up the issue with the U.S. will depend solely on the outcome of these consultations.

The minister has indicated in this House that his first priority is to conclude these consultations, particularly with the four major producing provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec.

• (1920)

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. David Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, I rise today with regard to the decision which was taken by the Government of Canada on December 5 whereby the president of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation announced a $110 million cut to CBC. This matter has been raised on the floor of the House of Commons by my colleagues and I, too, raised it with the Minister of Communications on or about December 19.

In putting my question to the minister, I noted that the CBC has a particular role to play in fostering national unity. For those members who are present I wish to quote from a former Conservative Prime Minister who was very involved in the legislation leading to the institution of the CBC.

This is what the former Prime Minister R.B. Bennett said some years ago: "This country must be assured of complete Canadian control of broadcasting from Canadian sources, free from foreign interference or influence. Without such control, broadcasting can never become a great agency for the communication of matters of national concern and for the diffusion of national thought and ideals and without such controls it can never be the agency by which national consciousness may be fostered and sustained and national unity still further strengthened."

The CBC, from time time, has treated politicians, if you will, with disdain and perhaps rightly so, but one thing that it has been able to do over the years is it has given those regions of the country who wish to be part and parcel of a united country, an opportunity to show the best of what they have. In doing so, it has added immensely to national unity in this country. Whether it is in Sept-Iles, Sydney, Nova Scotia, Corner Brook, Newfoundland or Calgary or parts of Ontario, the CBC has been bringing information to Canadians across this country.

Our history tells us a number of things, one of which is that yes we are a large country in terms of its geographical mass, but population wise we are very small. We are also young in years in comparison to other countries throughout the world. Hence, the need for a very active, a very comprehensive mandate by the CBC.

The cutbacks at Sydney have affected us in an extremely negative way. Not only will individuals be losing their jobs—and I want to speak specifically to that in a moment—but it also precludes us as a people on the Island of Cape Breton from communicating in a profoundly effective way with other citizens of this great country. But little ought not to be made, in fact a great deal ought to be made, of those individuals who will be displaced by the Government of Canada's decision to cut CBC by $110 million. These are employees, most of which are with NABET, the National Association of Broadcasters, Employees and Technicians, who are going to be losing their jobs. Those of us in Atlantic Canada who have seen the erosion of VIA Rail, the massive cutbacks with regards to Air Canada, the gutting of the Atlantic fisheries and the over-all massive erosion of medicare and now another national institution is waning in the wind.

It is not overly appealing for the major centres of this country to learn that such far off places as Sydney, Nova Scotia next to my constituency and/or Corner Brook or Sept-Iles or Rimouski are losing their stations.

It must be said, Mr. Speaker, that what we are doing at a time when national unity has never been as important as it is today, we are helping to foster a belief in a view from coast to coast that the government is not really concerned about national unity. Because if it was, it would not be cutting away at those very same national institutions which foster unity in this country.

I would hope that the parliamentary secretary could rise in her place this afternoon and explain to my constituents why those individuals who were employed with CBC Sydney have lost their jobs; why the people in that community of a population of over 130,000 are without the facilities of the CBC. Yes, they have some reporting mechanisms to have a few news stories out, but it is entirely different from the way it was.

I am wondering, Mr. Speaker, if the parliamentary secretary could be candid enough to tell us the true reasons why the government has fingered this particular institutions in my riding for closure.

Mrs. Dorothy Dobbie (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to respond to the member for Cape Breton—East Richmond and I am glad to dispel some of the confusion he obviously has over the CBC.

All hon. members recognize the importance of our national broadcaster, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, in providing services from one coast to the other. I know that many Canadians were concerns by the December announcement of the CBC. The restructuring measures that they announced were approved by the CBC board of directors in an effort to bring the services they provide in line with what is available in terms of resources.

This decision was taken in order to avoid operating in a deficit in the coming year. The board's decision was acknowledged generally as being fiscally responsible. And I believe it is important at the outset to stress to the hon. member that no transmitter, whether it be radio or television, is going off the air. All of the more than 1,600 transmitters owned and operated by the corporation will continue to serve Canadians, including those from Sydney.

Radio continues to be deeply rooted in all the regions of Canada and it continues to provide service at the local, regional and national levels. This is as true in Sydney as anywhere else, and I am assured that CBI-Radio in Sydney continues to provide all the local programs which existed before this restructuring announcement.

Television complements radio. It has withdrawn from programming intended for purely local audiences to concentrate on regional, national and international programming; in fact, to deal with that very issue of unity that the hon. member has mentioned.

This means that in Sydney as in other Canadian centres, the local productions have been replaced by strengthened regional programming. CBC continues to operate a local news bureau in Sydney and to assure local news stories are part of the strengthened regional news casts.

It is instructive to note, Mr. Speaker, that CBC's total planned resources for 1991-92 amount to $1.4 billion. These resources consist of parliamentary appropriations and revenues. Since 1984 the CBC has been allowed to retain in full the revenues it generates from advertising, and these revenues are projected to amount to $354 million for the next fiscal year.

Despite budgetary restraint, the Government of Canada has injected more than $645 million in new funds into the CBC's budget since 1984. This is over and above increases for salaries and other unavoidable operating costs. As a result, the corporation's total resources have

increased by 33 per cent in the period from 1984–85 to 1991–92.

All federal departments, agencies and Crown corporations must do their part to deal with the current financial burdens and pressures on the government and on the Canadian taxpayer.

The CBC has experienced some reductions in its parliamentary appropriations. This is necessary. These reductions are extremely modest when compared to the large amount of public funds that the CBC receives each year. For example, the reduction to CBC's appropriation of $23 million announced since 1989 represents only 1.8 per cent of CBC's projected total resources.

As the hon. member is undoubtedly aware, the Canadian Radio–television and Telecommunications Commission this morning began a week–long hearing to examine CBC's restructuring activities. The CRTC will hear comments and concerns from more than 70 interveners, as well as the CBC, before it retires to consider its decision.

The Minister of Communications is following these proceedings carefully, like all interested Canadians, and we await the decision of the commission with a great deal of interest.

In closing, I would like to assure all—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I apologize, but the rules are the same for all members and your time has expired.

The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until 11 o'clock tomorrow morning, pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

The House adjourned at 7.30 p.m..

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, March 19, 1991

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

PETITIONS

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to several petitions.

[*Editor's Note: See today's Votes and Proceedings.*]

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BILL C-73

REPORT OF LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

Mr. Girve Fretz (Erie): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the legislative committee on Bill C-73, an act to provide for the dissolution or transfer of certain crown corporations and to amend certain acts in consequence thereof, with one amendment.

[*Editor's Note: See today's Votes and Proceedings.*]

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PETITIONS

VIA RAIL

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure this morning to present a petition on behalf of a number of constituents from Kamloops, British Columbia, who point out a whole set of reasons why they feel the government ought to be paying more attention to passenger rail service and point out how they believe VIA Rail service could be improved to compete with some of the European railways. They are simply asking the government to reconsider its decision to cut back on VIA Rail service in Canada.

• (1110)

PERSIAN GULF

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure to present another petition on behalf of a large number of British Columbians, particularly from the communities of Kamloops, Salmon Arm and Sorento, who point out a number of concerns regarding the situation in the gulf as it has occurred and as it is unfolding. They are asking for Canada's participation in a most positive way in the post-conflict period.

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso): Mr. Speaker, I have several sets of petitions today. The first set of petitions comes from constituents in my riding of Cape Breton Highlands—Canso, concerning the goods and services tax which my constituents still feel is an onerous and unfair tax and they wish to make Parliament aware of their ongoing opposition to this tax.

The petitioners are from West Arichat, St. Peters, and various places in my constituency. They wish to register their ongoing opposition to this tax.

VIA RAIL

Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso): The second petition concerns the elimination of VIA passenger rail service from Truro to Antigonish, Nova Scotia. The petitions come, first of all, from the students of St. Francis Xavier University, who are opposed to the government's decision to abandon VIA Rail passenger service. They point out that since that passenger rail service was abandoned over a year ago, the transportation needs of the students are much more difficult to meet. It is a burden on students in the area who want to leave on weekends because the alternatives to passenger rail transportation are much more expensive.

Another group of petitions concerning VIA Rail passenger service comes from the town of Antigonish. The residents of the town of Antigonish, more than one year after the elimination of this service, are still opposed vigorously to the government's decision and have shown up in large numbers to express their concerns by signing a petition to that effect.

Supply

FISHERIES

Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso): Finally, on a totally different issue, but one which the government still has an opportunity to correct before it is too late. This concerns the imposition of exorbitant dock-side monitoring charges to the inshore fishermen of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, many of whom happen to live in my constituency.

These charges are absolutely ridiculous, when it is considered that they come at the same time as fishermen in my area are forced to endure drastic reductions in their quotas and increases in their other costs. They are not only an imposition on the fishermen, they are also an unnecessary bureaucratic measure.

They call upon Parliament and specifically the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to rescind these measures before they are obliged to pay them. They have submitted their names, in large numbers, on a petition to that effect.

* * *

[*Translation*]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Shall all questions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S. O. 81—HEALTH CARE

Mr. Rey Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North) moved:

That this House reaffirm its commitment to Medicare.

He said: Mr. Speaker, medicare belongs to all of us, to all Canadians. It is shared by every member of this House and all of their constituents. Medicare is no less prized in Winnipeg North than it is in Kelowna, B.C., or Port aux Basques, Newfoundland. Medicare is the undeniable right of every Canadian citizen. It belongs to my sons, and their children to follow. It belongs to the children of the Minister of National Health and Welfare and to his colleagues and their children. It is perhaps the most precious thing all Canadians have to pass on to the next generation.

Medicare is not a partisan issue and ought not to be. It should be the issue of each and every one of us. I ask the members of this House: Will we now be the ones to see medicare die? For this reason, to allay the fears I and others have for the future of medicare, I have called for this opposition day motion supported by my associate critics, the members for Hamilton East and Mississauga, and by my other colleagues.

I want this government to reaffirm in the minds of Canadians that it is committed to medicare. I want to challenge this government to make its agenda known. We have proposed a motion that this House reaffirm its commitment to medicare, a very positive motion.

I want Canadians to see that the Liberal Party, of which I am the critic for health and welfare, cares deeply about the future of our health care system and that we still believe in its universality, comprehensiveness, portability, and accessibility, and that it is a system that has to be funded continuously, publicly, on a non-profit basis.

I hope today we will all openly declare our resolve to nurture medicare and not let it be trampled by short-sighted government policy or by lack of government initiative. What is at stake here is inconceivably dear. It is the one thing we have that is unique to every Canadian despite race or religion or region. Rich or poor, young or old—it is a birthright. I cannot reiterate this enough.

I hope members will all vote with conscience and listen to the things about to be said on each side of the House. Measure their value and remember very few matters concern your constituents the way health care does. It touches the lives of everyone. Those who do not protect medicare, those who do not reaffirm their commitment to our hospitals and nurses, doctors and other allied health care professionals, and to our sick, will be held accountable.

With this accountability in mind, I will proceed.

For months I have been watching the steam building on the issue of medicare. It started with the budget of last year. At that time the government put its first restraints on money delivered to the provinces for health care. Then came the introduction of Bill C-69, the complicated government expenditures legislation which slipped past this House into the Senate and was given Royal Assent early in February this year. This Bill C-69 launched a critical government-backed assault on medicare.

As the social and health care groups across the country can attest, Bill C-69 is a deadly bill for health care and other social programs. It freezes and cuts transfer payments, the moneys transferred by the federal government to the provinces to aid medicare, and post-secondary education.

It is my feeling that this fiscal change will cripple medicare. I can already see the end commencing. This bill passed into legislation was only a few weeks old when the new federal budget was released by this government in February.

• (1120)

As we well know, this budget further increased the freezes and caps on the federal money needed for provincial health care. An additional $2.3 billion was taken from transfer payments, an incredible sum. They cannot slice $2.3 billion from transfer payments without seeing health services suffer. It is impossible. I defy the government to tell me and the Canadian people that our hospitals and health care will be left unscathed. Impossible. The strain is too great.

Things are already beginning to crack under the pressure. A domino effect will be the result. Crisis after crisis, one test after another will assault a weakened Canada Health Act. It only stands to reason that without the federal money maintaining national standards will be an unattainable goal.

Right now the steam is continuing to build. Adding to the pressure was a particular meeting in the autumn of last year when western finance ministers grouped in Winnipeg, my home city, to lead very significant discussions about health care. While the theme was good, the potential results and the emerging results are ominous.

The western ministers agree the federal government should deliver transfer payments while relinquishing control over national standards of health care. We cannot allow that. The western ministers want disentangling of federal funding and autonomy for health care policy in the provinces. We have to maintain a national health care system in the country.

In December of last year came an announcement from the minister of health for Quebec that he planned to revamp his province's existing health care system. The main bone of contention, if I could mention one, in the proposed reform is a proposed $5 disincentive fee, which I prefer to call a user fee. This fee would be for non-essential visits to emergency wards.

When I posed a question to the Minister of National Health and Welfare on this issue, he said he would consult with his provincial counterpart in Quebec. Have we heard the response yet to date? I have not heard, but perhaps later in the debate the minister would be kind enough to inform the House.

To me this development is highly reminiscent of the early 1980s when user fees and extra billing threatened universal medicare. Sometimes it only takes a spark to light a fire. From east to west health care is coming apart at the seams.

In Newfoundland, 360 acute care hospital beds and 900 health care workers have lost their jobs. Finance Minister Kitchen told the Newfoundland legislature that he had no choice but to make the cuts. His province has lost $180 million in transfer payments in the past year. Who is truly the culprit? This federal government.

In New Brunswick, members of the provincial legislature are travelling across the province trying to find new ways to trim health care costs while meeting their

budget. Mr. Maher, the province's finance minister, has said he would consider farming out services. He also said New Brunswick would be one of the first provinces to reconsider seriously compliance with the terms of the Canada Health Act. That certainly is very ominous. I would like the Minister of National Health and Welfare to be prepared with his answer.

In Ontario, Minister of Health Evelyn Gigantes has been quoted as follows: "When it comes to over-all health policy, we have a lot of work to do. We know that certain populations, natives, francophones, multicultural groups, are not participating fully in the benefits this society makes available to others".

Meanwhile, the Ontario minister of finance said: "I think Mr. Wilson is making it very difficult for the provinces to maintain their commitments to medicare".

Ontario is currently spending 30 per cent of its budget on health care. Farther west, closer to my constituency in the province of Manitoba, hospitals have been told to slash their budget by $19 million. This announcement came from the provincial government last week. The province told hospitals in Brandon and in Winnipeg to shave operating costs. There is fear that beds will be closed and services cut. The hospitals may also be called upon to absorb any additional costs from the dreaded goods and services tax.

Saskatchewan, we all know, was the first Canadian province to obtain public medical insurance. That was 45 years ago. Who back then would have envisioned our hospitals of today where babies small enough to fit into the palms of our hands can survive and grow? But even Saskatchewan declared that its provincial medicare is facing cutbacks in health care services.

Alberta and British Columbia are perhaps the two provinces best able to meet national standards despite cuts in transfer payments. Yet their governments have made no secret of their interest in again charging user fees and of disentangling the federal hand from provincial health care.

In the northern communities, especially in the isolated Indian reserves or the villages of the Dene and Inuit, proper health care has often been lacking. Inuit babies are 28 times more likely to die in infancy than are babies in the south. Native Indian babies are 19 times more likely to succumb during infancy. Those death rates are Third World in their nature. The huge gleaming hospitals of the provinces, whirring with technology, are but a dream to these people. Medicare is a concept they deserve to know. That should be a government priority: creating services, not restricting them.

It would be scaremongering to say the rest of Canada could have their hospital care stripped away, but the reality remains. Daily our health care system is becoming more taxed and stricken with debt and fiscal restraint. The purchase of new equipment, even the maintenance of old equipment, becomes exceedingly difficult to fund.

Meanwhile, the largest health research funding agency, the National Health Research and Development Program, had its budget cut by $2 million this year. I believe research into new medicines, a more efficient health care delivery system and preventive treatments are absolutely necessary if we are to control health care costs, yet only one-tenth of all money spent on health is channelled toward prevention.

I believe, by not focusing more attention on prevention, we cannot hope to maintain services while coping with burgeoning health costs. Some costs of health needed to be addressed long ago. By not dealing with them, the provincial and federal governments have left themselves vulnerable to an impending health care crisis. I am speaking about wage disputes and high turnover of nurses.

On February 20, in a full-page ad in a local daily newspaper, the Ontario Nurses Association printed a letter entitled *Nurses Continue to be Taken for Granted*. I quote from this letter:

> Recession or no recession, the nurses have continually received short shrift in terms of financial remuneration. They have fallen further and further behind comparable workers. It almost seems that society considers them dedicated amateurs who neither need nor deserve full monetary compensation.

This full-page ad was a call for public support. Just like the nurses in Manitoba earlier this year, the nurses in Ontario are set for contract negotiations. They too are caught in the funding slash that denies them wages, of provincial governments which are unable or claim to be unable to meet their wage demands. The problems are already coming to fruition as qualified nurses become

harder to find. From every angle, from without and within, our health care system is being pressured.

• (1130)

I ask the government to turn its attention to hospitals closing beds due to lack of funds and to explain to patients and staff that transfer payment cuts are not a problem and that direct taxation by the provinces will fill the void.

Meanwhile, our nurses and doctors are flocking to practise in the United States. American companies hand out glossy brochures displaying sunshine and smiles. Money is not an object, the way it is in our country. More of the American Gross National Product goes to health care than that of any other country.

As our shortage of nurses becomes critical in Canada, we will see them disappear, beckoned south by higher wages and salaries commensurate with the respect they deserve.

There are other things as well: treatment facilities for new diseases and for the elderly. Care centres for the elderly are desperately needed as their numbers swell with the addition of the baby boom generation. These are problems we Canadians face today: beds closing, inadequate care, stressed health care professionals.

I challenge you, Mr. Speaker, to ask any American which country, our or theirs, has a better health care system. American will say Canada, because in Canada we are guided by five basic principles of the Canada Health Act: accessibility, portability, comprehensiveness, universality, and non-profit public administration. These principles ensure that every Canadian, rich or poor, has the right to proper treatment.

The United States has many beautiful facilities with technology that is the envy of the world, but those centres are for the people who can pay to be well. It is a two-tiered system of health care, where what one earns and where one resides determines the treatment one receives. Without proper health insurance, one accident, one disease, can destroy the life savings of a family, ruining their lives.

There are many issues in our health care system that need to be addressed. There are issues that have been left to fester and problems that are new today, but there is no question in my mind these problems must be tackled. But are transfer payment cuts the way to do it, or will that make the suffering worse? I submit that the suffering will be worse.

Some people believe the government will introduce new legislation to protect medicare, as was said in the budget, that the government will give away tax points to the provinces in exchange for the reduction in transfer payments. But I ask: What is the policy basis? Have we told Canadians?

The problem remains: What will happen to the have-not provinces? They do not have a tax base that can deliver more tax to them for medicare funding. Those provinces will have no choice, as was recently seen in Newfoundland, but to cut services.

There are two points which must be considered. First, medicare is slipping away right now. Beds are being closed. Without proper funding a breakdown is occurring. Only a renewed financial commitment to medicare will halt this collapse. Second, with the change in funding policy the government will lose the penalty measures for provinces not abiding by the Canada Health Act. It is imperative the government move to find another penalizing system.

Medicare is a Canadian institution that must be protected. It was promised to Canadians in 1919 by the Liberal Party. It was given birth by the Liberal Party and we would like to continue to nurture this great social program.

As I conclude, may I say I hope we can again find the support for medicare we had in 1984, only six short years ago. I would like to hold the minister of health to a statement made in the House on December 17, and I quote:

> One thing the (government) does is respect the Constitution of Canada. We respect the fact the delivery of health care services is given to the provinces within the confines of the Canada Health Act.

I pray this respect for the Canada Health Act is still part of the Conservatives' tenets. I hope the Conservatives and every member of the House will join me and my party in support of medicare.

I ask this House to reaffirm our commitment to this basic right of citizenship and move to address the problems confronting our health care system.

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to turn the tables and to be able to be the one posing the question to my hon. friend for a minute or two.

I have two questions for my hon. friend. I listened with a great deal of interest to his call for members on all sides of the House to support the motion. One assumes that was a sincere call. I want to ask the hon. member these two questions.

Is the hon. member aware of the fact that the motion he has placed today asking for support for medicare is put in the guise of an Opposition Day votable motion which, if passed, would be a motion of non-confidence in the government?

Second, is the hon. member aware of a single instance or can he cite a single instance where such motions have been treated in any other way other than as a motion of non-confidence?

Mr. Pagtakhan: Mr. Speaker, I must admit that I am not a person esteemed in procedural rules. However, we should go beyond the procedures and go to the substance of the motion.

To the specific question of whether it will be a non-confidence motion, I would leave it to the experts on rules. I would like this government to make its commitment during debate that in fact it is committed to medicare, that it will restore funding for medicare, that it will prevent the "Americanization of Medicare" as published by Frances Russell in *Canadian Forum*, and that it will prevent Ontario from potentially looking at user fees when Ontario says it will copy Quebec's new health plan. We do not know.

I would like the government to be concerned. In this week's issue of *Medical Post* the headline is: "Medicare Murdered". In this weekend's issue of the *Free Press* one focus article reads: "Budget may spell the death of medicare".

Without going to the refinements of procedure, I would really like to tell the minister that I offer this as a sincere motion. That is why I saw to it that we introduced the motion in a positive way.

I believe it is a non-partisan issue. I believe it is an issue for all Canadians. This House must support this motion if each member and each political party truly believes that we are committed to the continuing life of medicare.

Mr. Beatty: Mr. Speaker, let us get greater precision from the hon. member as to what he is expecting today. The hon. member cannot cite a single instance when a votable Opposition Day motion has been treated as anything other than a vote of non-confidence in the government, which would have the effect if the motion were to pass of requiring the government to resign.

Does the hon. member seriously expect that any government could support a motion like that, knowing it is treated as a vote of non-confidence? Again, can he cite a single instance where his party, when in power, treated Opposition Day motions which stem from the old motions of non-confidence in any other way? How can he be expected to be taken seriously when he calls on members on this side of the House to support a motion of non-confidence in the government?

Mr. Pagtakhan: Mr. Speaker, I think this side of the House and all Canadians are truly disappointed with this government because it is treating medicare with disdain. It is trying to kill medicare. By the year 2014, if we continue with the current trend of funding, medicare will be dead. It will be earlier in Quebec. It is estimated to be in the year 1995-96.

To the specific question of the minister—and I have the highest respect for the minister whom I have always held in high esteem—this motion has been carefully thought through and considered. We certainly would like the government to come to its knees and defend itself.

• (1140)

When we have listened to all the debating points, we will see. I challenge the government. Perhaps it is time we declare openly we have no confidence in this government because it is trying to kill medicare.

Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North): Mr. Speaker, I am quite fascinated by this whole motion put forward by the Liberals.

I must say that for once I agree with the minister. There is no question that this motion is being put forward facetiously by the Liberals in the hope that the government will vote against it.

I would like to ask the member how he can reconcile his position with the fact that the erosion of medicare was initiated by the Liberals. Read the budget of 1975 of the former leader of the Liberals, John Turner. He is the one who capped the transfer payments and brought in the whole business of block funding to get away from the partnership that was built with the provincial governments so that they would not be required to pay 50 per cent of the costs in the early 1980s.

The Liberals unilaterally moved away from the revenue guarantee which costs the provinces $1.2 billion every year in lost revenue for medicare. The Liberals did that. How can the member stand up and say the government is eroding medicare when the foundation for that erosion and abandonment of medicare was laid by the Liberals in those three instances?

Why did the Liberals bring in the measures which eroded the medicare system and actually brought in the foundation for the federal government to erode it?

Mr. Pagtakhan: Mr. Speaker, I am really excited that there is an active debate emerging on the issue. In fact, it is part of the rationale of why we decided to put this motion before the House.

We would like the attention of all Canadians focused on this, because if we review the history and the commitment of this government to social programs, we see that it has done away with many the social programs step by step.

Now, Mr. Speaker, through you to my colleague from the New Democratic Party who would like to pontificate and would care to forget the lessons of history, I am glad that today he did not say that the NDP started medicare. Once before, he did say that. Finally, he has learned the lesson that it was the Liberal Party in the 1919 Liberal convention that made a commitment to Canada to introduce medicare.

After we conceived the idea, unlike the NDP, we put action into it. We gave birth to it. After having given birth to medicare, we would like to continue to nurture it like a good parent to any child.

I think the hon. member forgot that the newest Canada Health Act was introduced in 1984. I do not know where his history book is. I ask the NDP to put on record whether he will join the government and defeat this motion. I would like him to say "yes" or "no" when his opportunity comes during debate.

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the motion before the House today is about medicare and whether Parliament continues to support it.

That is the motion, but the issue is something very different indeed. It is about truth and whether members on all sides of this House will deal openly and honestly with the challenges facing Canada's health care system.

In the exchange which just took place with regard to the nature of the motion before the House, we learned the facts. The motion itself is very symptomatic of the problem. What it does is demonstrate the tactics which are being employed.

On the face of it, it is a very straightforward motion calling upon members of Parliament to announce their support for medicare. The vehicle being used, as is conceded by the Liberal Party opposite, is a non-confidence motion. Were it to pass, it would require the government to resign. We can hardly accept this as an honest attempt, a straightforward attempt, on the part of the Liberal Party to encourage non-partisan all-party support for the principles underlying medicare.

The opposition parties say that they support medicare, and I accept their word for that. On this side of the House we also continue to support this country's system of national health insurance, although the Liberals and the NDP would sow false fears among Canadians and have them believe that the government has a secret plan to do away with medicare.

What evidence do they tender for such a claim? From time to time, it is simply unsubstantiated claims that some element of the free trade agreement which they have as yet been unable to find would require it. The fact that the free trade agreement does nothing of the sort has not dissuaded them. It is politically convenient to sow the seeds of fear.

More recently, they have added a new claim; that federal financing for medicare is drying up. It is a claim that is equally false and which becomes no less false with repeated telling. The most recent example of this tactic was reported in Saturday's issue of the *Saskatoon Star-*

Phoenix, which reported the deputy leader of the Liberal Party telling Liberals:

> —what we are really talking about here is a scheme to totally end federal payments for Medicare across the country.

Federal payments to the provinces in support of medicare take two forms—cash and tax points—which together will total more than $14 billion this year. Per capita payments will remain the same as last year, although total payments will grow by about 1.2 per cent. The latest scare tactic is based on the fact that since 1977 when the Liberals introduced the new formula for funding of medicare, the way in which Ottawa transfers money to the provinces has been shifting away from direct cash payments and toward tax transfers.

The net effect for both the federal government and the provinces is identical, no matter how the payment is made. When cash payments are made, the federal government simply uses money raised from federal taxpayers and transfers it to the provinces. When tax points are used, the federal government reduces income taxes in the province by a specified amount, and the provinces increase their taxes by an identical sum. Both methods represent a draw on the federal treasury and both put money directly into provincial hands to pay for health care.

[*Translation*]

This year, as I said before, transfers to the provinces will total over $14 billion, about $10 billion more than when we came to power in 1984. Of that amount, more than $8 billion will be in the form of tax points.

For Quebec, the figures are as follows: one billion dollars in cash payments and $2.5 billion in tax points, a total of more than $3.5 billion.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker, we cannot make the deputy leader of the Liberal Party give Liberals the straight facts. It is a matter for Liberals themselves to deal with. What we can do, however, is to make sure that Canadians as a whole are not misled.

[*Translation*]

Before the Budget was brought down, concerns were raised about the federal government's future ability to enforce national standards for health care as set forth in the *Canada Health Act.*

It was feared that if the federal government were unable to withhold payment of cash transfers to the provinces, there would be no incentive for the latter to observe the five basic principles; portability, accessibility, universality, public administration and comprehensiveness.

That is why the Minister of Finance announced that the federal government would amend the *Fiscal Arrangements Act* to allow transfers to provinces to be withheld for purposes of enforcement, if necessary.

This is a clear indication of the government's intention to maintain its authority to enforce compliance with the Canada Health Act.

• (1150)

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker, Canadians are passionate supporters of the system. From its inception, it has enjoyed support from all three of our major political parties and today enjoys the support of 90 per cent of Canadians.

Canadians are proud that each of us has equal access to medical care. They like it because they are free to choose which doctor to see and are entitled to a full range of services no matter what their level of income.

Canadians support medicare because they can travel anywhere in the country, safe in the knowledge that they will have access to the care they need, regardless of where they need it.

These principles have become part of how we see ourselves and how we distinguish ourselves from others. Medicare is more than just an issue in Canada. It has become a fundamental social value. It is, in fact, a social value that many other countries would like to adopt. A Harris and Associates poll conducted in the United States reported that some 61 per cent of Americans favour adopting the Canadian health care system.

A November 1990 study by the Department of Human Resources in Oregon, concluded: "The Canadian system is attractive to many American observers, because it combines capitalism with social responsibility".

Anyone who finds this hard to understand need only put himself in the position of one of the 37 million Americans who has no medical insurance of any type.

Has medicare improved the health of our population? Absolutely. At the time we introduced the first element of our health system, our infant mortality rate was running 40 per cent higher than Australia's, 30 per cent higher than the U.K.'s and 5 per cent higher than that of the United States.

By the end of the first year that the system was in place, our infant mortality rate was identical to Australia's and the U.K.'s and 10 per cent lower than that of the United States. Today our infant mortality rates are 20 per cent lower than the American rates and among the lowest in the world at 7.8 per 1,000 live births.

When medicare was introduced, we found that pregnant women started showing up a couple of months earlier for prenatal care than they had previously. The result is that our maternal mortality rates have dropped by a third.

It is not surprising that Canadians support their health care system, nor is it a surprise that all of Canada's political parties say that they support it too.

When I began my remarks I said that while the motion today was about medicare, the issue was the truth. By that I mean not just the false claims by members opposite that the government wished to dismantle medicare, but also whether Canada's political parties are prepared to take the measures necessary to ensure that medicare and our other social programs will still exist in the future.

In his budget, the Minister of Finance announced a tough plan to control expenditures at all levels, including money transfers to the provinces. Per capita payments under the Established Programs Financing will be frozen. Canada Assistance Plan payments will increase at a maximum of 5 per cent a year for the three richest provinces, although it remains uncontrolled for the other seven provinces. In order to protect those poorer provinces, equalization remains unchanged.

In total, transfer payments to the provinces will rise by 3.7 per cent a year for the next three years. We are not asking the provinces to follow any restrictions that we are not prepared to apply even more strictly and stringently to federal programs. Federal program spending will increase by only 3.4 per cent over the next three years.

From members opposite and from my hon. friend from Winnipeg, we have heard a great deal of apocalyptic talk: medicare is dead, they say. The sick and the poor will be thrown into the streets; the Canada Assistance Plan cannot continue.

The opposition would have Canadians believe that provincial governments cannot possibly bear the burden being imposed on them. We heard it again today from my hon. friend from Winnipeg. The facts, however, paint a very different picture. The restrictions on transfers this year will amount to one-half of one per cent of total provincial revenues. What the provinces are asked to do is to examine the other 99.5 per cent of their spending and to set priorities, just as we have done at the federal level.

If you look at all of the nations in the world which have publicly financed health care systems, you will find that Canada spends the highest percentage of GNP on its system. Each year we spend nearly $60 billion on health. The sector employs 7 per cent of our workforce, including 57,000 physicians and a quarter of a million nurses.

You can imagine my surprise when I heard members of the opposition state on budget night that medicare in Canada is dead. Indeed, my hon. friend from Winnipeg quoted an article from the *Winnipeg Free Press* of this last weekend suggesting that the budget could have killed medicare.

I would cite to him instead another article, an editorial which appeared in his hometown newspaper, the *Winnipeg Free Press*, on February 28, 1991, under the headline: "Medicare Still Lives", the first sentence of which reads: "The death of medicare instantly proclaimed by the Liberal Party's deputy leader, Sheila Copps, and others in the wake of finance minister Michael Wilson's budget is not after all imminent".

We can all choose to cite selectively what articles or editorials we would like to have quoted on the floor of the House of Commons. I would hope that when my hon. friend is reading his hometown newspaper, he would read what they say in their editorials as well as what they run on their op-ed pages.

It is simply not true when members opposite suggest that medicare is dead, but to survive it needs to be built on a sound economic foundation. Simply running up

ever-higher national debts will not protect medicare. Instead it will threaten its ability to survive.

All members of this House should know some basic truths. The first 36 cents of every tax dollar that the federal government raises goes simply to pay the interest on the national debt. In Ontario only 10 cents goes toward servicing the debt. Alberta pays 8.5 cents and British Columbia pays less than 4 cents. It simply makes no sense to have the federal government, which is already running a $30 billion deficit, borrow even more money to give to provinces which have much smaller debts.

Fortunately not every one has taken an irresponsible approach to this debate. Monique Bégin, the former Liberal health minister, speaking at a conference just after the budget was tabled, said that federal restraints would not end our health system. Frank McKenna, the premier of New Brunswick, showed that he understood the ramifications of the debt when he said: "The leaders of the 1960s and 1970s have placed a first mortgage on the future of Canada. The leaders of the 1980s and 1990s are placing a second mortgage on the same assets. There is no equity left. We must once and for all put an end to the suffocating debt load we are placing on the backs of our children."

The people I have quoted are not, to say the least, known for their support of the Conservative Party. What differentiates Madam Bégin and Premier McKenna from their fellow Liberals in this House is that they recognize that the cause of preserving medicare in Canada is not well served by inflammatory statements, wild hyperbole, and political gamesmanship.

The cause of protecting medicare will be best served if we can act today to control the deficit while maintaining the principles and the high health standards which have made our system the envy of the world.

I mentioned earlier that Canadians are spending close to $60 billion each year on health care. We are second in the world in the percentage of our GNP that we devote to it. But there is evidence that our large expenditures have not brought us the greatest possible return on our investment. Japan, for example, spends less at 6.8 per cent of GNP and yet they have better life expectancy rates than we do. Their infant mortality rates are 5 per 1,000 live births versus 7.9 for Canada. The issue is not whether we are putting enough money into health, it is whether we are using the money we have as effectively as possible. In many cases the answer to that question is that we are not.

We know that elderly Canadians with chronic problems are being kept in expensive acute care hospital beds because we have not developed less expensive, more effective options. We know that hospital stays are longer in Canada than in other western industrialized countries when both the procedures and the outcomes are virtually identical. We know that the number of doctors is growing three times as fast as the population. Most importantly, we know that it is infinitely cheaper and wiser to prevent injury and disease than it is to treat them once they have occurred.

The fact that we are not providing health services as efficiently as we might has a very real impact, not only in the quality of care we provide, but also on our ability to provide other services. Every dollar that is spent on health care is a dollar that is not spent on education, on job creation programs, on reducing illiteracy or poverty or preventing disease.

There is no reason to think that we can reverse the situation in the immediate future but there are changes taking place within our society that will bring new pressures to bear on our system.

• (1200)

[*Translation*]

We should judge our system not only in terms of its present strengths and weaknesses but also in terms of its ability to deal with new challenges such as an aging population, the surfacing of new diseases such as AIDS, and a constantly changing technology. Seen from this perspective, our system is far from perfect, and if it is to meet these challenges on a limited budget, improvements wil have to be made. The Canadian medicare system was the result of a consensus. A great deal of compromise and co-operation by the federal government and the provinces was necessary to get where we are now. Future challenges will require us to rediscover that spirit of co-operation and sharing.

[*English*]

We need to allocate our funds to prevent health problems before they arise, so that we make better use of services in the community and so we adopt only those technologies which are efficient and cost-effective and which produce real improvements to a patient's length and quality of life.

Some people argue that we should simply transfer all of the federal money to the provinces and give them *carte blanche* to spend without restriction.

I do not believe that it would be desirable for Canadians to do so.

For example, Preston Manning, the Leader of the Reform Party of Canada, believes the federal government should tax away the money from federal taxpayers, give it to the provinces and then have no say whatsoever in setting national standards. He is suggesting it simply hand over $14 billion with no strings attached. To my mind, that money gives Canadians 14 billion reasons to expect that the federal government should maintain the principles of medicare.

In the cold, hard language of dollars and cents, the argument is both logical and sound. If you invest money you have a right to say how that money is spent.

I believe the case for national standards is built on more than just an economic right born of a sizeable financial commitment. It goes much deeper than that. Canadians see these standards as a fundamental right of citizenship, one that reflects qualities and principles that are quintessentially Canadian: a belief in treating all people with dignity and equality; a commitment to fairness and justice; a conviction that economic freedom and a market economy are not inconsistent with caring and compassion for those less fortunate than ourselves.

By all means, let us debate today whether MPs still support medicare. We can even debate what the federal share of medicare should be. Most important, it is time for straight talk with Canadians about where that money is coming from, whether it can be spent more effectively and what share of our national wealth we are prepared to put into health care.

Sadly, answers to those questions were missing when my hon. friend from Winnipeg spoke in defence of his motion earlier today. Canadians have a right to answers to those questions to as subsequent Liberal and NDP members rise to speak.

Canadians are watching this debate and they are expecting much more from each of us than cynical promises that we will simply spend more of their money without having to worry about where it is coming from. They are too sophisticated to be fooled by political show games.

Those who love Canada's social programs must do more than simply love them to death. Just as we know you cannot spend yourself rich, we know that year after year of uncontrolled deficits will not make our social programs stronger; they can only threaten those programs' very existence.

That is the issue before the House today. The young people of Canada in particular ask for honesty from all of us when explaining how we propose to deal with these issues. It is not enough any more for this generation to continue to spend today and to simply send the bills to our kids. Already that debt of over $15,000 for every man, woman and child in Canada stalks the next generation of Canadians. It is time for us today to deal with that issue.

In the hours remaining in today's debate, let us put aside political posturing and let us have straight answers to these important questions.

Canadians have a right to expect no less.

Mr. Rey Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear the minister speak of the need for honesty in government and I challenge the government to live up to that call.

Speaking of honesty, I have here a write-up from the *Winnipeg Free Press* which says that apparently there is a secret Statistics Canada study. The article says the report may not be revealed yet in public but that it exists, and that 44 per cent of Canada's colossal $400 billion national debt is due to tax breaks for corporations and the wealthy, and that another 50 per cent is caused by the compounding growth of interest payments applied on interest. Only 6 per cent can be attributed to living beyond our means.

On this point, my question to the minister is: Is it true that there is such a Statistics Canada study and would he table that report in the House of Commons?

Referring to the editorial in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, which says "Medicare still lives and death is not imminent", I would say that in fact even the editorial, if you read between the lines, is truly concerned about the health of medicare.

In terms of creative proposals, I would challenge the minister today to undertake a commitment to this House, if he has not already done so, to look at the report by the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, *Is There a Crisis?*, released in June of last year, which examined the accessibility to hospital services. Has he had the time to study this document, and what is he prepared to tell the House today in response to the many recommendations incorporated in this document, including the creation of a national health care resource plan?

Those are my comments and specific questions and I would like the hon. minister to kindly provide this House with the appropriate answers.

Mr. Beatty: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member referred to what he called a secret report within Statistics Canada concerning the national debt. If such a secret report exists, it is a secret to me as well.

I very much appreciate my hon. friend raising the question because it gives me the opportunity to challenge him. He mentioned that a certain percentage of the national debt burden we have each year is coming from compounding interest on the national debt.

The obvious question this begs is: Who was in office as the national debt was driven up and as we found that year after year the national debt was being added to?

If you take a look at the period from 1984 to 1991, you will find that the government during that period generated sufficient funds to pay for all of its ongoing expenses. Increases in the national debt since that time have come as a result of compounding interest payments on the national debt.

The hon. member attempts to dismiss this as being unimportant or somehow irrelevant. The point is that today the first 35 cents out of every dollar that comes from Canadians' tax funds goes just to pay the interest on the national debt. That is before we have a penny for pensions, before we have a penny for medicare, and before we have a penny for assistance to the poor.

We see that figure continuing to grow. The real challenge we all face in this debate today is to be honest with Canadians and say whether or not we are prepared today to make the commitment to turn that around.

We will be spending over $40 billion this year on interest payments on the national debt. That is more than we have in the whole budget of National Health and Welfare. Imagine what we could do for health care in Canada if that money were available instead of going for interest payments on the national debt. Imagine what we could do for the poor, for illiteracy, for aid to refugees, for the defence of Canada, or for a whole range of other programs that we in this House believe in.

We cannot because that money is going to pay interest payments on the national debt.

The government has made its position clear; that figure must be brought down. We cannot allow Canada's social programs to continue to be threatened by an increasing debt load which each year reduces the amount of money available to the federal government to pay for these important services.

• (1210)

My hon. friend says that the *Winnipeg Free Press* believes there are challenges facing medicare. Indeed, so do I. Should all Canadians be concerned? Yes, all Canadians should take an interest in their national system. What we see are pressures on the system which challenge it around the world. If we are to preserve our system of medicare, it is important that we adapt to change and not simply live in the past.

The hon. member cites a Senate subcommittee report; yes I have had a chance to take a look at that. He asked me how I respond to it. I respond to that and to the issues he raises today in this way: It is important for all Canadians to set aside partisanship and to come together for a fundamental discussion on the role of health care and the promotion of health in our society.

We must ask ourselves questions concerning the percentage of our Gross National Product we are prepared to consecrate simply for the delivery of health care services, and how we want to use our moneys in the future most effectively. We must take tough decisions in some cases, tough decisions which were not recommended by the hon. member opposite. We must sit down and work together with all the stakeholders: the hospitals, the professionals, the scientists, governments and

consumers of health services to ensure that our system remains strong and improved for future generations.

Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North): Mr. Speaker I wonder if the minister could identify the speaker who said the following: "The Progressive Conservative Party is in favour of quality medicare, universal medicare delivered to our citizens. The problem arises because of unilateral and arbitrary cuts by the federal government to the provinces which are charged with footing the bill."

I have another quote from the same person: "National health care is not a political issue. You are entitled to the same kind of quality service irrespective of the place of residence. That may mean higher than 50 per cent."

In cases such as northern British Columbia, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, the federal share would likely be higher than 50 per cent. I will not even bother to test his memory regarding who said this; it was of course the Prime Minister in 1983.

What has happened to change the Prime Minister's mind in the last four or five years when he talks about not only a commitment to medicare, but a commitment to returning to the 50–50 funding formula?

Mr. Beatty: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member treats the debate on medicare as if it were a trivia quiz. It is something considerably more profound than that.

The hon. member raised questions with regard to the federal share of medicare, particularly in have not regions of Canada. He will be aware of the fact that the system was changed in 1977 to move to block funding under EPF. My friend from Winnipeg overlooked the fact that it was done at that time.

He will also be aware that in addition to funds transferred to the provinces under EPF, the federal government continues to transfer funds under equalization, which are designed expressly to ensure that have not regions of the country receive extra money to enable them to provide the level of services available in other areas of the country.

A good share of that equalization money can be used by those provinces in their health care system if they choose to do so. Because of the fact that the delivery of health care services is the responsibility of the provinces constitutionally in Canada, it is a decision which they take.

The federal government continues to make a key contribution to financing of health care in Canada; through EPF alone this year, some $14 billion. Again, the question which comes back to all of us, including my hon. friend opposite, is: Is it the position of our political parties that the share of the Gross National Product to health care can and should continue to grow without constraint, or should we be taking a look at the system and asking ourselves whether we can use the money more wisely?

If their answer is that it is time we begin to look at our priorities, then it is incumbent on members opposite to spell out those priorities in this debate, and not to play shell games with something as important as Canada's health care system.

Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North): Mr. Speaker, I am most pleased to be able to enter into the discussion in this House concerning medicare.

I would like to start off with disagreeing with my hon. friend who says that this is not a partisan issue. I think health care is very much a partisan issue. This is a place where it should be discussed on that basis. If he means partisanship by the different political parties, there will be different philosophies, different priorities, different points of view and different records when it comes to the support of medicare.

We in the New Democratic Party are not afraid to be partisan, to set out what our record is, and what our priorities and points of view are. We are not afraid to contrast the Progress Conservative Party and the Liberal Party.

It is very important that people have a historical understanding of what has happened to national medicare. National medicare was really started in Saskatchewan by Tommy Douglas. It was the New Democratic Party and its predecessor, the CCF, which was willing to take the initiative to stand firm in spite of difficulties with the medical profession and to introduce a universal government-sponsored medical program.

In 1964 there was the Hall royal commission which I think gave a blueprint for Canada's national medicare which was brought in in 1966. I would like to point out it was brought in when there was a minority government, when the Liberals needed the support of the New

Democratic Party in order to continue to govern. That was one of the prices the Liberals paid; the introduce of national medicare.

Medicare started on certain principles: universality, portability, public administration. It was also based on a partnership between the federal and provincial governments; a cost shared partnership in which the federal government, using its spending power, would give to the provinces 50 per cent of what they were spending on medicare. There has been an erosion of that partnership and of the principle.

I think it is important to document as to where this erosion started. It started most dramatically as soon the Liberals got a majority government. By 1975 the Liberals were determined to back away from their commitment of a 50-50 partnership.

I will refer to some of the budget of the then Minister of Finance in the Liberal government in 1975. It reminds me of, and I would have sworn it was, the current finance minister. It states: "The government proposes to set an example of restraint in this regard by imposing strict controls over activities and programs. All are directed to bring outlays under more effective control to slow down the rate of growth this year and into the future. Our target of cuts this fiscal year is $1 billion".

He goes on to say: "under the Act the federal government must give five years notice before the present agreement can be terminated and new arrangements undertaken. I therefore wish to announce that the government will give immediate notice of its informal intention to undertake these steps". That was the notice to get out of it. It was not done by a Conservative government. It was done by a Liberal government. That was the beginning of the erosion of the 50-50 partnership, right there.

The introduction of block funding in 1977 came out of that. The federal government had limited transfer payments and it forced upon the provinces block funding in which it was saying: "We will give you so much money and you are on your own". That was the basis on which future governments could then unilaterally pull out.

In the early eighties even the Liberals started to renege on their agreements under the block funding program.

• (1220)

They did it by withdrawing the revenue guarantee. They unilaterally withdrew the revenue guarantee, and it cost the provinces $1.2 billion a year in lost revenue directed toward health care. That $1.2 billion is an escalating figure because it cuts off the base. At the same time, they attacked other parts of the transfer by the six and five, which was more specifically directed to post-secondary education but had the cumulative effect of the moneys being directed toward health care.

What we have here is the example that the Liberals would have done the same thing as the Tories have done if they had only continued in power. They set the basis and the agenda. It is the Liberals who made the legislation possible. It is the Liberals who started the whole erosion of health care.

When the Tories came into power we got the 1986 budget with its freezing of the transfer payments to GNP minus 2 per cent, the 1990-91 budget and Bill C-96 which froze the transfer payments, and this budget in 1991-92 which extends that over a long period of time. What has happened is that the Conservative government only did what the Liberals taught it how to do. It may have learned to do it a little better, to cut the transfer payments a little more effectively and a little deeper, but it only followed what its good teachers the Liberals taught it.

We have to take a look at the effect of these cumulative cutbacks started by the Liberals and carried on by the Conservatives. Prior to the 1991-92 budget the parliamentary library documented the loss in revenue to the provinces. It was a cumulative loss in revenue of $22 billion. With this budget the estimates now are that there will be a little over $29 billion in lost revenue. We have to take a look at what this means to a number of provinces, particularly some of the have not provinces where there is a tremendous erosion of their ability to provide health care.

The loss of $29 billion also means that the federal government is no longer anywhere near that 50 per cent figure. The figures before this budget indicate that the

federal government is now contributing only 37 per cent both through the tax points and the cash transfers and that the provinces are in fact picking up 63 per cent.

Another thing that has happened is that the cash transfer payments to the provinces have been going down. The Library of Parliament documents again show that they have been going down dramatically, and the projections are that they will cease totally as early as 1995-96 in Quebec and 1997-98 in Ontario and be completely finished in the early part of the next century.

For a long time the federal government said that this was not going to happen, to start with. Then it said that it did not matter, but in its own budget it admitted that without that cash transfer payment it could not enforce the Canada Health Act.

Therefore it is proposing to amend other acts: the Financial Administration Act which has to do with equalization payments. The problem is that the three big provinces—Alberta, B.C. and Ontario—do not get equalization payments. The biggest pot of money that they would then have to start holding back would be from the Canada Assistance Plan. It would very difficult for them to justify the holding back of moneys designed for child welfare services, child abuse or income support programs because a province did not comply with national health care standards. We have not seen any great enthusiasm on the part of any federal government to enforce national health care standards.

I turn my attention now to some other things that must looked at when one looks at people's priorities, commitment and record in terms of medicare. We should look at what the provincial Liberal governments are doing? What is the Liberal commitment to medicare, when we look at the track record of Liberal provincial governments?

First of all let us take a look at Newfoundland. That province has closed 360 acute care beds this week, including closing acute care hospital service in Port aux Basques, which means that community must drive three hours to receive basic health care. There is no question of accessibility any more.

They are not living up to the spirit of the Canada Health Act. There is no accessibility. They have laid off 300 nurses or 10 per cent of the nursing staff. Is this the Liberal's idea of maintaining national health care standards?

Jack Harris, a New Democratic member of that legislature, asked Premier Clyde Wells if he would make the provision of national medicare and the federal spending cuts a national crusade and go across the country in order to save medicare. Of course, Premier Wells declined by saying it was not a priority for him. He talks about trying to save national unity, and one of the major components of national unity is our health care system: a national, portable health care system that is equally available to all people across Canada. He is not prepared to try to make sure it is not eroded.

Let us take the Liberal government in the province of P.E.I. Unilaterally it denies all women in that province access to a fundamental, basic health care service: abortions. That is the Liberals way of deciding universality and accessibility to health care. The Liberal government simply says: "It is not available, period". Is that a commitment to a national, portable, universal, accessible health care system? Is that the Liberal record? Is that the Liberal philosophy?

In the province of New Brunswick the Minister of Finance is saying: "Of course we cannot comply with the Canada Health Act and national standards. We do not have the will. We do not have the means". Basically he is simply saying: "We will no longer comply with the Canada Health Act". There is no commitment to national standards.

In Nova Scotia, not one of the four remaining provinces that have Liberal governments, what does it say? Minister of Health George Moody said: "If people want certain levels of care, maybe they want to pay an extra $25 or $30". He could not rule out that there would be more and higher co-pay charges to consumers, user fees. What is the record of the Liberal government in that province?

• (1230)

The Liberal Government of the Province of Quebec is on record as saying that it wants the federal government out of funding of national medicare so that it can introduce user fees. It is even willing to forgo some of the revenue, because it wants to introduce user fees.

What we have is a Liberal record that relates to how they are the responsible ones for eroding medicare at the federal level. Of course we can look at the provincial

level and decide what is the role of the provincial governments in how they interpret national health care standards. At the first opportunity they have simply backed away from them.

The Prime Minister was very much in favour and supportive of medicare when he was in opposition. He indicated that the federal government needed to maintain and restore its 50 per cent funding of medicare.

Let us not have blinders on and think there are not problems which the health care system in this country must address. Changes are taking place in health care across this country in which the federal government has to take leadership. It must work with the provinces to deal with them. I want to spend just two or three minutes outlining what some of the problems are.

Before I do, I just want to correct something I may have inadvertently said a minute ago, namely that the Nova Scotia government is a Liberal government. I believe that is a Conservative government, but I have difficulty telling the difference between Liberal and Conservative governments. When one comes from B.C. one has great difficulty because in B.C. we have this amalgamation of Liberals and Tories and they are called Socreds. We have difficulty sometimes distinguishing between a Liberal and a Tory, particularly at the provincial level.

There are three or four things that I think the federal government has to show some leadership in, in working with the provinces to deal with medicare. I see my time is starting to run down, so I will just mention them.

First is the changing demographics in this country with the aging population, where increasingly people are living longer and the elderly rely more upon our health care system. We have to resolve that by developing community based alternatives to acute, institutionalized care. That is something we all must do.

The whole question of high technology is expensive, often unproven, and sometimes leads to heroic interventions that do not either prolong the life expectancy, the comfort or the functioning of the person. We have to start looking at and dealing with when we actually use high-tech constructively to improve the health and functioning of people and when we simply say: "Look, it is not beneficial to the patient or to the total community to spend that amount of money".

Another whole area we have to look at is the question of personnel. There are indications we are training far too many physicians, that they are concentrated in urban centres, and that the rural areas of this country are not being served.

I want to go back to the Prime Minister's statements in 1983 wherein he talked about the need to restore the 50 per cent cost sharing, the partnership. He was quite passionate about it and said that was what was needed to restore the viability of medicare in this country.

Because of that, I think I would agree with him. Therefore I would propose the following amendment, seconded by the hon. member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley, British Columbia:

> That the motion be amended by adding the following words:
>
> "specifically its original commitment to restore 50 per cent federal funding for provincial health care costs".

If we are to have a commitment to reaffirm our commitment to medicare, we should do so in concrete terms, not simply in hollow rhetoric.

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I listened with a great deal of interest to my hon. friend. What particularly peaked my curiosity was his reference during the course of his speech to concerns that he had about the maintenance of standards under the Canada Health Act.

He made considerable point of the fact that the balance is shifting in Canada between transfers to the provinces in the form of tax points as opposed to transfers in the form of cash. He made it clear that he would prefer that those transfers take place in the form of cash.

What was most interesting though to me was he followed that by talking about the government's proposal that as we shift to tax points away from cash, we would be able to protect the standards in the Canada Health Act by being able to attach other funds transferred to the province. He attacked that proposal.

My question for my hon. friend is very simple. It is not what would be the optimal method of enforcing standards but his party, as will all members of this House, will be forced to deal on a yes or no basis with a bill which

will give to the federal government the ability to protect national standards by withholding other funds from provinces. How will his party vote?

Mr. Karpoff: Mr. Speaker, the whole question of how we protect national standards when the moneys are no longer transferred for health care is going to be a very difficult one. Our proposal is to reinstate the type of funding so that they then have moneys to withhold.

Mr. Beatty: How will you vote on the present bill?

Mr. Karpoff: I cannot speculate as I have not seen the bill. The minister wants me to commit myself to how I am going to vote on a bill. I do not know what the bill is. I do not know whether it is something that we would support.

We would support the reinstatement of the 50–50 funding, which means that there will be cash transfers going to the provinces. If they then do not live up to the Canada Health Act, the government has some moneys to hold. It is directly related to health care.

There are two aspects to this issue of enforcing national health care standards. There is one that the minister seems to keep looking at. He says: "We are going to call the tune even if we are no longer paying the piper. We are going to insist that provinces provide services even if we have pulled the rug out from underneath them in terms of money. We are going to say that they have to meet this national standard, but we are going to turn our back on them in terms of financing it".

What we have right now is not surprising. The financially disadvantage provinces are now backing away from provision of medicare that would meet national standards, because they are the ones who are financially under the most pressure. They do not have high employment. Let us take a look at Newfoundland. It has very high unemployment. They do not have the large numbers of people working. They do not have the industrial base of B.C., Alberta or Ontario to raise tax revenue. Yes, they are more dependent on transfer payments including transfer payments for medicare.

The federal government is saying to them very nicely: "You have to meet these standards, but we are going to wash our hands of any responsibility for your funding of them". I say to the minister that he cannot have it both ways. He can bring in all the punitive legislation he wants, but if persons cannot afford to meet those standards it is going to be almost impossible to force them.

Mr. Rey Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, when I was listening to my colleague from the New Democratic Party, I almost felt that we were in government. Of course we will form the next government.

• (1240)

He kept attacking the provincial Liberal ministers across the country. I ask my colleague from the New Democratic Party, since when has it become a virtue that you criticize the victims and not the victimizer? Have you not said during debate in the past that the federal government has been passing the deficit burden to the provinces, and now you say you are blaming those people, those ministers? Mr. Speaker, this is a classic example of double-speak.

Then he alluded to Ontario. I was glad. But he did not say that the Ontario government is now run by the New Democratic Party. Here is a headline from a newspaper: "Ontario looks to copy Quebec's new health plan". Part of this plan, as the member indicated, is the utilization of user fees. Are we going to see the NDP government of Ontario apply a user fee? I tell you, when the NDP provincial government of Ontario does just that, we will fight it.

I would, therefore, like to ask the member if he has spoken to his counterpart in his own party in Ontario.

My second comment is in terms of history because the member alluded to it, Mr. Speaker, that is, that we have to have an historical understanding of medicare and its documentation. I would like to put on the record, very briefly, that the first stage in Canada's national health insurance known as medicare, came with the unanimous approval of the Hospital Insurance and Diagnostic Service Act of 1957 by the House of Commons. Actually, the earliest record is before Confederation in 1832. Medicare as a national idea at the federal level, as a political issue, occurred in 1919 at the Liberal Party convention.

In 1939 we had the Rowell-Sirois report and then in 1947 Tommy Douglas tried to implement his program in Saskatchewan, and finally did so in 1962. In 1966 it was the Liberal government that introduced the medicare act

of 1966 and modernized it in 1984–1985. I would like to set the record straight. If we would like to study the history of medicare we must study it thoroughly so that we can tell Canadians how it has evolved.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I have to recognize the hon. member for Surrey North for two minutes to answer.

Mr. Karpoff: Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to say that I have spoken to the New Democratic Party minister of health for Ontario and I look forward in the next few months to being able to speak with the New Democratic minister of health from British Columbia and the New Democratic minister of health from Saskatchewan.

When we get three or four of the provinces, which will represent 50 per cent of the population, being governed by New Democratic governments, then I think we may get a sense of the difference in priorities that those governments may set in terms of health care.

I could get into a long historical debate with my fellow colleague about the position the Liberal Party took on health care, particularly his reference to the early days. I have a copy of the Liberal platform from 1921 and I could have sworn it was Michael Wilson speaking because it says: "In so far as may be practical, having regards for Canada's financial position, an adequate system of insurance against unemployment, sickness, old age, and disabilities". It includes all of the cop-out words "as may be practical", "having regard to Canada's financial position". That was in 1921. The Liberals never even bothered to put it into their election platform until 1949 and that was only because by then the CCF was starting to make inroads into the traditional Liberal support.

Our medical system in Canada is under tremendous pressure, and it is under pressure largely because of escalating costs at the provincial level and the withdrawal of financial support from the federal government.

I have enjoyed the discussion. I hope Canadians have been listening because I think it is important for them to realize that the only party which has always been firmly behind national medicare is the New Democratic Party.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The Chair finds the amendment moved by the New Democratic Party member in order.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Pagtakhan: Mr. Speaker, I would like to indicate to the House that we would like the next set of Liberal speeches to be 10 minutes and five minutes for comments and questions, with the permission of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Does the House agree with that motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The hon. member for Mississauga East for 10 minutes followed by five minutes of questions and comments.

Ms. Albina Guarnieri (Mississauga East): Mr. Speaker, since 1967 Canadians have been comforted by the knowledge that they could obtain the high quality health care services they need, irrespective of their ability to pay. Every Canadian, whether rich or poor, has protection from the medical cost of sudden illness. Of the current generation of Canadians, there is no one who has been turned away from a medical institution because of his or her inability to pay.

We have always believed there is a common starting line for free enterprise and competition; that everyone would be guaranteed an equal level of medical care; that someone's failure to compete in the business world would not impede one's access to hospital or professional care. Canada is a nation where a bad credit rating is not a health hazard.

It has been suggested that the U.S. offers a two-tiered health care system, one for the rich and one for the poor. In reality, it has a fabulous system for the rich, a mediocre system for the middle class and no system at all for 37 million of the poor.

Canadians today are beginning to see their own much-coveted medicare system looking more like its predatory counterpart south of the border. Those that have recently been ill or hospitalized will know that the quality of care in Canada has been deteriorating since 1984.

[*Translation*]

The lack of funding is such that the number of beds is dropping steadily. In January, one of my constituents had

a heart attack and had to lie on a stretcher for nearly a week. Why? Because of a chronic lack of beds.

Canadians are all aware of reports that at any given time, more than 1,000 people are on the waiting list for bypass surgery in Toronto.

In Quebec, people may wait up to eight or nine months for a bed. In Toronto, at the Hospital for Sick Children, 40 young patients had to wait up to eight months for open-heart surgery. Why? Because scheduled operations were constantly postponed due to a lack of beds. In most large cities, emergency wards often lack the capacity to take care of new patients. Why? Because of a constant lack of beds.

[*English*]

Emergency rooms in major cities often have no capacity to handle new patients because they do not have enough beds into which previous patients could be transferred. Wealthy Canadians, are choosing to go to the United States where they can receive immediate treatment for immediate cash.

It is small wonder that Canada's medicare system has fallen ill, for it is has been so under-nourished since this government came to office in 1984. At that time Canadians took comfort in the Prime Minister's declaration that "medicare was a sacred trust". They now realize that they should have put their trust in someone else. Some may even remember the present finance minister saying in 1982 that cuts to Established Programs Financing could have disastrous effects on hospital funding and on their operation. He went on to preach:

> Let us not make hospitals a battleground between the federal government and the provincial governments. Let us solve those problems not on the backs of hospitals, let us solve those problems outside of that arena.

• (1250)

When the minister took his new seat on the other side of the House, it is obvious he left his social conscience behind. Perhaps on election night he did not just see stars but saw stripes as well.

The Canadian medicare system has become the favourite target of Tory attacks since they took office in 1984. Cuts to Established Programs Financing have resulted in the inevitable destruction of the five principles of medicare. Universality, portability, accessibility, public administration, and comprehensiveness will all be an historical footnote if the Wilson fiscal knife is not dulled.

The spirit of the government's free trade agreement is embodied in its current medicare policy. We all remember American objections to our social program subsidies during the free trade negotiations. We also remember that the American Medical Association spent a great deal to dissuade the U.S. from ever adopting any kind of universal medicare.

According to polls, 60 to 80 per cent of the American public want the U.S. to copy the world-renowned system to which Canadians have become accustomed. The AMA is desperate to protect its $600 billion a year business. Our Canadian example is the AMA's greatest enemy.

Under the guise of fiscal restraint, the ministers of this government continue to divest themselves of programs that even they once called sacred trusts. Most cherished of all social programs, medicare is now certainly under the knife on the Tory trade table.

While inept on most accounts, this government has excelled in the art of camouflaging its real agenda, thus being able to slowly divest the federal contribution to medicare. In 1984 the Prime Minister boasted that Canada is open for business. Sadly, we find ourselves in the midst of a fire sale, the value of our social programs being marked down year after year.

In order to avoid public wrath, the government is gradually and deceptively passing the vast majority of costs on to the provinces. Continuing to promote the reduced deficit they have failed to achieve for the past six years, medicare and other social programs continue to be scrapped for parts. Instead of investing resources and devising policies to create wealth in this country, this government has chosen instead to sell off our social assets.

As the party that introduced national medicare to Canada, our commitment is as strong today as it was in 1966. With any system, improvements must be made. This requires innovation, foresight and direction. We do not advocate that money be mindlessly spent throughout the system.

On February 26, 1991 the finance minister introduced a budget telling Canadians they must pay their own way. We have been paying his way for the last six years.

This government tells us that the only way to bring down the deficit is to shred our social programs. The way to get out of debt is by creating wealth, by investing in people, in education, in technology, in research and in jobs. The 1.5 million unemployed Canadians are willing to make a contribution to Canada, and this government has failed to give them that opportunity.

The Canadian medicare system is increasingly mirroring the American model. Soon we may expect to see government ads for an American Express medicare card: "Don't get sick without it!"

The polls show that Canadians are wise to this government's tactics, and they will not be fooled again. Today we are asking the government to reaffirm the longstanding federal commitment to publicly funded universal medicare on a national level.

Canadians are watching their response from the sacred trust people. Medicare is one of our national treasures that Canadians will one day reclaim from our Tory pawnbrokers.

Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the member's discussion of national medicare.

Basically, I have two questions on which I would like her to comment. First of all, could she explain why the Liberal finance minister in 1975 pushed through a cap on medicare which led to the block funding formula of 1977. This was the backing away from the basic concept of 50–50 sharing of medicare with the provinces. Why did the Liberals and the finance minister do that?

Second, why in the early 1980s, did they back away from their own formula of block funding to the tune of $1.2 billion a year in erosion of payments to the provinces? Why did the Liberals do that? Why are their cuts different than the Tory cuts to medicare? They are about the same. It was $1.2 billion in the early 1980s as opposed to $1.1 billion by the hon. Minister of Finance.

Third, what is her reaction to the proposal by the Quebec Liberal government to introduce user fees?

Ms. Guarnieri: I am very baffled by this member's obsession with history and the past. I am more interested—

Mr. Boyer: We expect better than that from you.

Ms. Guarnieri: Unlike the member who is cackling right now, I am more interested in focusing my attention on what is being done right now and where we will be in the future. I think it would be more useful if we would put our industry into reviewing what is going on in this government, rather than the obsession with Liberal days that this colleague shares with members opposite.

I am more interested in reviewing the earlier assessment of the Minister of National Health and Welfare when he showed righteous indignation that Liberal members would put forward a motion asking the government to reaffirm its commitment to medicare. I fail to see the dishonour in members opposite voting with us on a motion that we have heard a lot of talk about which says that the Conservatives support medicare. We want to know, and Canadians want to know, exactly what are this government's intentions.

Mr. Boyer: You are playing a parliamentary game.

Ms. Guarnieri: No. We heard earlier that the Minister of National Health and Welfare said that we should put aside partisan politics. The motion is a good one. Admit it, and you will be a better person for it.

Mr. Boyer: It's a non-confidence debate.

Ms. Guarnieri: I do not mind the debate. I am happy to stay all day if I have to.

The Minister of National Health and Welfare, in an article I have here, denies that he ever made an allegation that the U.S. system has one system for the rich and another for the poor.

Does he believe that the poor in the United States have equal access to health care as the rich? If he does, will he accept that he is alone in that belief?

The minister says that the government is increasing the total level of funding by 1.2 per cent. He knows that in Ontario alone, it will rise 12 per cent just to maintain the same level of care as last year. Once again, we are asking the government to simply reaffirm its support. If it is not prepared to do that, it should resign.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): It being one o'clock, I do now leave the chair until two o'clock this afternoon.

At 1 p.m. the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 31

[*English*]

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Mr. Peter L. McCreath (South Shore): Mr. Speaker, many challenges face Canadians today. None is more compelling than the challenge to make Canada a society that is proud of its diversity, a society that is committed to the equality of all its citizens, a society, quite simply, that is free of discrimination.

The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, to be celebrated this week, is a time to review our successes and failures in combatting racism and racial discrimination in Canadian society. It is a time to renew our efforts in combatting this social ill.

The Government of Canada, through the Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship, works in partnership with key institutional sectors, such as community associations, unions, police departments, educators, the media and municipal governments, to highlight the importance of March 21 and the need to work together to end racism.

I am convinced that the will to make Canada a more just and equal society is present wherever Canadian values are held in high esteem. Ours is a country in search of lasting unity, and we can regard March 21 as a central building block in this process.

* * *

FORESTRY

Mr. Bob Wood (Nipissing): Mr. Speaker, the debate over national unity is having adverse effects on the economy of this country. The surtax of our softwood lumber export provides a glaring example.

The Americans, lovers of fair trade when they are beaten at free trade, claimed that our stumpage fees were too low and amounted to an unfair subsidy. Our response to this was to levy a 15 per cent export tax on our producers before the Americans could, instead of fighting this ridiculous claim.

I wonder if the Americans will claim that Mexico's cheap labour costs constitute an unfair subsidy when they conclude free trade talks with them. Better still, perhaps Canada should claim that the Americans are subsidizing all their industries because they have almost no social programs and, thus, are not on a level playing field with us.

Whatever the case, the point should be clear: By the U.S. meddling in our forestry practices and having their way with us, our sovereignty is becoming compromised.

We must balance the interests of all the regions of this country and build a consensus to forge ahead in our efforts to revoke this softwood surtax and strengthen our economy.

We must resolve the question of national unity and stand together; for today it is forestry, tomorrow who knows what it will be?

* * *

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, when the federal Minister of Finance refused to exempt books from the GST we said he was wrong. Now, as we predicted, the Saskatchewan provincial government is expanding its retail sales tax and is also refusing to exempt books.

This is shameful. The combined taxes will lead to fewer books being purchased and fewer books being read, particularly by young people. The provincial and federal governments must remove this hurtful tax from books immediately.

In my own constituency, the Lakeland Library Region reports that the two new taxes will cost them $20,000 in 1991. That represents one-half the book budget for their resource centre or one-third the budget for their 39 smaller branch libraries.

Regional public libraries provide equitable access to information and reading materials to rural residents. They are already trying to cope with decreased revenues. Unnecessary financial pressures like these regressive taxes that can be removed must be removed. The federal and provincial governments have no mandate to tax reading, literacy and learning.

S. O. 31

[*Translation*]

CANADA–U.S. AGREEMENT ON AIR QUALITY

Mr. Jean-Guy Guilbault (Drummond): Mr. Speaker, the Canada–U.S. agreement on air quality is the result of the very special relationship between Messrs. Reagan, Mulroney and Bush.

Since the two heads of State met in March 1985, striking progress has been achieved by this government with respect to pollution. Thanks to the co-operation of the federal government, provincial governments, industry and environmental groups, the Canadian program to control acid rain was successfully implemented.

The signing of the important Canada–U.S. agreement on air quality is a milestone in the history of environmental protection. This bilateral agreement establishes a framework for Canada and the United States to deal effectively with present and future air pollution problems involving both countries.

Mr. Speaker, this historic agreement sets forth clearly and concisely the commitment of both governments to dealing with the problem of air pollution.

* * *

[*English*]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, today a country is defined by its communications, by how and what it communicates. This distinguishes us on the global map. In this light, the CBC has a unique and dramatic role to play, providing the cross-country links that truly connect and reflect all of Canada and all Canadians from sea to sea to sea. With the exploding spectrum of program choices available all around us, today, more than ever, we must have that distinctive Canadian voice.

The CBC is more than a bottom line on a balance sheet. CBC is measured in terms of how it reflects local ideas and national ideals. Canada is rooted in the realities of its small local communities and its regions through their singers and performers, their values and stories. This then becomes Canada's national voice.

The CBC is critically wounded in its ability to ensure the development of Canada's national personality by the Conservative Party's unconscionable cuts to the CBC. This is why 11 members of the national Liberal caucus care enough to express their views today at the CRTC hearings on why a strong, local, regional and national CBC is needed now more than ever. It is a priority at this sensitive juncture in our political history as a nation.

The government should review its support for our national public broadcaster. Eleven cents per Canadian per day is very little for the cost of a bilingual radio and TV service across this land. I think it is worth at least that much to ensure that the hearts, minds and attitudes of our children and our future are that as distinct Canadians on the world map.

* * *

BANK OF CANADA

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, it has been said in many commentaries that the middle class is dying in Canada. I think there is a real understanding now as to why that is happening. Last night, when he was before the Commons finance committee, the Governor of the Bank of Canada defended his salary and increases for his senior officials, saying that they needed the money to attract top people. He himself earns a salary which is between $168,000 and $253,000 a year. That is an $85,000 difference between the top and the bottom level.

How can Canadians expect any fairness if the people who earn the most in our society have deliberately set up rules supported by the present Conservative government, often implemented in the first place by previous Liberal governments, which create secrecy around the salaries which are much higher than those of ordinary Canadians? The secrecy is not there to defend a postal clerk who might be earning between $23,000 and $25,000 or a clerk in the federal government who might be earning between $23,000 and $26,000. This secrecy is set there to defend the deputy ministers, the political appointees and those who give advice to this government.

It is time to defend all Canadians. Make all government salaries public for all Canadians.

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Mr. J.W. Bud Bird (Fredericton—York—Sunbury): Mr. Speaker, two days from now on the first day of spring the world commemorates and reaffirms its commitment to the elimination of racial discrimination. We in Canada are especially enriched by the many races and cultures which comprise our population.

Our government has established the legislative framework for a society which should become free of racism; most notably, through such statutes as the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Employment Equity Act and Canada's Multiculturalism Act.

There is still a sad reality, however, that racism and bigotry remain everyday facts of life. These demeaning attitudes violate the dignity of those they attack and they devastate the very fabric of our society.

It is time for each of us to recognize that diversity is the essence of Canadianism. It is the combination of tolerance, goodwill and respect for every citizen, regardless of race, language, colour or creed that makes us a distinctive society among the nations of the world. Multiculturalism is an asset that benefits every one of us, culturally, socially and economically.

* * *

[*Translation*]

DEBT SERVICING AND REDUCTION FUND

Mr. Gilles Bernier (Beauce): Mr. Speaker, I would like to read a letter I sent to Mr. Wilson, the Minister of Finance, on March 7:

> Mr. Minister,
>
> The Budget you brought down on February 26 proposed to create a special fund into which will flow net GST revenues, plus the profits on the sale of Crown corporations that will be privatized and all private contributions.
>
> All monies from the special fund will be used to pay off this country's enormous deficit.
>
> Mr. Minister, I am enclosing a personal cheque for $100 which I would like to see applied to the deficit reduction fund. I hope many more Canadians will do likewise, and especially members of Parliament.
>
> In addition to the taxes we pay, a joint effort is in order, and I am convinced that many Canadians would be willing to do their share.
>
> Furthermore, members of the Government and Parliament will be asked to accept a drop in income. I do so gladly, because I realize that the economic situation demands it. Next December, I will be glad to do so again.

Mr. Speaker, in concluding I would like to share with you an old Chinese saying: As the river returns to the sea, so what man gives comes back to him.

* * *

• (1410)

[*English*]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, our country was built and strengthened by communication links: rail, air, the post office and the national public broadcasting system.

During this perilous time when Canada seems to be slipping into a regional mentality, the CBC must provide a strong national voice and a sense of shared value and purpose.

[*Translation*]

Canada is a cultural mosaic that thrives on diversity. However, this diversity must be nurtured. If we do not know and do not understand our differences, whether they are geographical, cultural, social or economic, we lose our common goals as a nation.

Here in the National Capital Region, programming produced locally by English and French television networks has made it possible for Francophones and Anglophones in eastern Ontario and western Quebec to share what they have in common, to laugh and cry, and to live together in harmony.

[*English*]

CBC has helped us to show the country and each other we are more than a national capital. We are a vibrant community that is a microcosm of the nation.

The decision to axe local programming will diminish the important role of the CBC in our community and in all communities. Local programming is essential to Canadian unity, and we urge the government, which is busy dismantling our national institutions, to listen.

* * *

ATLANTIC CANADA OPPORTUNITIES AGENCY

Mr. Greg Thompson (Carleton—Charlotte): Mr. Speaker, small business in south-western New Brunswick got some welcome news this past weekend

with the announcement that the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency is setting up an office in the city of Saint John.

New Brunswick has 31 per cent of the region's employment and has netted 37 per cent of the $658 million ACOA has committed between 1988 and 1990.

This should go a long way to generating a stronger working relationship between the agency and local business interests. It will ensure the region and the province will continue to benefit fully from the many programs available under the action programs.

There is no shortage of good ideas in south-western New Brunswick. By taking this action, ACOA is attempting to bring a greater focus on the special needs of the region.

* * *

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Mr. Speaker, when the federal science minister appeared before the science and technology committee, he pretended that there was $1.5 billion in new R and D money, but later revealed that this referred to sub-inflationary budgetary increases over five years.

The minister then told 7,000 recipients of NSERC grants that many of them did not deserve the grant money. Today, we learn that one employee in 15 is interested in early retirement at NRC.

In fact, if everyone who wanted to quit were allowed to go, entire sections would be wiped out. This is how demoralized Canadian scientists are. They are sick and tired of a government which is destroying their mission, their grants and their jobs.

They are sick of watching R and D expenditures fall, and they are sick of watching the erosion of NSERC, NRC and the entire federal science structure. They are insulted when a minister who is supposed to be their advocate not only defends this sorry record, but obscures the real facts about funding levels and then adds insult to injury by kicking them while they are down.

[*Translation*]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Bob Kilger (Stormont—Dundas): Mr. Speaker, average farm incomes are expected to be extremely low in 1991 in this country, but this government is dragging its feet on the subject of helping farmers with their seeding programs. This is a recipe for disaster.

As far as prices are concerned, last year was a terrible one for producers of grain, oil seeds and fruits and vegetables. The result is that farmers need financial assistance to be able to seed their land.

Mr. Speaker, many producers have never faced cash flow problems of this magnitude.

As a result of government cutbacks, especially in support programs for 1991, we expect that total net farm income will be down 54 per cent. Our farmers have a right to know how the government will help them.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Mr. Denis Pronovost (Saint-Maurice): Mr. Speaker, this year again, thousands of Canadians will meet to take part in demonstrations throughout the country to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, on March 21.

This day is an important one, because discrimination still exists. Despite undeniable progress, Canadians have not yet managed to create a society that is consistently respectful of cultural, linguistic and religious differences.

We all have the same basic needs. We all need understanding, respect, friendship and equal opportunities, values that are essential to the survival of this country. And that is why racism, racial discrimination and racial prejudice must disappear in Canada.

Together we can build a society that is fairer and less racist.

[*English*]

CANADIAN COAST GUARD

Ms. Mary Clancy (Halifax): The Canadian Coast Guard inshore rescue program has existed for 14 years, providing both summer employment and a quick response prime research and rescue unit, but the latest budget threatens to change the entire character of the program.

It has been suggested that the qualifications necessary to work in the IRP will be eased in order to open the program up to career oriented summer employment plan jobs at a lower hourly rate and that the jobs will simply be opened up under a non-close up agreement, saving the ministry even more money per hour.

There are six IRP stations in Atlantic Canada, employing 36 students. They assist the RCMP and local authorities in the exercise of their duties. They conduct safety examinations; search for lost vessels; tows for vessels in danger and other distress situations.

These stations performed 250 rescues in 1990 from May until October and saved an estimated 30 lives.

The importance of this program and the need for trained and qualified personnel is clear. Therefore, I ask the Minister of Transport to carefully consider the Canadian and tourist safety and maintain the same high standards that the IRP has kept for 14 years.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*English*]

POVERTY

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

Yesterday we heard in this House that the government intends to spend millions of dollars to send propaganda information to households across this country to sell this government's disastrous budget and the GST.

Today we learn, in a report tabled by an advisory committee to the government, the National Council of Welfare, that in fact this government is the first government in history to pull back from its basic commitment to the needs of the poor.

I would like to ask the Minister of National Health and Welfare why it is that his policies do not support those people who most need our help and why his government is pulling back from its basic commitment to the needs of the poor and the sick across this country.

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, just the opposite happens to be the case. What we are determined to do is to ensure that Canada's social programs are founded on a firm foundation.

I want to indicate to the hon. member that simply proposing that we continue to pile deficit upon deficit, debt upon debt, without any restriction in the future, is the single greatest threat to the existence of Canada's social services network.

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): It is no wonder that the National Council on Welfare, the government's advisory body has said about the 1990 budget that it has reinforced the council's concerns about leaving social policy to the finance department. Is it not about time that the Minister of National Health and Welfare took his responsibilities?

I would like to ask him how he and his government can justify taking $865 million over the next two years out of the mouths of mothers and their children and those people on welfare benefits who most need the help. How can he justify an $865 million cut to those people who really need our help, the poor of this country?

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member is sincere when she claims to be concerned about Canada's children, she will be aware of the fact that every man, woman and child in this country has a debt in Ottawa of over $15,000. She may believe that the appropriate way to deal with Canada's children is for this generation to spend and for us to simply send the bill to our kids. On this side we do not believe so.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, I am talking about food for poor children now living in Montreal, Quebec City, and Chicoutimi.

I have a question for the Minister of National Health. If he really believes in the health of our children, why would he and his government implement this unfair policy over the next two years under which they are taking $865 million off the funds earmarked for poorer families only in Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia? Why is he taking this kind of action against the children of Canada?

• (1420)

[*English*]

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is the acting leader of her party. As such, one would expect that she would at least have some understanding of the subject that she raises.

She should be aware of the fact when she cites the province of Quebec that the restriction on the Canada Assistance Plan does not apply in the case of Quebec. It is totally unrestricted.

* * *

REVENUE CANADA

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Deputy Prime Minister. This question is about another of this government's inane economic policies.

Yesterday, in British Columbia, the Minister of National Revenue announced a program that actually encourages Canadians to shop in the United States. It amounts to a life in the fast lane program for a select group of shoppers who can pay an up-front fee and who have credit cards.

Why is the government putting into effect a new policy that will help the economies of Michigan, of Washington and of New York and has no new policies to help the economy of Canada, to help the economy of our own country?

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has as usual only partially read the announcement of the Minister of National Revenue.

When the Minister of National Revenue announced this pilot yesterday, the Pace Program, he mentioned that in the fast lane there would be random checks, there would be heavy fines, and there would be important sanctions against those who abuse the fast lane.

Therefore what the fast lane will do is make sure that Canadians now pay fully all their duties and taxes, something that did not happen under the previous government. Second, it will speed the flow of U.S. tourists into Canada. Third and most important, it will maybe encourage Canadians to shop in Canada.

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, this program at this stage applies only to Canadians. Instead of being checked each time they cross the border, they will just throw a little card in a box. That does not sound too strict to me.

Statistics Canada has reported that the number of same day car trips to the United States in January jumped 15.2 per cent above the same month last year. Retail analyst, John Winter, speaking of this increase, said it was directly due to the GST. He went on to say:

> This is bleak economic news for municipalities on the Canadian side of the border. But it is bonanza days for merchants on the other side.

Why does the government want to create an economic bonanza for merchants on the American side of the border rather than for those on the Canadian side? Has its policies not done enough damage already to merchants in our border communities?

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member would be the first person to stand up if we stopped every car for a half hour each and rifled through them. He would be the first one to complain.

The member also knows that the Retail Council of Canada asked us to come up with a scheme whereby we would start to collect fully all duties and taxes. This scheme allows that.

We have also been asked by thousands and thousands of tourist operators to make sure that the three-hour wait at this particular border crossing where we are doing the pilot is so long that American tourists are deciding not to come to Canada.

We are coming up with a scheme in which we can increase the flow and speed the flow as well as make sure that Canadians who return pay their fully duties and taxes.

BANK OF CANADA

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

The Governor of the Bank of Canada, John Crow, has run a monetary policy that has taken Canada into a recession, yet last night he refused to say even what he was paid despite his immense power. He also refused to say if his bank employees would be affected by the public sector wage freeze.

Crow's salary has to be approved by cabinet. The salaries of everybody in this House are known in detail. Why is it that John Crow's salary should be privileged and secret?

Would the minister also tell us if in fact the Bank of Canada is subject, as it should be for fairness sake, to the public sector wage freeze if the rest of the public sector is supposed to be affected by it?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I have communicated in a letter to Mr. Crow to discuss with him the application of the public sector wage policy. I can tell my hon. friend that the Bank of Canada will be subject to exactly the same rules as the Public Service will be in wages and salaries in the coming three-year period.

My hon. friend knows the policy that the government reached on salaries of senior public servants. We have set a range. The boards of directors of these organizations establish a level within that range which is subject to approval by the government, but the range is very clearly available and is subject to public knowledge.

* * *

CANADA ASSISTANCE PLAN

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona): Mr. Speaker, my question has to do with the report by the National Council of Welfare which calls on the government to rescind its cap on CAP, its cutbacks in Canada Assistance Plan funding for the provinces of B.C., Alberta and Ontario, in which it states that it is no time for cuts to our safety net of last resort.

The minister of health has defended this cap by saying that we cannot send the bill for the deficit to our kids. Will the Minister of Finance or the Minister of National Health and Welfare tell us why it is right to send the bill for the deficit to the 700,000 poor children who depend on the Canada Assistance Plan? Why is it right to send the bill to them for the deficit?

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, at least this hon. member, unlike the hon. member for Hamilton East, knows which provinces the cap applies on.

The premise of his question is fundamentally wrong. It is not our intention to send the bill to the unemployed or to children in Canada. The restrictions, in terms of transfers to the provinces over the coming year, will amount to about one-half of one per cent of provincial revenues.

What we are asking the provinces to do is not to penalize the poor or not to penalize the disadvantaged, but rather to look at the other 99.5 per cent of their expenditures and to set priorities in exactly the same way as the federal government has had to do.

* * *

CORPORATE TAXATION

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona): Mr. Speaker, what we would suggest is that the government send the bill for the deficit to all the corporations which have been receiving tax breaks over the years.

In that respect, I would like to ask the Minister of Finance or the minister responsible for Statistics Canada whether the government is aware of the study done by Statistics Canada which shows that 44 per cent of Canada's debt is due to tax breaks for corporations and the wealthy.

Apparently this study is so far a secret study. We want to know why it is a secret study, and we want to know when the government is going to release that study so that Canadians can see the big lie that exists behind this government's deficit reduction ideology and who is really at fault for the deficit.

Release that study, why don't you?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of any such study. My hon. friend has raised the question of tax preferences as it relates to corporations. I discussed these item by item in committee last week. I told him why the government has taken the position that if we followed the approach that the hon. member from Winnipeg is suggesting we should do, he would lose a lot of businesses in Winnipeg that

would move down to the United States. It is the same in any part of the country.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): My hon. friend is talking about a previous question. If he wants to ask a question on that, I would be happy to respond to that as well.

* * *

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Rey Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

In his budget the Minister of Finance cut $2.3 billion in cash transfers to provinces, much of which was for health care. This morning the minister said that he would compensate provinces with tax points.

Can the minister be frank with Canadians and tell this House today that tax points, particularly with the have not provinces, will not fully compensate for loss in cash?

• (1430)

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I am certainly very much in your hands. As the hon. member prefaced his questions saying that he was referring to a matter that was before the House in debate today, I am in your hands as to whether or not I should be responding to that question. I would be pleased to do so, although the convention in this House has been that matters addressed in debate are not dealt with during Question Period.

Mr. Rey Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, I think the subject has been discussed for many weeks. I would like to ask the minister the second question, if he does not wish to answer the first one.

Provincial ministers are not impressed with this minister's unilateral plans. Can the minister commit to this House that he will immediately consult with a view to reaching a consensus with his provincial counterparts, before going any further and thereby save medicare?

That was not asked in the question before us today.

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the same concern applies here. Notwithstanding the parliamentary conventions, let me attempt to respond to my hon. friend.

Mr. Speaker: If the minister does not wish to answer, of course that is the minister's right. The hon. minister has the floor.

Mr. Beatty: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to take advantage of the opportunity to try to put one of these shibboleths to rest.

The net cost to the federal government, the net benefit to provincial treasuries as a result of a shift from cash transfers to tax point transfers, is identical.

The hon. member asked whether or not I am prepared to consult with colleagues at the provincial level as well as to consult with people outside government. Of course I do that regularly, but the plans that were announced in the budget by the Minister of Finance is the announcement of the policy of the Government of Canada. It is important that we all work together to ensure the fiscal soundness of this country.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Albina Guarnieri (Missisauga East): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

Patients throughout Canada who need medical attention, such as victims of heart attacks, are already queuing up and waiting for costly operations. Some of them may have to wait for up to a week on a temporary bed. With a medicare system already on the decline, how can Canadians ever hope to have an effective system or even hope the existing system to survive, threatened as it is while the decisions of his government continue to undermine the institutions which Canadians hold dearest? How?

[*English*]

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member well knows, this year alone the federal government will transfer some $14 billion to the provinces for the administration of health care in Canada.

When she criticizes the delivery systems, for example in our home province, she is really criticizing the provin-

cial Liberal government which is responsible for administering those services.

It is worth while for the hon. member to note the fact that since we came to office increases in transfer payments for health care have been in the order of about $4 billion in Canada.

Ms. Albina Guarnieri (Mississauga East): Mr. Speaker, we have heard this minister's protest before. Tonight his bluff will be called at six o'clock. This government will have to vote against or for medicare.

During the first five years of this government, the average increase in established programs funding was 6.3 per cent, and yet the quality of care declined over the period.

Earlier today the minister repeated that his government's contribution to medicare will extend by only 1.2 per cent in the coming year. This can only accelerate the deterioration of health care services.

Why is the minister allowing federal support for medicare to erode faster than the rate of inflation?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. minister has made reference to a long-standing rule in the House that questions ought not to anticipate the Order of the Day. Despite that the minister has, as is his right and if he wishes to, responded. This question is clearly taken right out of the debate which has been taking place in this House. I think I have to say that it is out of order. If the minister wishes to reply he can, but he does not have to. I want to make it very clear that the minister does not have to reply.

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, precisely because of the information that was put on the record by the hon. member I want to reply. She refers to our bluff being called tonight at 6 p.m.

What members opposite, in the guise of a motion in support of medicare, are doing is proposing a motion of non-confidence in the government. In order to vote for medicare members of the government would have to be voting non-confidence.

Surely the people of Canada expect greater honesty and sincerity from the opposition than that.

Some hon. members: Hear. hear.

HEALTH

Ms. Joy Langan (Mission—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, my question is about the Meme breast implant and it is for the minister of health and welfare.

Over a million Canadian women face breast cancer in their lifetime. Twelve thousand Canadian women have received Meme breast implants. Forty cases implicating the Meme breast implant are currently before the U.S. courts. A Canadian woman from Delta, B.C. is before our courts in Canada. Surely the minister has some concept of all the horrors of cancer and knows there are serious concerns about the Meme implant.

Why then does the minister continue to refuse to order that the Meme breast implant be withdrawn from the market until all questions of its safety have been answered?

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Because, Mr. Speaker, all of the evidence available for the Government of Canada to date indicates that the Meme is equally safe as other breast implants.

What is taking place in the United States is the FDA is reviewing evidence with regard to all breast implants. We will review that evidence as well.

What we have done in Canada is commission independent studies, for example the Kerrigan report. Second, a study done by the University of Ottawa demonstrates that the Meme does not release carcinogens under conditions which are found in the human body.

We will be following carefully any new scientific evidence that is educed at any time, but based on the evidence that is available to the Government of Canada today there is no reason to believe that the Meme breast implant is not safe.

Ms. Joy Langan (Mission—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, it would appear that there is systemic sexual discrimination in our health care system. The minister is screwing up his face and saying that is not true, but I would like to ask a question.

When there is a stated health hazard in this country the minister and the health ministry act. On this issue consistently we have asked the minister to withdraw or to stop the use of the Meme.

If the minister is not willing to stop the Meme, is he willing at least to issue information to those who might get the Meme implant that it could possibly be dangerous? If he is concerned about all implants then all implants should have the warning.

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, of course I reject the very unfair assertion that was made in the premise of the hon. member's question.

The key issue is this: just because the hon. member makes allegations does not make those allegations correct. The obligation of the Department of National Health and Welfare is to weigh scientific fact. If the hon. member has any scientific facts as opposed to unsubstantiated allegations, let her bring them forward.

I have offered to all members of this House a full briefing by the scientists from health and welfare. I renew that offer to her, and I also invite her again to tender any information she has whatsoever that would suggest there is a lack of safety.

Second, she asks whether or not we are prepared to give information to Canadian women considering breast implants about the safety and effects of breast implants. Yes, we do that today by helping to finance a brochure which gives Canadian women that information.

* * *

[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Chairman of the Standing Committee on the Environment.

The Minister of the Environment told us on Friday that the environmental assessments of all government projects since June 1990 must be filed with the environment committee. This is a good initiative, somewhat surprising though it may be because as a member of that committee this the first time I hear anything about it.

Here is my question, Mr. Speaker. Can the committee chairman confirm that the committee was told about it and when? In addition, can he tell us whether he has received the funds required to do that job?

• (1440)

[*English*]

Hon. David MacDonald (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, to respond briefly, I am aware of the commitment because it was very clearly stated in the Green Plan, as confirmed by the minister the other day. When those preparations are completed, I look forward to receiving these studies. Obviously, if the committee is to do its work effectively in reviewing these important environmental assessments, we may need more assistance because I think this is a very important step in making sure that all of the Green Plan priorities are adhered to.

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Mr. Speaker, it is evident from the reply of the chairman of the committee that he found out about that responsibility at the same time as the rest of us did and that was on Friday when the minister announced it in the House.

My question, therefore, given the chairman's somewhat puzzlement, is for the Acting Prime Minister. Last Wednesday, the Minister for International Trade stated that it would be the height of nonsense to do an environmental assessment of the Mexican free trade agreement. On Friday, the Minister of the Environment flatly contradicted him, saying that it would be done. We have just heard the chairman of the environment committee respond in some wonderment at this infighting among dinosaurs.

My question for the Acting Prime Minister is this. In all of this confusion, who is speaking for the government, the Minister of the Environment or the Minister for International Trade?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, if my hon. colleague opposite had cared to listen to the comments I made last June it was very clear. This is not something I announced in the House last week. This is something that was made very public last June.

Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard): How come the committee didn't know about it?

Mr. de Cotret: It was made very public—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member has put a question to the minister and the minister is clearly prepared to respond. I am sure that hon. members would want to hear the minister.

Mr. de Cotret: It was made very clear the days following the cabinet decision to deal with this issue. Those assessments of environmental impact that deal with cabinet documents will be made available to the House committee on the environment, as we stated back then. The commitment stands, it is there and it will be done.

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AGRICULTURE

Mr. Lyle Vanclief (Prince Edward—Hastings): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. In Saskatchewan last week the Minister of Finance said the $1.3 billion that was added to the agricultural budget for this year had already been committed before the bridge financing, that is being requested by producers, had been met. The Minister of Finance also said that there is no more money.

Does the Minister of Agriculture still promise Canadian farmers that he will find that money for the bridge financing before seeding this spring?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to correct what my hon. friend has said. He obviously received some misleading information or else he would not have repeated that.

What I said in the meetings I had in Saskatchewan, Alberta and also in British Columbia last week was that there is an increase in the budget for agriculture of $1.3 billion next year. There will be a western grains stabilization payment. There will be transition to the new Gross Revenue Insurance Program and transitional costs relating to that. There will also be funds available for the so-called third line of defence, which was the topic of discussion among the agriculture ministers in Saskatoon a little over a week ago.

The final details of that third line of defence are not available at this point because we are still working on the details, but I am sure that my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, will be anxious to get that information out as soon as the details are ready.

Mr. Lyle Vanclief (Prince Edward—Hastings): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Minister of Finance.

The Minister of Finance said last week, in discussions at the same meeting, that the Canadian Wheat Board deficit could approach $900 million. The western grain stabilization payment is probably going to approach $400 million. The minister just stated that payments for premiums for GRIP will have to come out of that same $1.3 billion. The money is committed, and there is nothing left over if he pays all of those bills to cover bridge financing.

Will the minister stand in his place today and say that, if necessary, he will use government contingency funds to bridge finance producers for this spring?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member may try to draw whatever conclusions that he wants.

The facts of the matter are that there is an increase of $1.3 billion in the moneys that will be available for agricultural producers, principally in the grains and oilseeds sector. As I have indicated, as soon as we have precise numbers, the Minister of Agriculture will be getting that information out.

I do want to caution the hon. member on the use of some of the figures that are there, because some of those figures I did not use in my discussions with people in Saskatoon last week.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CANADA POST

Mr. Jean-Guy Guilbault (Drummond): Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister responsible for the Canada Post Corporation deals with the Corporation's decision to increase by as much as 500 per cent the postal rates for the delivery of regional newspapers.

This major cost increase may jeopardize a number of businesses, because they owe their cost effectiveness to the exclusive sale of commercial advertising. They will have no other choice than to pass this increase on to business people. Last week, two weekly newspapers in my own riding had to lay off 4 employees in order to make up for this increase in their costs.

Could the minister reassure the House and the business community that he will urge the Cabinet to reverse this decision, in view especially of the fact that Canada

Post is already competing unfairly with these newspapers for the delivery of circulars?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, the new postal rates my hon. friend is referring to have been in place since March 1st, except those which apply to weekly newspapers. These will only be applied as of June 1, 1991.

This increase in postal rates is the result of a change in the magazine distribution assistance programs. The Department of Communications is currently developing new assistance programs.

May I add that some time next month, representatives of Canada Post corporation will meet those of the weekly publication association to discuss the circular delivery issue.

* * *

[*English*]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Communications.

Last December, while the minister sat on his hands, the CBC closed 10 regional TV stations and threw 1,100 Canadians out of work. Yesterday, at the CRTC hearings, CBC President Gerard Veilleux revealed that the corporation faces a further shortfall of some $50 million and a further possible loss of 500 to 600 jobs.

I would like to ask the minister why he continues to refuse to meet with the CBC management to discuss these cuts, and why he has abdicated, essentially, all responsibility for the CBC. Can he assure this House that he will not allow future cuts to further emasculate the CBC and throw 500 more people out of work?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Mr. Speaker, hearings are taking place this week. I imagine we should wait until those are complete before making any further comment to what the CRTC might say.

I might say that back in February, Mr. Watson said that he did not feel the CBC needed more money. He said: "I am, frankly, embarrassed that we cannot manage on $1.4 billion a year. That is a lot of money."

We are all very appreciative of the fine work that the CBC has done through the years. We are deeply supportive of their initiatives, but frankly we should let them manage their own affairs. This is what you would expect us to do, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary for the pinch hitter for the Minister of Communications.

On the weekend, the Prime Minister promised to save Radio-Canada International, which is also waiting for the axe to fall come April 1. Can the minister confirm that the current funding of $20 million for RCI will be cut in half, and that the 14 languages that are currently broadcast will be reduced to four? Is this the Prime Minister's great promise of saving Radio-Canada International, to only sacrifice half of the 193 employees upon the altar of restraint?

• (1450)

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister did indicate on the weekend that the government intends to continue Radio-Canada International service. Details of how this will be done and the budget for the service are now under active consideration.

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[*Translation*]

GUN CONTROL

Mr. Benoît Tremblay (Rosemont): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Justice. On February 8 and on February 15, the hon. minister reiterated her commitment to go ahead with effective gun control legislation. My question is this: When does the minister expect to introduce this legislation in the House of Commons?

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I am looking forward to introducing this legislation in the House soon, in response to the Special Committee report and I hope that the House will continue its work on Bill C-80.

Mr. Benoît Tremblay (Rosemont): Mr. Speaker, I should like to know exactly when, for we know that if the Tory caucus is divided on this issue, the Canadian people are not. The people concerned are therefore worried

and wish to know when the minister will introduce the bill.

[*English*]

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, it is a source of great interest to us that even the tiny Bloc Quebecois caucus is occasionally divided on issues as well.

An hon. member: Never together.

Ms. Campbell (Vancouver Centre): Mr. Speaker, a special committee of this House engaged in a in depth study, not just of C-80, but also the entire package of proposals I put forward on gun control. I received the report February 15. I have now had a chance to review the report and work is under way. I have indicated that Bill C-80 lives; Bill C-80 will be acted on. I am hoping very soon to be able to present to the House my response to the report of the special committee and we can get on with second reading of Bill C-80.

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FRIGATE PROGRAM

Mr. Maurice A. Dionne (Miramichi): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Supply and Services. I am informed that the government will be paying about $100 million to the contractor of the frigate program to do the necessary translation of technical manuals.

The government, by using its own translators, could save at least $50 million. Why did the government not insist that its own translators from Secretary of State do the job to save money and to ensure a professional translation?

Hon. Paul Dick (Minister of Supply and Services): Mr. Speaker, the cost for doing the translation through the company which was set up by the prime contractor is competitive with the cost of doing translations within government and other areas.

I want to inform the hon. member that it is highly technical work and it seemed sensible to have the person who did the engineering and wrote the book in one language would also do the translation into the second language.

Mr. Maurice A. Dionne (Miramichi): That is as convoluted a justification as I have ever heard.

Is the minister satisfied that there are sufficient safeguards to ensure that taxpayer's dollars are spent wisely and prudently in this case? Can he explain to Canadians why a contract of such magnitude, even though it is technically a subcontract, was given without public tenders having been called?

An hon. member: I thought you supported the private sector.

Hon. Paul Dick (Minister of Supply and Services): The hon. member will be aware that the contract was given in 1988 to the prime contractor because the prime contractor wrote the manuals for the work he was doing on the frigates. They are highly technical manuals and it seemed sensible to also have him do the translation.

If the member is trying to say that he is against setting up a large translation firm in the Province of New Brunswick, why does he not say so?

* * *

HARBOURFRONT

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Public Works. The people of Toronto are now learning that as part of the government's plan to sell Harbourfront public lands, the Minister of Public Works intends to set up an endowment fund that a reputable accounting firm says is severely underfunded and inadequate, cut a special deal giving real estate developers a $36 million windfall, and sell out Harbourfront's parking facility to private owners.

Will the minister agree today to reverse his position on these three issues before it is too late, and do what is right for the people of metro Toronto and Harbourfront?

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): No, Mr. Speaker, we will not reverse the decision that was taken at Harbourfront.

We followed the decision of the royal commission on the future of the Toronto waterfront. In its publication of

last summer it stated the following in regard to what the government had accomplished at Harbourfront:

> The royal commission commends all three governments, the Government of Canada for leadership and the province, city and Harbourfront's board of directors for their co-operative support of the federal actions over the past year, and looks forward to the successful resolution of the Harbourfront situation.

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River): Mr. Speaker, I would say that the leadership is somewhat in doubt. The government says its actions are consistent with the McKeough report. Harbourfront's own directors do not agree with the McKeough report, city of Toronto council did not, and metro council wrote to this Parliament just three weeks ago to say that it had not been fully consulted, and objected.

Who is the minister trying to snow here about this agreement? He is not fooling the people of metropolitan Toronto. Why won't he take some action to safeguard Harbourfront's cultural programming and facilities and block this windfall to developers which will come right out of the taxpayers' pocket?

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): Mr. Speaker, the recommendation of the royal commission was to move planned condominiums—which were put there by the previous government, I might say—off the waterfront. This has been accomplished through negotiations, through the McKeough report, and through the work of Duncan Allan with the provincial government, who was then adviser to the Liberal government who recommended this.

These follow the Liberal recommendations from the province. They support the city of Toronto, who get 40 acres of park handed to them, which has been developed by the federal government following a promise of the Liberal government back in 1973 that it would develop this area and then return it to the people of Toronto. That is exactly what this government has done.

* * *

INDUSTRY

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. The minister knows that broken federal promises have killed Versatile Pacific and shipbuilding in British Columbia, laying off hundreds of workers who have no guarantees of severance pay, no adjustment compensation or retraining. He also should know that Polish crews are doing repair jobs at Versatile which should be done by Canadians.

Will any federal help be forthcoming to save Versatile since the government cancelled the *Polar 8* ice-breaker and has invested literally millions in the past which will be lost?

Will he also look into the protections and benefits for displaced workers who confronted him last week?

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): The hon. member should be reminded that since 1985 VPSI has been awarded approximately a quarter of a billion dollars in Government of Canada contracts to begin with. At present this company, as she knows, owned by Shieldings, is experiencing financial difficulties and has sought protection from its creditors. There is over-capacity in this industry; the government has a policy to deal with that. We have asked this company to step forward with a viable plan. They have not done so as yet.

But what we want to do is to see those properties properly used so these people can be employed. The government stands ready with an offer, our offer is still on the table as well as our adjustment programs for the ship workers.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture.

The Canadian Honey Council is concerned that the Minister of Agriculture appears prepared to allow the importation of Hawaiian honey bee queens this spring, even though there is an import ban on U.S. bees until December 31, 1991.

What assurance can the minister give Canadian honey producers that these Hawaiian queens will be free of the varroa mite, tracheal mite and other bee pests?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): I am sure the hon. member is aware that since the closure of the Canadian border to the importation of honey bees for Canadian use as a result of the infestation of the tracheal and varroa mites, it has created a hardship and indeed a difficulty for many beekeepers, particularly in the Peace River district in northern Alberta. They have made strong representations to allow the importation of bees from Hawaii which are not infested with the tracheal and varroa mite. In that connection, we commissioned a group of experts from

Agriculture Canada and the Alberta Department of Agriculture, along with other specialists, to go to Hawaii to determine whether it was in fact feasible. They have really found no technical reason for not bringing in honey bees from Hawaii.

• (1500)

We are looking at that and hope that we will be able to put in place the appropriate kind of protocol so that these beekeepers who are faced with having to bring in bees from New Zealand and Australia at considerable expense will be able to be accommodated. It is in that spirit that we are responding to this issue.

I will give the hon. member the assurance that we will ensure that the integrity of the bee population in Canada will be preserved.

* * *

POINT OF ORDER

ALLOTTED DAY

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona): Mr. Speaker, I understood that there was a point of privilege, but with respect to my point of order, the Minister of National Health and Welfare said in the House in answer to a question that the motion before the House on supply day was a matter of non-confidence. Ever since the adoption of the McGrath committee report, these motions have not been matters of non-confidence. The language of confidence was taken out of the Standing Orders precisely so that motions of this kind would not be regarded as motions of confidence or non-confidence by either government or opposition.

I call to your attention the day that we unanimously passed a motion, exactly the same kind of motion, having to do with the preservation of South Moresby.

Is the government saying that it should have fallen on that day because we unanimously adopted a motion of this kind? Not so. The same thing applies today. We could adopt this motion unanimously affirming medicare. The government refuses to do that. But do not let them hide behind the Standing Orders.

Point of Order

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, there is no attempt to hide behind Standing Orders. There is an attempt to follow the Standing Orders on this side of the House.

An hon. member: Bull.

Mr. Andre: The hon. member should clean up his language a little bit and perhaps do the courtesy of being civil enough to listen.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member has risen on a point of order. The hon. government House leader is replying. I know all hon. members would want to give him the courtesy of being able to make his reply.

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, as you know, allotted days for the business of supply, which is what opposition days are officially called, are a replacement for a previous practice of some years now, back prior to 1969, where in fulfilling the fundamental purpose of Parliament, namely challenging the question of supply, members used to challenge the Appropriations Act, indicating their concern or objection to various items within the Appropriations Act.

For reasons of efficiency or what have you in the House of Commons, those rules were changed in 1969 and the opposition was allotted certain days for which they could put down motions to challenge items in the Appropriations Act which were, by definition, matters of confidence; that is, appropriations by the government goes to the fundamentals of what Parliament is all about.

Supply is what this place is all about.

The hon. member sits in his seat and keeps barking. Why will he not do the courtesy of allowing me to reply to his point of order. He shouts profanities and he shouts from his seat as opposed to listening.

If the hon. member were raising in more temperate tones the concern about whether in fact these motions, in the way they are worded, in fact meet that purpose any longer, I think that would be a valuable discussion.

I would ask him to consider that taking his suggestion, his declaration, at face value will then have in essence removed from the procedures of Parliament the one mechanism wherein Parliament challenges the appropriations government asks of this House. That is the purpose of—

Mr. Blaikie: Why don't you tell the truth. That's not true.

Mr. Andre: The hon. member sits there shouting from his seat. He is—

An hon. member: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. minister has the floor.

Mr. Andre: As I was attempting to say, in moderate terms, the purpose of this place is the appropriation of supply. The opposition, in challenging that, is fulfilling its role as the loyal opposition in challenging the government. To suggest that we remove totally from our Standing Orders any implication of challenge to supply in these opposition motions on allotted days is a suggestion that goes right to the root of what we are all about. It is certainly worthy of discussion. Things have changed; we have evolved. I would not dismiss arriving at an agreement consistent with the hon. member's view of what that agreement should be, but we have not reached that point. We have not had those discussions. We have not reached that position. When we do, perhaps it would be appropriate to look at the changes that might be made.

In the meantime, this must be viewed by our side as a challenge to supply, to appropriations. We are therefore duty bound to vote against a motion which we absolutely support in terms of its substance. That is the dilemma.

I perhaps could get a little indignant about this tactic, but I think we invented it when we were in opposition, didn't we, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I am sure the minister does not want me to answer.

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Perhaps the government House leader would simply explain to those Canadians who are viewing and those members of the Chamber why it was that the government of which he is a part did not resign in May 1987 when this Chamber unanimously adopted the motion in my name on South Moresby.

Mr. Rey Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, since I moved the particular motion, I would like to advise the Speaker that it was done with considerable thought, with careful sensitivity, and a commitment to the issue.

I am told that our rules give this government a chance to make a choice, to choose whether this is a confidence motion or a non-confidence motion. If that is so, is it possible that it has chosen it to be a vote of confidence so that it can escape the issue?

The ball is in the hands of the government: it can either support it or not.

Mr. Speaker: We are getting a long way from a point of order. We are getting into debate and that is, after all, what the House is debating today.

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I will try to stick to the point of order that is before the House.

The fundamental question here is whether or not support of this motion is tantamount to a vote of non-confidence in the government.

My colleague, the government House leader, made it quite clear earlier that this particular type of motion, an opposition day motion, has its genesis in the supply procedure. If the hon. member can be quiet for a minute and listen for 30 seconds, if he looks at the Order Paper for today, Tuesday, March 19, he will see under Government Orders, Supply Proceedings: Consideration of an Opposition Motion. Then it states: "Note: Seventh of nine allotted days and third votable motion for the Supply period". These motions always have been linked to supply.

• (1510)

An hon. member: Oh, oh.

Mr. Beatty: Mr. Speaker, can the hon. member not show a modicum of courtesy to other members in the House and at least listen for a minute?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona has raised on a point of order a question which affects the debate that is taking place today and whatever may happen later on in the day. He has said that this ought not to be treated as a motion of confidence.

The hon. government House leader has responded and set out the position of the government. The hon. minister is adding to that and I want to indicate to the House that I think I have been as generous as I ought to be, as Speaker, in letting this discussion go on for as long as it has.

I will hear the minister, and I know that he will not need to keep us very much longer.

Mr. Beatty: No, Mr. Speaker, because the issue is very clear indeed. I will not take much time at all.

Mr. Speaker: My difficulty is that in extending appropriate courtesies I need some indication of which minister wishes to speak. The hon. minister, and I will come back to the hon. House leader in just a moment.

Mr. Beatty: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will conclude very simply by reiterating the point that on today's Order Paper it is made clear that this motion is intimately connected to the Business of Supply. Since the earliest days of Parliament the traditions have been abundantly clear that a defeat on a supply motion is a defeat of the government. That remains the case today. That was a point that was acknowledged. The hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona should be aware of the fact that that point was explicitly acknowledged earlier today by the hon. member for Surrey North of his own caucus, speaking on behalf of his caucus. He condemned the Liberal Party for proposing such a motion under the guise of a motion of non-confidence.

That was the case this morning. It is still the case this afternoon.

The members opposite can propose that the traditions in the House be changed, but that should be a subject of negotiation. It certainly does not apply to their simply unilaterally announcing that they have been changed today.

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to make an offer that indeed, if there is a desire to have this motion voted on, then by unanimous consent we can agree to put down another motion: "This House has lost confidence in the government", an appropriate supply motion for whatever reason and we could have a separate vote on this House supports the motion of the hon. member for Winnipeg North: "That this House supports Medicare", separate the two, so there is one on the supply question and one on the question of medicare. I am sure we could reach a resolution. I would be pleased to discuss that with House leaders and reach that accommodation if that is the desire.

Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North): Mr. Speaker, on the point of order, this morning when the issue was raised, I accepted the explanation of the minister of health. Since then I have done some checking and found out that there in fact have been some precedents. He said: "Is there any precedent". Of course, my hon. colleague has established that there is a precedent, that in 1987 there was a similar motion that the government ruled was not a motion of non-confidence.

Based on my finding out that there were precedents, I now would like to inform the House that I am in total agreement with my colleague from Winnipeg Transcona, that there is no need for the government to interpret this as a vote of confidence.

Mr. Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, if there is a heaven for parliamentarians, somewhere Eugene Forsey is commenting on this debate. We all know the late respected senator was an expert in the matters of confidence. It was he who came before the special committee on the reform of the House of Commons and made the argument that we needed to find ways in which the House could express itself in ways which were considered not to be matters of confidence or non-confidence.

It was in response to that recommendation, as well as the recommendations of others and the consensus of the committee, that we made recommendations that the language of confidence be taken out of the Standing Orders. That is what I am referring to here today.

I know about the rules in 1969. I know about the origins of opposition days in the mechanism of supply. What I am contending here today and what no one has even acknowledged is that something happened in 1985. What happened in 1985 was that because that language was removed, both opposition parties and the government party were freed up to express themselves on the substance of the matter when it came to opposition day motions. This was to avoid precisely the kind of sheltered arguments that we are getting in this case from the government which sometimes we have got from both opposition parties. The confidence mechanism was used by all parties of this House to hide behind the substance of issues. There is no need for a second motion. I am saying to the government if it wants to reaffirm medicare as it says it does in substance, then let it vote for the motion and we can be done with all this tomfoolery.

I am saying that as of 1985 the government can vote for these kinds of motions and affirm the substance of motions and nothing happens. It just allows the House to express itself. What could possibly be wrong with that.

SPEAKER'S RULING

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member who has raised this matter has wound up the exchange and has made his position very clear. The question of confidence, of course, lies with the government. The hon. House leader has made the position of the government very clear. He has also put forward a suggestion which he says he is prepared to discuss with hon. members. It seems to me that there is time to have those discussions before the day is over if hon. members wish to do so, but short of that I think we must proceed with orders of the day.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lapierre: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Is this on the same matter?

Mr. Lapierre: No, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: So this is another matter. Very well. The hon. member for Shefford.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS ALLOWED DURING QUESTION PERIOD

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order because I would like to hear your interpretation of what happened during Question Period when our New Democratic Party colleagues asked a question about the success or lack of success of Versatile in Vancouver. Subsequently, they asked a supplementary about the honey industry.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to know whether you allowed this question on honey, bees, queen bees and the rest, because of some connection with Versatile. I would like to know what the rules are on supplementary questions, because we know you are very strict about applying the Standing Orders where the Bloc Quebecois is concerned. So I would like to know the connection between Versatile and the honey industry.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker: I think I can say to the hon. member that I will look at the context in which the question was asked. I would say on the surface if the supplementary should be linked to the principal question, but I wonder if the hon. member would let me look at the matter and I will get back to him. Prima facie the hon. member is correct in his interpretation.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S. O. 81—HEALTH CARE

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Pagtakhan (p. 18648).

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): At the suspension of the debate at one o'clock, the opposition had the floor. I recognize the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain for 10 minutes.

Ms. Beth Phinney (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, as I rise today, I feel a deep sense of history. I do not believe, as perhaps the government would assert, that this is a debate about financial realities. This debate is in fact about the nature of our country, Canada.

Great nations of the world are not simply held together by geographic boundaries. Witness the Soviet Union today. Nor are they united, in the final analysis, by words written in a constitution. At the heart of all great nations is a common belief in a set of fundamental principles.

Canadians have developed, through 123 years of history, a mutual understanding of what their country represents. Through their elected representatives they have legislated a social contract. This social contract essentially states that we each look out for not just ourselves, but each other, and that fundamental services in society such as health care should be equal in both quality and accessibility to all Canadians.

• (1520)

This government, I would assert, has set about through its eight years in office to destroy what had taken Canadians the previous 115 years to build: a sense of nationhood. The development of the principles of Canadian nationhood, I believe, can be closely charted alongside the development of our medical care system. How a society cares for its sick, elderly and disabled reflects on its most basic principles.

At the time of Confederation government involvement in health was very small. People relied on their own resources and those of the family. Initially provinces were responsible for the minimal role of government in health care. As Canada developed more as a country and the government began to assert a greater role in health care, the federal role increased substantially.

In 1919, the idea of a national health insurance plan first emerged at a federal Liberal Party convention. In 1959, the Hospital Insurance and Diagnostic Services Act established a national program of hospital insurance. In 1966, the National Medical Care Insurance Act provided for public medical insurance.

The Canadian commitment to its system of medicare has come to be one of the first things Canadians point to in defining what their country stands for. The importance of this cannot be minimized. The cutback in Established Programs Financing grants will radically change the medicare system which in so many ways has come to symbolize the Canadian principles of fairness and equality.

Those on both sides of this House will recall that in the 1988 election both the opponents and proponents of free trade judged the effects of the agreement on Canadian sovereignty in the context of medicare. Although both sides came to a different conclusion about the future of medicare under free trade, each in essence was acknowledging the incredible symbolic nature of medicare to the Canadian identity.

The cuts in EPF transfers between 1990 and 1996 will represent a drop in federal funding of over $40 billion. There can be no question that this will have a serious effect on the Canadian health care system.

At a time when hospital beds are being closed across Canada, I find it impossible to see how this can be justified. The logic behind this is difficult to understand when the aging population, AIDS, drug addiction and other serious illnesses are increasing the burden on the health care system. If the government will not believe me, perhaps it should listen to the following persons directly affected by health care cutbacks. Lionel Savoie, president of the Canadian Medical Association, representing 46,000 doctors across the country, said the following about federal cuts in health care funding:

> The Government of Canada is financially strangling medicare. It has systematically reduced the planned level of federal support for provincial health care five times since 1982. This budget will speed up that process—Health care will suffer, especially those in less affluent provinces.

At the recent task force on the economy in a recession, in Hamilton, David Watts, vice-president of the Hamilton Civic Hospitals, offered the following analysis:

> The province has had to restrict its transfers to the hospitals to the point where we feel that the amount of money received is less than the inflationary requirements to keep things going at the level they were the previous year.

Things have to be shuffled around and priorities have to be reset, and things that we used to do we cannot do.

The last crisis in health care in Canada occurred in the late seventies and early eighties. At that time large numbers of doctors were extra billing patients. In response, in 1984, the Canada Health Act came into being. For every dollar the provinces received in extra billing and hospital user fees, the federal government withheld a dollar in health grants. By 1987 extra billing and user fees disappeared across Canada, as all provinces complied with the Canada Health Act.

Because of cash contributions under EPF, the federal government was able to enforce the basic principles of Canada medicare. With the ever-decreasing cash contributions by the federal government under EPF, this enforcement mechanism will no longer exist.

It is estimated by the National Council of Welfare that federal cash payments to Quebec for medicare and post-secondary education, could be gone in 1996-97. Payments to Ontario could disappear by 2002 or 2003. For the other provinces and territories, they could disappear by 2007 or 2008. How will this government enforce medicare standards then?

The government no longer has the financial clout to enforce national health standards. In the near future the provinces will no longer have the means to provide universal, portable and accessible health care if the government does not reverse its course.

Certain provinces may be able to raise provincial tax revenues to maintain a semblance of medicare, but rest assured that the poorer provinces will end up being left with second-class health care.

As opposition critic for the status of disabled persons, I would like to offer my views on the effects to the disabled community. Disabled Canadians are among the poorest citizens of this country. Approximately 80 per cent of them are unemployed. Of those disabled people fortunate enough to be employed, the majority are ghettoized and underemployed.

In 1986 almost two-thirds of those employed had a total income of less than $10,000. The dependants of disabled persons on social programs such as universal medicare is the highest of all economically disadvantaged groups.

Disabled persons must face the daily challenge of trying to cope with the extra burden of their special care and living needs while in most cases having insufficient resources to make ends meet. It is a fact of life for most disabled Canadians that they are severely constrained financially, a situation that is only marginally alleviated by government programs.

It is also a fact of life that their chances of gainful employment are still very slim. Opening the door to the possibility of user fees or lower quality medical service will severely hurt the disabled community, which can least afford it.

The disintegration of universal medicare will further marginalize and isolate the disabled community. Once again, it will relegate its hopes of economic integration to the back burner.

As members of a society who need medicare the most, the disabled will be the first casualties of federal withdrawal from health care. There can be no question that there are financial challenges involved in maintaining medicare at its current level.

By cutting health care funding, the federal government has turned financial challenges into economic impossibilities. It has made a bad situation into a disaster.

Why did it not examine alternative means to reduce health care spending? Why, when many provinces have begun their own studies into the health care system, has the federal government decided to run away from the problem?

Health care professionals have claimed for years that health care costs can be greatly reduced through prevention. It is estimated that reducing the occurrence of low birth rates even by 1 per cent could save billions of dollars a year.

The point is that there are many other ways of making the health care system more cost efficient without trashing the fundamental principles of medicare. An honest examination of the issues of health care in Canada is needed. We on this side of the House support this. We do not, however, support empty promises and the dismantling of medicare which this government has already begun.

The cuts in federal health care funding attack the most basic principles of equality, caring and fairness that make up the Canadian identity. For the sake of Canadians and Canada, the government must restore health care funding.

Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North): Mr. Speaker, again I listened intensely to the comments of the member about the commitment toward medicare. It is very nice to make, as she called them, empty promises. I think the government has been good at that, but I think the Liberals have even been better at empty promises.

It is all very nice for them to talk about what they should do, but the reality is that when the Liberals were in power and had the right and ability to demonstrate their commitment to medicare, what did they do?

Would the member like to explain what was the commitment to medicare of the previous Liberal finance minister when he put a cap on medicare in 1975? What was the commitment to medicare when the Liberal government in the early eighties $1.2 billion in transfer payments from the provinces, the same amount of money that the federal government is taking this year? What was the demonstrated Liberal commitment to medicare when they started gutting medicare when they had the power to protect it?

• (1530)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Perhaps I may point out that we now have five minutes for questions and answers. The hon. member for Hamilton Mountain.

[*English*]

Ms. Phinney: Mr. Speaker, I have been here all day and there is something that confuses me. I have heard these gentlemen on the left, and they have been gentlemen today who have been speaking. The member has gone on and on and on all day, commenting on what the

Liberals have done with medicare, what he did not like about what the Liberals had done with medicare, and what he thinks they should have done with medicare.

I studied history and, as far as I know, this party on the left has never been in power so it has done nothing about medicare. Instead of continually criticizing what the Liberals have done, it should be glad that we have had a medicare program in Canada for many, many years. It is not perfect and nobody has ever said it is perfect, but it is a medicare plan that people in Canada have felt comfortable with.

Instead of arguing about something they are upset about because they did not do one single thing to get medicare in this country in that they have never been elected federally in this country, they should be protecting the medicare plan and using their energy in a positive way to make the government across the way keep our medicare in a whole unit that will help Canadians, all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The hon. member for Saint-Maurice. There are two minutes left.

Mr. Denis Pronovost (Saint-Maurice): Mr. Speaker, we just listened with great interest to a lively discussion between two real socialists. The NDP are clearly socialists, but the socialists in the Liberal Party do not always come across as the real thing.

In any case, Monique Bégin, once a member of cabinet under the Liberal government, said after the Budget was brought down that people should ignore the Liberal Opposition her own friends and stop listening to them because what they were saying about the Budget wasn't true. Mrs. Bégin said, the day after the Budget was brought down, that Mr. Wilson's latest budget did not in any way affect our medicare system in this country.

I think the hon. member should listen to this former minister who was part of the Trudeau government. Now that she has retired from the partisan side of political life, she tells us quite clearly: "Don't listen to the Liberal Opposition. They want to scare people". Just like the Liberals scared senior citizens in my riding, in Saint-Maurice, during the last federal election campaign, when they said: If you vote for the Conservatives and free trade, all old age pensions in Saint-Maurice will be scrapped.

The Liberals are using the same kind of scare tactics again, but I think Canadians will ignore them and maintain their confidence in our national medicare system, a system we want to maintain and preserve for the years to come.

[*English*]

Ms. Phinney: Mr. Speaker somewhere during that little dissertation the hon. member mentioned listening to. I do not know what the government members do when they go back to their ridings. I wonder how many phone calls they get about this budget. I wonder how many people are phoning, wondering what is going to happen if they get sick or if the federal government continues to stop giving grants to the provincial government and there is not enough money for the hospitals.

I cannot believe that they even ever turn up in their constituency offices, and they are still talking the same way about listening. The party people across the floor should be listening to the people of Canada and they would not touch medicare; they would leave it the way it was.

Mr. Ross Belsher (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to join in this debate this afternoon.

However, I must point out to the people who are not here in the House but are out in listening land that the motion before us says "This House reaffirms its commitment to medicare". We on this side would dearly like to be able to vote for it. Nonetheless, by a quirk of the rules, it would be considered non-confidence in the government if we were to vote that way. It has been explained earlier, but I just wanted to go on record as restating that position. I will be voting with the government against this motion when the vote is taken at six o'clock this evening.

What I would like to do for the next few minutes is speak about some of the media coverage that we have had over the last few weeks regarding medicare. There certainly has not been any shortage of this media coverage.

Some of the headlines have been: "Strangling of Medicare", "Death of Medicare", "Limit on Transfer Funds Called Medicare Threat", and so on.

This coverage seems to have been prompted by the exercise of expenditure control on federal health transfer payments to the provinces. The limiting of these transfers is part of a broader program of expenditure control that touches virtually all aspects of federal government spending. Transfers to the provinces comprise over 20 per cent of federal government expenditures and cannot be exempted from control. Even with the controls, transfers to the provinces will continue to increase at about 3.7 per cent per year over the next five years, while other government program spending will be limited to a growth of 3.4 per cent.

The recent media coverage tells us a lot about what Canadians feel and think about this country and about their world-class health care system. I would like to give my interpretation of what we have seen in the press.

First, it tells me that Canadians love medicare. Our universal, publicly financed health care system is part of a value system of this country. Second, it tells me that Canadians see the federal government as the guardian of medicare. They want the government to retain its ability to enforce the Canada Health Act. Third, it tells me that many Canadians still link dollars to health. They assume that the system is underfunded and that if we only spent more all our health problems would be solved.

These are strong messages, and I would like to explore them a little more in detail.

This country has embarked upon an historical debate about national unity. Canadians across the country are assessing what it means to be a Canadian. It is clear to me that our beliefs about health care play a fundamental role in defining us as Canadians. Medicare is a central component of Canadian culture. Ask any Canadian what he or she values about this country, what makes this country a good place to live, and I know that in almost all circumstances they will say: "Our medicare system".

Canadians also believe that the federal government must play a strong role in our health care system. They look to the federal government as the guardian of medicare. This government accepts this role and is comfortable in it. This government stands by the principles of the Canada Health Act which are: universality, accessibility, comprehensiveness, portability, and public administration.

This legislation has not been amended since it was passed into law with the unanimous support of this House almost seven years ago. The government has announced that it will be taking action to ensure that it has the means to enforce the act. The Minister of Finance made this clear in his budget last month, when he said in *The Budget Papers*:

> The federal government will be amending the Fiscal Arrangements Act so that, if necessary, other cash transfers to provinces could be withheld for purposes of enforcement. The conditions and criteria governing medicare will not change. Indeed, this action will strengthen the government's ability to uphold the conditions and criteria which govern the national medicare system.

That is a pretty straightforward statement made on behalf of the government by the finance minister, and there is no room for misinterpretation.

The federal government has this guardian role, but its involvement extends well beyond this. The federal government is a partner in health. This partnership role is manifested in many ways. The federal government is a partner in financing health care.

Under Established Programs Financing, the government will be contributing about $14.5 billion in 1991–92 for health, over $13 billion for insured hospital and medical services, and $1.5 billion for extended health care services. These amounts are substantial and clearly indicate the government's commitment to health care.

• (1540)

Another example of federal partnerships is in combating tobacco use. Our national strategy is a comprehensive, co-operative, integrated effort to combat tobacco use. It brings together health officials of federal, provincial, territorial governments and eight national voluntary public health organizations. These organizations are the Canadian Cancer Society, the Canadian Council on Smoking and Health, the Canadian Lung Association, the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Nurses Association, the Canadian Public Health Association, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada and Physicians for a Smoke-free Canada.

The strategy has three goals. The first is prevention, to help non-smokers stay smoke free. The second is cessation, to encourage and help people to quit smoking. The

third goal is protection, to protect the health and rights of non-smokers.

This approach is bearing fruit. Since 1986 per capita tobacco consumption has fallen by 24 per cent. The annual decline in tobacco consumption was 7.6 per cent. This was the largest decline ever recorded and it looks like the numbers for 1990 will be even better. The tax increases announced in the latest budget should reduce the number of teenage smokers by 100,000.

The government is also a partner in the national drug strategy. The strategy was launched in May 1987 with the objective to reduce the harm to individuals, families and communities from the abuse of drugs through a balanced approach. Activities and programs to fight drug abuse are undertaken in partnership with the provinces for treatment and rehabilitation, with community based groups for education and prevention programs, with universities for research and with business through corporate sponsorship of prevention programs.

AIDS is another area where the federal government is a strong partner. The national strategy was announced on June 28, 1990, and involves partnerships in five major program areas: in education and prevention; in biomedical initiatives; in care, treatment and support; in support to non-governmental organizations; and in co-ordination and collaboration with a wide range of partners in Canada and around the world.

The government is also involved in partnerships in health and the environment. The health and the environment component of the Green Plan was developed through nation-wide consultations with individuals, communities and organizations. The partnerships developed through the Green Plan consultations include native people in addressing native health and environmental issues; communities; and international organizations such as the World Health Organization high level mission on health and the environment, OECD technology and environment program, and international program on chemical safety.

It is easy to see why many Canadians would feel that health care is threatened if it does not get ever increasing funds. It seems that there can never be enough resources where your own health or the health of your loved ones are concerned.

But as a society, we have to be objective about how much we spend on health, at least as objective as we can be.

Canada is the highest spending nation of all countries with a publicly-financed health care system, $56.1 billion or 8.9 per cent of the GNP in 1989. Spending on health care is one of the fastest growing areas. Canadians are among the healthiest in the world, but increases in health spending have not produced commensurate increases in health status. The gap in life expectancy between the richest and poorest Canadians is almost two years for women and five and a half for men. This gap increases significantly if disability is factored in.

Other nations spend less and have better health status. Japan spends 6.8 per cent of GNP and has lower infant mortality rates: 5 per 1,000 live births versus 7.9 for Canada. Resources are finite; every dollar that is spent on health care has an opportunity cost. It is a dollar not spent on education, accident reduction programs or reducing illiteracy. There may be other areas where benefits, in terms of health status of the population, might well be higher.

Tough choices have to be made and they are not going to get any easier. As we learn more about the the determinants of health status, we will have to consider a broader range of allocative choices. There are other factors that affect the well-being of populations beyond health care and public health measures like education, environment and poverty.

Most of the recent provincial task forces and commissions that have examined the health system have recognized, once again, that health is not just health care.

More money is not the answer. A consensus is emerging on this, but clearly we have a distance to go. It is important that we build on this consensus. We have to challenge ourselves not to spend more but to spend better. In the end we are all seeking the same goal: a better and more equitable distribution of health status for all Canadians.

I welcome the opportunity of speaking to this motion today.

Mr. Joe Comuzzi (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Mr. Speaker, I would like to compliment my colleague and my friend from Fraser Valley East for the very thoughtful presentation he made to the House. I am wondering if he would allow me to ask him several questions with respect to the comments that he just made.

Let me list those in order of importance. The question that I get constantly as I travel through my riding of Thunder Bay—Nipigon, where there are several hospitals and many senior citizen complexes, concerns most senior citizens. They worry about their personal safety and the delivery of adequate health care which they have come to expect from other governments in this country.

As a first question, I would like to ask my friend if he could unequivocally state to the seniors, not only in Thunder Bay—Nipigon but the seniors throughout this country, the question that comes to me on almost a weekly basis when I have the opportunity to get back to Thunder Bay—Nipigon, whether this government is going to do anything to jeopardize the delivery of health care services to seniors?

As we know, these people all live on pensions and they are sometimes in very frugal surroundings. They are concerned about the application of user fees in this country. They are concerned about having to go to a doctor and having to pay a fee. They are concerned about the availability of drugs which are getting very expensive. They are concerned about the user fee or a deductible portion that they are going to pay.

I would like my hon. friend, who has just given this fine treatise on his government's plans for the medical system in Canada, to assure the seniors in my riding of Thunder Bay—Nipigon, but also assure all the seniors throughout the country, that this in fact is not going to be a program that his government will entertain during its term of office.

The second and perhaps equally important issue that my friend alluded to in his remarks is that medicare has come to be one of those very important services that this government provides to all its citizens and one of the factors that unify this country.

I am certainly glad that the former minister of health is in the House. I am concerned that when we talk about what is going on constitutionally in this country, that we are going to separate the powers, that we are going to stop being a federal state, that it is contemplated to give so many more powers to the provinces. I am concerned about this fundamental right that all of our Canadian citizens, especially those who are approaching the senior level, have to the availability of medical care and drug care that we have come to expect.

• (1550)

I am sure my colleague, who is such a thoughtful man, has put his mind to this. What happens if we become something less than a federal state? What happens to our medical system, our plans and what we have come to expect in this country? What happens to this very important facet of our daily lives should we become something less than the federal state, such as is being proposed in our country today?

Mr. Belsher: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. friend opposite for his questions.

We have to think of what sort of controls are in the medical system now to prevent people abusing the emergency wards? It is strange that we should find that emergency wards in our hospitals are far more widely used on the weekends. I remember the hospital at home when B.C was the last province to stop user fees.

B.C. had user fees in the system. In 1983 when the Canada Health Act was brought in, it said that user fees could not be used. If a province had user fees, it was penalized by the amount of money charged, which was held in trust for a certain amount of time. That money was lost if it did not stop charging user fees.

It was strange that as soon as the user fees were stopped, the use of in the emergency ward in the hospital at home went up dramatically in the following month. It was really strange that there should be a correlation between the user fees and that.

It was also asked by people in the British Columbia government whether we would consider bringing user fees back in. I said to them: "If you would bring that forward to the federal government through your health ministers' meetings and had a significant number of health ministers requesting it, then we would seriously look at it. Unless that was to come with a very strong mandate from a number of provinces, then we would not look at it."

The hon. member asked about whether or not we are committed to the delivery of services. Yes, we are. The hon. member can assure his seniors that we are as

committed to it today as when it was brought in so many years ago.

What is going to happen if our country splits up? I hope our country does not split up, and I am doing everything I can to ensure that it does not. I am glad to see that the majority of people in this House do not want to see our country split up. We have representatives on both sides of the House, and there is only a very small minority who want to see a different arrangement of Canada than the Confederation that we now have.

I am still an optimist about our country. I still have faith that we will continue to be the dominion of Canada from sea to sea and that the health system we have grown accustomed to and which the whole population expects to be delivered by our senior levels of government will continue to be so.

One thing that is not widely known or understood is that when the federal government reduces any of its payments in the Established Programs Financing, there are tax credits which are given to the provinces so that they can pick up the slack. The amount of dollars that the province will have to use will still be the same amount.

Many people say that we are cutting down on medicare. Nonetheless, we have frozen the dollars on the EPF—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Order, please. I want to recognize another member who wants a question or comment.

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (York North): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for his speech.

There is a report published today which states: "One in four report lengthy delays in health care." It goes on to state, for example, that of the 25 per cent who reported problems getting treatment; 12 per cent waited longer than four weeks.

I for one understand the fact that it is not necessarily always a question of funding or more money towards programs. Sometimes it is a question of efficiency.

I was just wondering if the member can tell us what ways or means he has in mind to increase the efficiency of our health care system.

Mr. Belsher: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raises a very good question. I am not sure sufficient work is being done on how we might improve the system. Have we really gone out and brought to bear all of the minds that are in our health care system to see how they can improve it?

I know that when a patient goes in to see his doctor for a check-up, the doctor has a little check off pad for the various tests he wants. He can check every one off. Whether all are necessary or not, I do not know, I am not a medical doctor. But really, is anybody looking over his shoulder to see how many of those tests were necessary for the general health of that patient?

I am sure there are many, many cases across our country, from coast to coast, of things being performed that are not necessary for the health and well-being of the patient.

Mr. Gilbert Parent (Welland—St. Catharines—Thorold): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance announced in last month's budget that the freeze on the EPF, that is the Established Programs Financing, would extend to the fiscal year 1994-1995. As all members in the House know, these entitlements cover payments to the provinces for health and post-secondary education.

I am the critic for youth for the Liberal Party and as such I want to mention of how these cuts in medicare are going to affect the young people of our country.

Some years ago the Liberal Party put its caring stamp, as I call it, on the nation by bring in the universality of social programs. The minister of external affairs who was here today, mentioned Lester B. Pearson in his speech a few days ago, when he was talking about the peace process in the gulf. Well, Lester B. Pearson—I call him the man of peace—whose work did lead to a Nobel Peace Prize, brought us medicare and the Canada Assistance Plan as well as bringing us great renown because of his work for peace.

The programs he brought in followed those which were brought in by Mr. Mackenzie King; old age pensions; family allowances and unemployment insurance.

The viability of these programs is now in jeopardy, due to a succession of brutal budget cuts by the Mulroney administration. We generally tend to think of medicare as a program for older Canadians. But as I look at the frightening statistics and the ravages of AIDS on our

youth, I become more convinced that our commitment to health programs must be greater, not smaller and surely, not endangered by lack of funds.

I recall 25 years ago when the thalidomide babies first came to our attention. The plight of our young thalidomide Canadians must be adequately remembered, considered and finally, I believe, they must be compensated by this government very soon. They cannot wait much longer.

From the period 1986 to 1996, the government's cuts to the EPF payments will reach $40 billion. A cutback of this magnitude is unprecedented in the history of federal-provincial relations. To compensate for the loss of federal support, the provinces and the municipalities are either going to have to increase taxes or cut services. Given the priority nature of health care, as well as that of welfare support and quality education, tax increases at the provincial levels are an inevitable result of federal buck passing. Statistics released yesterday indicate that by the end of this century, and that is only a few short years away, there will be 10 million orphans in the world due to the ravages of AIDS. Unfortunately, Canada will not be spared its share of this terrifying statistic.

• (1600)

It is tragic for a child to die of AIDS, but even more tragic and heart-wrenching is the discovery by a mother that she, too, may soon die knowing that she has infected her baby and is leaving her other children as orphans.

In 1993 more than 7,000 people with HIV infection in Canada will have progressed AIDS. Canada has one of the highest rates of infection in the developed world and the epidemic has spread rapidly. It is estimated by the Canadian Public Health Association that 50,000 Canadians are now infected with HIV.

Several organizations work at preventing and informing the public about the dangers of the infection, but until a cure is found, and we are going to need money for that in research and development, it is our responsibility to care for the sick. The Canadian Institute of Child Health states that: "Canadian children's health is poorer than other western nations in the mid-1980s". In the mid-1980s the infant mortality rate was higher in Canada, that is 7.9 per 1,000 live births, than in Japan which had 6.0 per 1,000 live births, and several other western nations. This rate is traditionally regarded as an indication of the health status of children in this society.

Canada's death rate from all causes for school-age children was higher than that of Sweden, the Netherlands, Japan, Germany and England. This is just not acceptable to the people of Canada. The Canadian experience is even worse for deaths due to injury. At 13 deaths per 100,000, school-age children in Canada die more often from injury than children in eight other western developed nations.

Canada's death rate from all causes for teenagers is nearly double the rate for the Netherlands. We even see inequalities among the children of Canada. Infant mortality rates are more than 1.5 times higher in Saskatchewan and Newfoundland than in Ontario and Quebec. In 1986 death rates for poor children were 56 per cent higher than for higher income children and this rate of 56 per cent is doubled again among our native infants. That is not acceptable.

This government is playing Russian roulette with our nation's health system. Perhaps the intention is not to kill medicare. As the hon. member who just spoke said, it is not the intention of this government to kill medicare, but the Minister of Finance must stop this relentless pursuit of budget control through cuts to our social programs. It just does not make sense. It is a fallacy to say that Canada's social programs are responsible for the deficit. They are not. That would lead to another whole debate as to why we are in the economic predicament we are in but it is not because of our social programs.

Our medicare program was at one time the envy of many countries around the world. In fact most Americans would abandon their health care system and join one like ours if they could, that is the system as we knew it before, as it was implemented by the Liberals during the Pearson administration. There have been too many horror stories in the last few years, stories of long waiting lists. One in four is said to be now waiting for surgery, as my colleague pointed out a few minutes ago. There is postponed surgery, overcrowded emergency facilities and perhaps saddest of all is the total lack of adequate

programs and care for Canadians of all ages who suffer due to mental illnesses.

I see, Mr. Speaker, that my time is almost up. I would have wanted to delve into the problem of mental illnesses and how we care for our people, but perhaps that will come in another debate.

We in the Liberal Party have a strong commitment to Canada's medicare program. We fear that the lack of interest from this government might lead us into expensive private plans to which only a small percentage of Canadians would have access. Our interest in social programs remains one based on universality. That means that we are all equal and we should at least have equal medical care in this very rich and prosperous country.

I would say to the minister and to all of my colleagues who would think otherwise: Keep your hands off of our medicare system. It is one for which we have worked very hard and one which is surely worth preserving for our children and our children's children.

Mr. Peter L. McCreath (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): I listened with great interest, as I always do when my hon. friend from Welland speaks. He did leave me a little bit confused on one point and I would like to put a very specific question to him in that regard, and I am sure that his answer will be as specific as my question.

I heard him very clearly say that we should be spending more in provincial transfers. I must say I know that if we were able to do that we would very much ingratiate ourselves with the government of my province, the government of Nova Scotia. I notice in the budget this year that the government is indeed increasing EPF payments by 3.7 per cent while limiting its own growth to 3.4 per cent.

Therefore, my question to my hon. friend is: Would he specifically tell us which programs of the government he would cut in order to make available the additional moneys that he thinks should be applied to health care.

Mr. Parent: Mr. Speaker, I do thank my hon. friend from South Shore for his question. He said that they were going to increase the payments by 3.7 per cent. If it is true that inflation this year is going to be, I believe, well over 6 per cent and possibly 7 per cent, I think that what we would have there is not an increase but a decrease because they are not even keeping up with inflation.

But the question was very specific and very fair, and I imagine it comes down to priorities. The hon. member asked for an opinion from me, and I could tell him that my priorities would be to put our moneys into our social programs rather than into defence spending. I think it is much more important to save lives and to take care of Canadians than to have all of the weaponry which would be destructive, not only to Canadians but to other people.

And that is a specific suggestion to a very specific question.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Is that Liberal Party policy?

Ms. Mary Clancy (Halifax): I would be happy, Mr. Speaker, to begin by answering the hon. minister's question except I did not hear it, so he can wait and ask me in the proper way at the end.

I am delighted to stand and speak in support of the motion by my hon. colleague, the member for Winnipeg North, that this House reaffirm its commitment to medicare, and that we reaffirm this commitment not by idle words, not by pious mouthings, but by putting some money where those pious mouthings are.

Another friend of mine, the hon. member for South Shore, got up and talked about how Liberal policies would gladden the hearts of his own government—my government, too, —in Nova Scotia, and I want to talk a little bit about what this government policy is doing in the province of Nova Scotia. Today a headline in the *Halifax Chronicle Herald* states: "Cuts in federal payments put medicare system in danger". I quote: "Medicare is something most Canadians take for granted but shouldn't. It may not be with us much longer".

• (1610)

This article goes on to tell us about the cuts, which my friends on the other side keep saying are not cuts, that Bill C-69 freezes transfer payments to the provinces for health and education at the 1989-90 until 1995. Given the inflation rate and given the way this country is developing, that is a cut. And a cut is a cut is a cut.

These observations are not coming from partisan politicians. They are coming from the Canadian Medical Association and the director of government relations for that august body. He says that the CMA's concern is the impact that this freeze on transfer payments will have on the quality and accessibility of health in the country as a whole, but in particular, in the Atlantic region.

It is the same old story. If it hurts anywhere in Canada, and my friend from South Shore knows this and knows it well, it is going to hurt even more in the Atlantic region.

Since the inception of medicare in 1965, Canadians have had a tremendous boon and a tremendous gift. They have not had to worry. They have not had to worry about paying for their health care and the health care of their children. This was brought home to me in a very significant way in the late 1960s.

In 1967 a very close friend of mine, who was a student in university, married an American student and they went back to the United States for two years. During that two-year period they had one daughter. They came back to Canada in 1970 to resume their university careers in Halifax. They were barely in the country a week when their daughter contracted pneumonia and had to be hospitalized. Because my friend had been out of the country for two years, she had to be back in the province for three months before being covered by medicare.

I remember very well two very frightened, very young parents with a very sick baby. Every one of us I think can empathize with that situation. Certainly my colleague from Winnipeg North as a paediatrician has seen that many times and the fear, the stress and the anguish of parents in that situation. Added to my friend's fear, stress and anguish was there they were living on the money they had managed to save for two years, living with a small amount of student loan, the fact that both of them had part-time jobs and they were going to be faced with an horrendous medical bill for their child's health care because they had fallen through one of the cracks, a crack that we need to have I suppose. I understand the situation. It certainly brings forward how crucial, how important medicare in its original state is to the health and well-being of this country as a whole.

I remember another evening, shortly after I was elected, spending some time after a committee with two of my colleagues, the member for Willowdale and the member for Dartmouth. We each started talking about the reasons that we had such a strong commitment to social programs in this country. It turned out that each one of us had a story about what it was like in our families to suffer incredible medical bills and the incredible insecurity *vis-à-vis* the cost of health care in pre-medicare Canada.

Every one of us in the House can delve back into our families and find a story that relates to those that I have mentioned here today. Every one of us is committed, at least to the principle of medicare, but we need more today than just the principles.

I have heard over and over again, I heard it today in Question Period, I have heard it ever since this budget came out, that there is not really a cut taking place because the federal government is transferring tax points to the provinces. Well, maybe that works in B.C. Maybe it works in the hon. minister's province of Manitoba, although I am sure my colleague from Winnipeg North will have something to say abut that. Maybe it works in Alberta and Ontario. As the hon. member from South Shore will have to agree, it does not work in Nova Scotia.

You could transfer tax points until the cows come home, and if you have an economy that cannot support that kind of a tax base, that does not engender that kind of a tax base, all the tax points in the world are just points on paper. They are not dollars for medical care, and they are not going to assist in the payment of medical care for Nova Scotians. They are not going to give any sense of security to the people in my province who woke up this morning and read in their newspapers that cuts in federal payments put the medicare system in danger.

Mr. Geekie from the Canadian Medical Association said that what provinces decide to do is going to be on an individual basis. But the very fact that the cuts are taking place is going to pretty well erode or eliminate national standards or criteria from health care.

We live in perilous times for this country. Every one of us in this House at some point, at many points during our day, thinks about the country. We think about the future of the country, and we think about what Canada means to us. I was 17 years old when medicare came in. One of

the things that makes me intensely, emotionally proud to be a Canadian is medicare, is the universality of that program, is the fact that at least on a regional basis—not perhaps in every community because of our geography and our small population, and so on—there can be access to a reasonably high standard of medical care in this country.

If this devolves on to the provinces, particularly the have not provinces, that concept is dead. It is gone. It will mean that if you live in Atlantic Canada, or if you live in northern Canada, or northern Ontario, or parts of Quebec, or parts of the western provinces, you will not have the access to the same level of medical care as if you lived in downtown Toronto, downtown Montreal, downtown Vancouver. That is simply un-Canadian and that is simply unacceptable.

Every one of us is concerned about the deficit. Every one of us is concerned about balancing our budget, about paying our way, and about making sure that this country survives fiscally as well as constitutionally and spiritually. We cannot do it by cutting out the heart of our nation's belief, the heart of our nation's existence, and that is by cutting out the heart of those programs that Canadians have come to rely on, that they swear by, that they are sending a message to each and every one of us here in this House to maintain. The jewel in that crown is medicare.

Mr. Peter L. McCreath (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): Mr. Speaker, I compliment my hon. friend for Halifax. I listened with great interest to her remarks, but she did say one or two things that I wanted to question.

The hon. member said that medicare should stay exactly the same as it was when it first came back—and it could not be too many years ago if my hon. friend was 17 then—and I am tempted to ask her if she is suggesting that all aspects of the medical system should remain the same as they were then, but I am sure she would not mean that.

My question to the hon. member is with respect to the existence of medicare. In particular, I refer to our own province. I think the Minister of Health in our province would be delighted to infer from my hon. friend's remarks that she feels the medical system and the health system in our province cannot be improved upon. My question is: is she completely satisfied that no improvements in cost effectiveness can be made in the health care system in Nova Scotia?

• (1620)

Ms. Clancy: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. friend for South Shore for his question. I suggest that he remove some of the Hubbard sand from his ears.

I did not for one instance suggest that the medical care system in this country could not be improved upon, nor did I for a moment suggest that—

Mr. McCreath: I heard what you said.

Ms. Clancy: The hon. member clearly misheard. What I said was that it must not be diminished or retrenched from. Improved, definitely.

I refer in particular to a study going on right now in the health and welfare committee where we are looking at and will be reporting on in due time ways to improve the delivery of health care systems in this country. There is absolutely no question that there are myriad ways to improve the health care system. There are myriad ways to make it more cost effective, unquestionably.

One thing we know is that there is a very high level of satisfaction with medicare in this country by Canadians. We also know that our costs on a per capita basis are not as high as those of our neighbours to the south. We therefore can extrapolate from that and from various other empirical data that we have received in the committee that, for example, a user-pay system is not the answer to the cost overruns in medicare today.

I would invite the hon. member, as I am sure he will, to read the report when it comes out and perhaps even to go to the committee *Hansard* and read some of the testimony. We have heard from some fascinating witnesses at that committee.

One thing that particularly interested me was the whole question of standardizing communication and management administration of the medical care system through computers and the fact that computerization is still something relatively foreign to medical practice and hospital administration in this country.

I will refer to a perfect example of this. I was speaking to a specialist in Halifax not too long ago. He told me that a patient came to him with a particular problem, but the hospital of first instance in another part of the region had neglected to send the patient's x-rays. Because it was a situation that could be urgent depending on what was going on, the doctor in Halifax ordered new x-rays, doubling the cost. If that man's x-ray package had been sent with him, there would have been one form of money saved.

I am also told that there are communication systems that can be set up where reports of that nature, pictures, and so on can be sent on an electronic or computerized system.

What I am saying is that we may have to look at tremendously innovative ways of reducing the cost of the health care system, but let us not look at that reduction by reducing quality and standard of care to Canadians or by reducing the absolutely imperative standard of universality.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): On debate. The hon. member for Saint-Maurice has the floor.

Mr. Denis Pronovost (Saint-Maurice): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian peole following this debate on our health care system must be wondering. Since this morning, we have been hearing opposition members paint an overly bleak and pessimistic picture of health care in Canada. Yet, when we leave that kind of planet away from earth, get out of Parliament and take a look at the situation in the field, with both feet well on the ground, as we say in Quebec, we realize that it is quite different.

The Canadian people who pay their income taxes each year know how expensive the Canadian health care system is. And I think it is normal to want to afford the Canadian people the best health care services in the world. However, we must remember that all that costs money. If we were to implement all the good ideas the Liberal and NDP members have come up with up to now—I am not mentioning the members of the Bloc Quebecois, Mr. Speaker, because they did not show more than one quarter of one hundredth of one per cent of interest in this very important debate on the universality of health care in Canada—we would have to double, triple and even quadruple the income taxes collected across Canada to finance their projects.

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian people have to know that, in 1991, their health care system will cost them the tidy amount of, not $60 million, but $60 billion. This is no big thing, of course, only the largest amount ever spent on health care in Canada's history. Yet, when listening to the Liberal and NDP members, one gets the impression that almost all hospitals in Canada are closed, that there are no old folks homes left and no community health care services in the various provinces of Canada.

That is far from the truth though. The health care system in Canada got gradually better over the past few years. The provincial governments as well as the federal government invested billions and billions of dollars to finally reach that $60 billion we will be spending this year, that is to say $2,500 per capita. This means that the health care system is costing $2,500 per capita to the taxpayer, and heaven knows we have a lot of taxes to pay in this country.

I think that the Canadian people are nevertheless entitled to one thing—and the big difference between our philosophy and that of the opposition members is that we learned to be realistic.

The members on this side of the House have learned to say: Considering the present state of government finance, considering the current national debt, the major part of which was created by the successive Liberal governments in the 1960s and 1970s, considering this extremely difficult situation we are in today, this is no time to increase government budgets, whether at the municipal, provincial or federal level. I suggest we have reached a crucial point where we must master the art of managing whatever money we have and ensuring that the $60 billion that health care will cost in Canada in 1991 will be used in the most efficient way possible instead of just investing more and more money in the system. As I see it, Mr. Speaker, the key element of our present situation is to know how to use the funds available to deliver the world's best health care system to the Canadian people.

I say this because it is a very important question. But there is one thing that Canadians have to know, something which Liberals are wont to forget: the federal government is not responsible for the management of hospitals and health centres throughout the country. That responsibility belongs to each and every provincial government. Earlier I heard the hon. member from Nova Scotia blame the federal government for the long hospital waiting lists in her province, as in other provinces indeed. That is not a federal responsibility. The

federal government has invested a lot of money in terms of transfers for medicare.

The main question now, Mr. Speaker, is what are we going to do to ensure that the $60 billion expended each year for health care throughout Canada are put to good use. That is the direct responsibility of the provinces. Let us take just one example. Go anywhere in Canada, in Quebec, in other provinces or in the Territories and you will see for yourself that a considerable number of hospital beds in this country are occupied by senior citizens, people aged 65 or over. And as everyone knows, in the health sector if a chronically-ill elderly person has to lie in a hospital bed this represents almost prohibitive social cost charges against the budgets of health ministries in the various provinces. That is the prevailing situation in all regions of Canada.

• (1630)

Mr. Speaker, instead of investing this money in keeping senior citizens in hospitals at a prohibitive cost, we should look for alternative solutions and try to provide accommodation for senior citizens that puts less pressure on our health care resources.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to mention another phenomenon in this country: when Canadians go to the hospital, they tend to stay longer than patients in other industrialized countries I am thinking of France, Great Britain, United States, The Netherlands, Sweden, Finland and Norway. Now, I don't suppose Canadians are sicker than the Swedes, the Finns or the Norwegians. But I do think that we have a very serious problem here in our health care system. Why should Canadians, given the same standard of medical care, stay in hospital longer than people in other industrialized countries?

Mr. Speaker, I think we should remember that the provinces are responsible for running our hospitals and are therefore responsible for admitting and releasing patients. The provincial governments should take a long, hard look at this situation.

Mr. Speaker, in Canada our health care system costs $2,500 per capita. Today, in 1991, 57,000 physicians are being paid by taxpayers to look after the health of Canadians. We have a quarter of a million nurses who provide care in our hospitals. However, Mr. Speaker, despite the billions of dollars invested in this sector, the federal government has very little control over the money it gives to the provinces, because it just hands over the money and the provinces apply the national policy adopted by previous governments—despite all that, we still have a higher infant mortality rate than other countries.

What does this mean? Here in Canada we spend more money than any other country in the world with a comparable medicare system, in terms of our Gross National Product. We spend more money than Sweden, Norway, Finland, France, Great Britain all countries with a national system. We spend more per capita in terms of our Gross National Product than all these countries.

Although our national health care system, which is in good shape, has a number of shortcomings, it is the provinces who are responsible for doing something about those shortcomings. It is high time, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP and the Liberals stopped blaming the federal government, because the provinces are responsible for doing something about this. That is the crux of the matter. That is what we have to consider if we want to do something about the health care system in this country.

There is also something else, something very important that Canadians must realize. Since we started the debate this morning with the hon. member for Winnipeg North, the Liberals kept saying it was the end of our medicare system in Canada. Mr. Speaker, I want to say that there is not another country in the world that spends as much money as Canada does in this area. What more do the Liberals and the New Democrats want? There is enough money in the system, but the problem is that we have to improve the way we use the resources at our disposal.

There is another tactic the Liberals are using to get their message across, Mr. Speaker. The formal federal Minister of Health, Ms. Monique Bégin, said the day after the Budget was brought down: "Now listen, I am no longer in politics so I am not going to approach this in a partisan way". Ms. Bégin, well known for her radical

position on health care and her emphasis on universality and former Liberal minister in the Trudeau government, told Canadians: "Listen, don't worry, stop listening to what the Liberals, my former colleagues, are saying; stop listening to those people. The present government is introducing budgetary restrictions, that is clear, but it will have no impact on our national medicare system". That is what Ms. Bégin said. Is there anyone more qualified and more competent on the Liberal side than Monique Bégin, who was a minister? She said, without a hint of partisan politics, to stop scaring people.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to mention a few other scare tactics indulged in by Liberals and New Democrats in the riding of Saint-Maurice during the campaign leading up to the election on November 21, 1988.

At the time, the NDP candidate and the candidate for the Liberal Party of Canada were walking around the riding in Shawinigan, and they went to the senior citizens clubs and told them—I remember they wrote about it in the papers: "If you vote for the Conservatives in the next election, you will lose your federal old age pension". The Liberals and the New Democrats said this in my riding. They said it in the riding of Champlain, in Trois-Rivières, in Richelieu—Yamaska and in all the ridings in the heartland of Quebec.

And today, they want to scare senior citizens again, people who are more vulnerable than the average Canadian, by telling them: Watch out for the Conservatives! They are going to abolish medicare.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the senior citizens in my riding that we, as a government, will continue to respect their heritage and the country they worked so hard to build. Canada is my country, I have always said so and I always will, and the senior citizens in my riding may rest assured that the Progressive Conservative Government of Canada will continue to ensure they receive the best possible care for many years. We will keep up the good work in this area.

However, I also want to say this to my senior citizens—and Opposition members may wish to consider this—that we have a problem in Canada, in all the provinces including Quebec, Ontario, the West and the Maritimes, and whether we happen to be separatists in Quebec or federalists, the problem is the same. Mr. Speaker, senior citizens, as you may know, take far too much medication. This is a serious problem. We must take a long hard look at over-medication among senior citizens and take steps to remedy this social problem. There is a whole range of measures that can be taken by the provincial governments.

The Government of Quebec—I realize I am not supposed to say the members of the Bloc Quebecois are not in the House, Mr. Speaker, but I think you can draw your own conclusions regarding their absence here in the House. Mr. Speaker, members—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I am sorry but I must remind the hon. member that we have a tradition in this house not to allude to absences. There are 30 parliamentary committees currently sitting and people who are listening to us now must know that hon. members have also much work to do in those committees. I recognize again the hon. member for Saint-Maurice.

Mr. Pronovost: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since we are not allowed to mention the absence or presence of other members, I will tell you that Bloc québécois members in Ottawa do not even have secretaries in their offices. When you phone them, you end up talking to answering machines. So much for those people who, supposedly, are in Ottawa to protect Quebec interests. We will probably have an opportunity later to talk about this.

I would like to conclude by saying that it is very important, in a debate such as this, to tell Canadians that our difficult financial situation is due to previous governments. The problem will not be solved in a matter of one, two or even five years. It is quite impossible with a national debt such as ours. But despite the enormous pressures that the national debt puts on our budget, our government is committed to providing the same health services to Canadian citizens across the country.

What we have to do, Mr. Speaker, and I want to invite my Liberal colleagues, particularly the hon. member for Winnipeg North, to think about that, is to allocate these funds in a way that would be more efficient and forward-looking. That would allow us to provide the best service that Canadian men and women can expect from the Parliament of Canada.

[*English*]

Mr. Rey Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, I certainly compliment the member on his debating points. I would like to make a very short comment and then pose two simple questions.

When he indicated that no other country spends more for health and welfare, I think it has to be recorded that while Canada spends about 8.5 per cent of its Gross National Product on health care, the United States spends more. We have a far better health care system and therefore we must preserve it. In terms of the need for other programs to make our system more productive and cost efficient, my colleague from Halifax and I this morning alluded to that. In fact, we are prepared to offer those initiatives to you and we have mentioned some.

• (1640)

My two questions are: I would like to ask this member if he and his government are considering the application or implementation of user fees?

Second, what legislation is intended to help enforce the principles of medicare that now do not exist in the current Canada Health Act?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Pronovost (Saint-Maurice): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Winnipeg North for his comments concerning the speech I have just made.

I should like, however, to correct his first statement. I indicated a while ago quite clearly that among the countries of the world with a health care system Canada spent the most per capita for health care services as a proportion to its GNP. I insisted twice on that fact. So the hon. member is quite right to say that the Americans spend a lot more, although their system is a private one. But I referred to most industrialized nations with a public health system.

Canada is by far the country which spends the most. People in Canada are not more stupid than people in the Scandinavian countries; they have a right to expect their government to spend their taxes the way they want, and God knows they do pay a lot and will continue to pay for a long time. Everybody knows that there are taxes in Canada. We are just starting to reimburse the accumulated national debt. They have a right to know that this money—I am not talking here about the cuts—will be spent more efficiently.

There is another point I should like to raise as a result of the hon. member for Winnipeg North's question.

The cuts in Mr. Wilson's last budget will affect payments to the provinces, but Canadians should realize that, all in all, these cuts represent only half of one per cent. Only half of one per cent of the total revenues the Canadian provinces are getting now.

The federal government did not tell the provinces to reduce their health care spending by half of one per cent. When we compare the budgets of the various provinces, we realize that the Ontario government budget was increasing at a rate greater than inflation, while the budget of the federal budget was increasing at a rate smaller than inflation—

I wish all governments in the provinces and territories would imitate the federal government instead of increasing their budgets by 10 or 12 per cent. Last year, some municipalities—my colleagues could deal with that—increased their budgets by as much as 15 or 20 per cent, while inflation was a lot less than that.

The federal government is making an honest effort. But if we want all Canadians to benefit eventually from our budget restrictions it is imperative that the efforts made by the federal government be duplicated by all provincial governments, all municipalities, Hydro-Québec, Ontario Hydro, in short by all Canadians involved. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, if the serious, difficult and sometimes unpopular efforts we make in this House are not followed by similar efforts on the part of the provincial governments, Canada will not have the promising future we are all looking forward to enjoy. That is where we are at in the national debate, Mr. Speaker.

I have stated over and over again that I am not a separatist, that I am a Quebecer and a Canadian—I am proud to be a Canadian—but I know that the people in Quebec are listening to the members of the Bloc Quebecois who are telling them: Look at the size of the national debt in Ottawa, let us split and we will get rid of that.

The national debt happens to be the main problem. It is our problem of national unity. Quebecers are slowly drifting away from the country because they consider that the national debt is much too heavy. They are quite right. It is on that point that I seek the co-operation of the Liberal and NDP members.

If as members of this Parliament we can find a reasonable solution, acceptable to the federal, provincial, and municipal governments to deal with our national debt problem in the foreseeable future, I believe that we can save our country and give Canada a fresh start in

a renewed federation. In conclusion, I would say that when all the members of this federal Parliament understand this fundamental issue, we can look to a better future, and present, for our children, as well as for the Quebec and the Canadian people.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian L. Gardiner (Prince George—Bulkley Valley): Mr. Speaker, I just have two quick questions for the hon. member. I would like to give him another chance to try and answer the very easy question from the member from Winnipeg. Yes or no, does he support user fees?

The second point follows from his comments where he said that the funds should be used more effectively, an argument that I can support. I would like to ask his views on whether he would support new measures which would ensure that those funds which are transferred from the federal government to the provinces that are supposed to be spent on health and post-secondary education are, indeed, spent on health and post-secondary education?

The member may know that, at least in my province, there are many allegations the Government of British Columbia takes federal money designated for health and education and spends it on paving highways. I would like to know the member's views on that matter as well.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Pronovost (Saint-Maurice): Mr. Speaker, in reply to the first part of the questions, I would say we must, first, maintain the universality of the medicare system in Canada. We will allow provincial governments and the federal government to review the conditions because we cannot be trapped or locked in a system that is fifteen or twenty years old. That is what counts. We must consider all the options, but retaining at the same time our national system.

On the second point, I would say I agree with the member of the New Democratic Party. Mr. Speaker, as far as I am concerned, I am not at all convinced that all provincial governments really use the transfer payments or for that matter the health care transfer payments for that purpose.

My colleague talked about British Columbia. We could easily say the same thing about Quebec. I am not convinced, Mr. Speaker, that the Quebec governement uses the money we transfer each year for health care. And we have a very tangible example of that in Quebec with the tax on gas. That money is intended in part for road repairs, but what we see in reality is that only 35 per cent of it is used for the purpose it was established for initially.

As for user fees, *frais modérateurs* as they are called in Québec, one thing remains: they are not at the heart of the matter. The issue is not user fees. The question is not whether you're going to charge $3 or $5 or what have you every time someone shows up at the hospital's emergency department in Shawinigan-Sud or Grand-Mère.

That is not the way we are going to solve health care problems in Canada. It is not by charging a tax here and a tax there in an effort to discourage users that the problems are going to be solved. What we must do—I will say it one last time in conclusion—is to review the way we spend the money, which is up to $60 billion every year. That is the main problem we have in Canada as far as health care is concerned: we must review the whole process and find more efficient ways to do it, Mr. Speaker. Other countries have done it, and Canada has the resources to do the same.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian L. Gardiner (Prince George—Bulkley Valley): Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for this opportunity to speak on this very important motion which has been introduced by my colleague from Winnipeg, and has been amended today by the New Democratic member from Surrey.

From the debate earlier on, there were some serious questions, I suppose from all sides of this House, concerning exactly what was the intent of the member from Winnipeg in bringing this motion forward. Some questions were raised by the minister of health regarding whether this is in fact a question of confidence in the government. The member wanted to know if the vote would mean that if the government supported the motion it would have to resign and call an election. Well, I don't think that would be such a bad idea, in any case,

Mr. Speaker, because I think if you check, most Canadians would like to have an election so they could express their opinions on the actions of this government.

• (1650)

I refer also, just on this particular procedural point, to the comments that were made earlier by the member from Winnipeg, who made some very important interjections in this House regarding procedure. I understand he has had some previous experience debating the role of this House, the rules of this Chamber, in particular motions and the work of private members. He made some very compelling arguments, I think, suggesting the Minister of National Health and Welfare may have been wrong on this matter. I leave it to people much more learned in procedure and policy than myself to decide that. But obviously the NDP member from Winnipeg who made those interjections on procedure made some very important points.

That is the setting for the debate we are having today. I trust the government members will hear the arguments presented by my colleague from Winnipeg, and will be brave and show all Canadians that they do in fact have a commitment to medicare. What is the big deal? Show your support for medicare.

I would like to just pick up on some of the comments that were just made by the member across the way. I appreciated his support on the question I put to him. Because, of course, when we are talking about health care in Canada, it means we are also talking not only about what the federal government does, but of course what the provinces have to do as well.

The question, and I think a very important one, is how do we go about setting health policy in Canada.

Most current historians would give the credit for the start of medicare in Canada to the CCF government in Saskatchewan. Tommy Douglas is noted for that. Many will recall better than I the fight that was put up at the time by some who were against medicare. Tommy Douglas and the CCF, the forerunners of the New Democratic Party, really showed the rest of Canada exactly what we had to do in this country to ensure we had a health care policy that was going to ensure above all else, if there are some basics in life, health care has to be one of them, and that it is a duty and an obligation of government.

The federal government has some significant powers and responsibilities in this field, especially when we are dealing with spending powers. That has often been the club that the Government of Canada has used with the provinces, and some of that was evident during the debate on the Canada Health Act, the discussions at that time over user fees—another question I put to my colleague across the way, and I appreciated his answer. He is probably quite right that three $5 user fees here and there are not going to solve some of the problems we have in health care policy.

But he did respond positively to my comment and suggestion about how do we deal with the questions of federal transfer payments of funds, particularly in health care. I think he used the words in his comments about how do we use those funds effectively?

Some time ago I asked the Secretary of State, who is responsible to some degree for post-secondary education—it was in a debate like this, it turned out to be a quiet debate that afternoon—I asked if he could tell this House with confidence that those funds the federal government was transferring to the provinces for health and education was spent on health and education.

Mr. Speaker, the response from the minister was I suppose a little scary; he said that we would have to trust him. He said that we would have to trust him that in fact that was happening. I am glad to see that he has some colleagues on his side who maybe do not quite share his confidence that that is happening. I had mentioned British Columbia. The member across the way had mentioned Quebec and his concerns there. It sounds like they are about the same. In fact, if we start looking at the constitutional position of the Liberal Government of Quebec and the Social Credit Government of British Columbia, they are starting to sound almost the same.

It is no wonder that the Liberal Government of Quebec and the Social Credit Government of British Columbia might use federal health and education dollars to pave highways. That is an allegation that many people have made.

With regard to what we have to do with medicare though, I am more convinced than ever, we as parliamentarians must debate what is the effective role of government in Canada today, in society today. Many often on the opposite benches argue that the govern-

ment has to get out of everything because government restrains and restricts the individual. We have to let the benefits trickle down, when of course usually they dry up.

I would argue that if there is one particular field where we need expanded government participation in, it is co-operation at all levels between the federal and the provincial governments in health care. It is an old cliche I suppose about an ounce or prevention is worth a pound of cure. I think we need a revolution in health care in Canada.

Let us start at the community level. Let us start there rather than what many people have written about in our country, that we have put a heavier emphasis, if you like, in terms of technology and equipment and large buildings, that we have been top heavy in terms of our approach to health care in Canada. I am not an expert on this matter. I usually prefer to stand up and talk about trees, fish and VIA Rail. Nevertheless, it is an important initiative to talk about health care in this country because it is one that in the end is going to affect us all.

The motion that is presented today by the member from Winnipeg is an important one because as I argued, if there is a way now or a greater room for participation by government, I would say it is to work at all levels on the health care field and most importantly, to work with the schools. We know it is going to be some years from now, when who knows what happens in some years, when they see ourselves or children with the vaccination mark. People will wonder what that was. It is how we have evolved and changed.

I think if we are going to start developing a health care policy, we have to go beyond just a debate about transfer payments and funds. We have to talk and work with the provinces who obviously have the major responsibility for the delivery of health care. We have to work with the school districts and other areas as well to ensure that a comprehensive health care policy is developed. In that way we can ensure that national standards are there.

I am not one, like the Government of British Columbia, and some provincial governments across the country, to sort of piecemeal take apart our health care system. What Canadians call upon this Parliament to do is to guarantee some degree of accessibility so that those services are available to all Canadians, no matter where they live. Again, I approach this because I think health care is one of those basics, one of the pillars of this country that we are talking about and is also one of the foundations of just a better nation of people.

That means that even Prince George in my riding has had to battle, if you like, with the provincial government in trying to get a cancer clinic located in Prince George. Yet what does the B.C. government do? It expands or builds new facilities, if you can believe that, in Kelowna and Kamloops, arguing about geography and what have you.

• (1700)

There is a clear example where a provincial government has made a decision like that. Unfortunately, in this case it is a bad decision. I am also reminded by the many community health clinics that approach me and talk about how difficult it is to attract professionals to stay in their communities.

I am sure I am not alone. Many members have smaller, rural communities in their ridings. The community clinic, Belmont in my riding for example, advertises in the newspapers in the U.K. to try to get doctors to come there. I do not know what kind of newspapers. It is trying to promote and bring professionals like that to our communities.

We produce some nice pamphlets with snowmobiles on them. We used to have a northern tax allowance in some parts of the country to try to encourage people to come to those parts of British Columbia.

Again, without dragging it out, accessibility is an important question not just in terms of across the border of the province with the United States in the band of the major population as we know it, but also in the distance that is growing in many areas between the urban and rural communities, often within provinces themselves.

Also, I would argue strongly. I think there is a role for the federal government and this Parliament to use its spending clout. That is what it is all about. Mr. Speaker, you know that. When the federal government sits down

with the provinces, it hammers out agreements on questions like universality which have to be written into any kind of agreement. Public administration of health care is written into any agreements with the provinces as well.

That is what it comes down to in terms of governing the country, in using the spending clout, if you like, Mr. Speaker. I have suggested that maybe we could use a little more clout in some cases with the provinces which were not doing the proper kind of spending on health care that there should be.

I mentioned earlier about prevention. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. There is not a better way to spend money than ensuring that young people, particularly in schools, are guaranteed their health care.

With regard to health promotion, my colleague from Surrey has had to start a health watch, because we have to keep track of what the government members are doing to our health care system. Daily, we have reports from the different provinces about how they are, piecemeal, taking apart our health care system.

That is not the kind of health care system we want to have in this country. I would encourage the members opposite to really show their courage. I know that they will be called upon to do that at some point in the mandate of this government when they are called to go before the people again.

There could not be a better issue to get support from your constituents on than health care. I would strongly encourage the members opposite to support our amendment to the motion and to support the main motion as well.

Mr. Sid Parker (Kootenay East): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a few questions to my colleague from Prince George.

He mentioned the matter of trust, and I think this is something that we have to question with regard to the government's motives with respect to health care. During the last election, comments were made by government members about the level playing field with regard to the free trade agreement and so on.

They made comments about how the Americans were concerned about our social programs and we were notified by the government members that our social programs would not be affected. Yet, we have seen the changes to the Unemployment Insurance Act, which now means the government has completely withdrawn its contribution to unemployment insurance and which brings about the level playing field that the Americans were calling for.

We have seen the clawback to the old age pensions whereby the social programs are being attacked there.

We have seen the cutbacks in the transfer payments to the provinces. We have seen the equalization grants being attacked. We have also heard comments from a former cabinet minister of the Conservative government with regard to the commitments to keep the Canadian dollar high, all part of the free trade agreement. When the member talked about the matter of trust, I say to him that it is important that we also identify the fact that the free trade agreement possibly has some of the ramifications of what the government is trying to bring about here.

I would like to ask my colleague from Prince George—Bulkley Valley if he identifies that as probably the biggest problem we have today with regard to the cutbacks in our social programs.

Mr. Gardiner: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Kootenay East for raising some very important questions. I know the tenacity with which he has raised other matters within the party and the caucus, and I know the hard work he has been doing in his riding on many issues, such as health care.

I made notes and there are three points which I picked up during his comments. The first one is trust. He is absolutely right. I suppose we have reached the stage where I am not sure that this government can be trusted. Certainly the question of trust is reflected in the correspondence I receive from my constituents about this government in particular and, unfortunately, regarding all elected people. That makes it more difficult for those who feel there is an alternative, a different way to do things. Of course we in the New Democratic Party believe very much that there is a different and better way to run and administer the affairs of the Government of Canada in order to develop a better country.

Some of the Conservative members opposite got a little excited when my hon. friend made reference to a former colleague of theirs who, during discussions on the free trade agreement, made some references to a secret deal between the Canadian government and the U.S. government in terms of letting our dollar go up and develop the level playing field, et cetera.

We will find out the truth about that as time goes by. Maybe Mr. Stevens will be writing a book some day and we will find out the real story behind a lot of it. But we do know this—

Mr. Epp: He wasn't even part of the agreement.

Mr. Gardiner: He was not even part of the agreement. Well, Mr. Stevens will write the book and we will see just exactly what the truth is behind it all, the truth behind the higher dollar.

Last night during discussions here in the House about the softwood lumber tariff, a subject with which I am very familiar, and how the rising dollar has helped destroy our forest industry in this country, we learned the thinking on the part of this government is that the memorandum of understanding on the softwood lumber tariff has done the job. Well, the job was done by the increase in the Canadian dollar that this government allowed in co-operation with their friends in Washington, D.C.

The question is, why does this government do this. I think perhaps we should look at Ronald Reagan's memoirs or something like that to get to the bottom of the thinking of this government. It is their view that the freeing up of government—

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Several members have questions and comments. Therefore, I must interrupt the hon. member. The hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton has the floor.

[*English*]

Mr. Ken James (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I noticed that the amendment put forward by the NDP adds the following words: "specifically its original commitment to restore 50 per cent federal funding for provincial health care costs".

The member who has just spoken was, in essence, running down the federal government.

• (1710)

Now they are coming through with an amendment of this kind that we would assume means the restoration of costs shared of all provincial health expenditures. That would cost $5.4 billion.

Is the member aware that this could probably replace provincial health care dollars? Can the member be honest with Canadians and tell them where they would get the $5.4 billion that the amendment he is supporting would have the government come forth with? What would they do? They should be honest with Canadians. Will they eliminate programs such as the illiteracy reduction program? Would they create job creation programs? Would they get the money from family allowances? Let's come clean with Canadians as to where they would find the $5.4 billion. Would it be from research, from the green plan? Be honest with Canadians for once and tell us where you would find these dollars. It is easy to come out with these amendments.

It is time that the NDP, rather than call down this government that spends $42 billion a year on human resource development, covering health and education, told Canadians where it would find the money.

Mr. Gardiner: Mr. Speaker, I have had plenty of advice from my colleagues and others to answer the member's question.

First of all, I suggest that it is unfortunate that the Prime Minister is not here right now because it was the Prime Minister who said across this country in 1983 that he thought that federal health care funds should try and reach 50-50. When the Prime Minister returns to the Chamber, I know the member will ask his own Prime Minister about his position on that.

The member asks: Where are you going to get the money from? Here are two quick answers. I would seek from the members opposite unanimous consent on a motion of the House to amend the budget to eliminate the entertainment tax which would bring in $1.1 billion to the Government of Canada; and I would eliminate the $153 a day to the Senate. Let's spend that money on health care policy instead.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Order. I ask the honorable members to revert to the subject before the House.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter L. McCreath (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to rise to participate in this debate. I compliment the hon. member for Winnipeg North for bringing forth this very important topic for discussion in the House today. There is no

question in my mind that every member of Parliament in this House strongly supports medicare and is fully committed to medicare. I for one certainly would reaffirm, if ever there were any doubt, my commitment to medicare.

As an aside, there has been some discussion with respect to the motion that is before us, which of course is an opposition motion presented on supply and therefore is a confidence motion in the government. Naturally, in accordance with long-standing tradition, government members will vote against the motion. However, that is really irrelevant in terms of the government's commitment to medicare.

What is important here is that all members of this House, representing all parts of Canada, stand here today and make known to their constituents and indeed to all Canadians the strong commitment that we have to our health care system in Canada and to medicare. That is what is important: where we stand on the issue and not the health of this particular motion.

Canadians probably value their health care system more than just about anything else that we have in Canada, and for good reason. We all have stories of our experiences travelling abroad. One time when I was in the United States, I had a very minor illness and had to see a local physician and buy some medication. Before it was all finished, it cost me approximately $125. We do not want to see that kind of situation in Canada, and Canadians do not want to see that situation in Canada. Indeed, that is one reason Canadians commit as much money as they do, through their government, to our health care system. In Nova Scotia we have a provincial sales tax of 10 per cent at the moment. That goes toward our health care system.

When we go to the United States and some other countries and pay a sales tax, we do not necessarily get a return for that or the people of that country do not get the health care system that we get in Canada. So, it is something that is important to Canadians and all members of the House should stand today and make that point.

In my province of Nova Scotia, we have what we consider to be a health care system second to none. That does not mean, of course, that it cannot be improved. It does not mean that there are not facilities that we would like to have that we do not have. But the fact is we can be very proud, not only of the system in general but, indeed, of the people who make the system, the health care professionals we have in our province.

In my constituency of the South Shore, we have a beautiful new facility in the South Shore Regional Hospital with a dedicated cadre of workers, as we have in our other three hospitals in the South Shore; the Fishermen's Memorial in Lunenburg. I publicly commend and thank the Minister of National Health and Welfare for his support and his financial commitment to the establishment of a drug dependency clinic in the Fishermen's Memorial Hospital.

We also have good facilities in the Queen's County Hospital and the Shelburne Roseway Hospital. All of these benefit, as do Nova Scotians generally benefit, from a very dedicated cadre of health care workers in our province.

Medical services in hospitals, in particular, require more than professionally trained and professionally paid health care workers. They also exist because of the volunteers, the ordinary citizens who commit their time on a voluntary basis to work as auxiliary members within the hospital, as board members or, indeed, in various fund raising projects to support the work. Work that is supported from the public purse, yes, but work that is supported because many Canadians, many Nova Scotians commit their time, energy and enthusiasm to working to raise money and to do voluntarily tasks that contribute to making our health care system what it is.

As an aside, I might say that as a member of Parliament, of course, like all of us in this place, I spend time in Ottawa. No more so than I have to but, nevertheless, I do. I had occasion earlier this year to be a patient at the National Defence Medical Centre, which was the subject of some controversy when the Auditor General's report came down. I am not particularly interested in getting involved in the controversy, because one thing I noticed did not come out at that time was the quality of health care provided in that institution. As a patient there for five days, I have to say that I have never been anywhere where I was so impressed, not just with the professional-

ism of the staff of that institution, but with the friendly environment there in the way they treated me as a patient. I thought it was superb.

Shortly thereafter, when a number of people from that institution went to serve in the Canadian field hospital as part of the Canadian contribution to the coalition in the gulf war, I thought about some of the men and women who had made my stay in hospital a less unhappy occasion than a stay in a hospital might be. Of course, like all Canadians, I am delighted that they are all returning home safely.

While it is sometimes popular to get up and criticize things, I think we also have to be prepared to stand up when things are good and say so publicly. In a sense, I am bootlegging an opportunity to publicly thank the people at the DNDMC for the wonderful service and support I received when I was a patient there.

The issue here is really our commitment to medicare. As someone said earlier in the debate, we can all stand on principle and say we support our medicare system. And of course we do. The issue we have to consider is how tangibly and most effectively do we support that system?

What I seem to hear some of my hon. colleagues opposite saying is, the more money you throw at it, the more you support it. I notice that it does not seem to matter what the program is, many members opposite frequently stand up and say: "No matter how much you spend, you should spend more". That is not really a realistic solution to the problem.

The best way to preserve and provide a solid long-term base for our health care system and the financing of our health care system is, of course, a sound Canadian economy and sound government financing, both at the federal and provincial levels.

• (1720)

That is one of the reasons that this government, in what I consider to be a highly responsible manner as well as priority, has said that we have to put the finances of the nation in order so that we have a sound economy and a basis from which we can ensure the long-term viability of not only our medical and our health care system, but indeed our entire social programs in Canada.

It is well and good to go out and in an hysterical manner try to convince Canadians that we are on the verge of seeing our health care system destroyed. Let there not be any illusions as to why that is going on. People on all sides of this House know how much Canadians value their health care system. If we go out and try to convince Canadians that it is being destroyed, there might be some partisan advantage in that to my friends opposite.

This is not the first time we have seen that in this House or in this country. I recall in the fall of 1988 the hysterics and the scare tactics that were disgracefully used, in my opinion, in trying to convince Canadians they were going to lose their health care system. I suppose what we have going on in this debate today is an effort to say: "See, we told you so". Guess what, folks: that is not the case.

What we have going on in this country today and indeed in this House is that we have a government that is responsible in handling the affairs of the nation and an opposition, no matter which end of this House we look at, that simply says, no matter what it is: "Spend more, spend more, spend more". That is the order of the day. I am sorry, but that is not what is in the best interests of this country.

We talk about commitment. If we look at the expenditures, transfers to the provinces in the present budget are 14 per cent of expenditures and 27.4 per cent of expenditures are debt charges. That is what we have to get control of. Then we will have the funding we need to spend as much as is appropriate and is needed to allow our health care system and other support systems to continue to grow.

The fact of the matter is that transfers to provinces are increasing by 3.7 per cent this year while at the same time the government is controlling itself to the extent of 3.4 per cent. We will end up without having a medicare system if we do not get the finances of the nation under control. We all have to come to grips with the reality of that situation.

The fact is that Canada is a federal state. The fact is that under our Constitution health care falls within the jurisdiction of the province. The fact is that provinces have a major if not the lead role to play in the handling of decision making with respect to our health care system. Quite simply, the provinces must accept their responsibilities.

We just had a major royal commission on health care in Nova Scotia which, among other things, pointed out very clearly and unequivocally that the challenge of growing health care costs is probably the greatest challenge that is going to be faced by governments in this country, both federally and provincially but particularly

provincially, over the next few years. We have to come to grips with that.

We have to ask ourselves a number of questions. How do we control that cost so that we can maintain a quality health care system? How do we ensure that we are getting the best value from our expenditures with respect to health care? Do we have to have all the procedures that are there? When new technology comes out, do we necessarily have to go out and acquire it and put it in all facilities? Do people always have to go to hospitals when in fact what they may need is a visit to a doctor? Do people have to attend at the doctor's office as often as they do?

The provinces are going to have to face these types of questions in terms of access to the health care system. The important thing is that we have to have a system that can respond to every need, every health care need of every Canadian. But at the same time, we have to ensure that those valuable resources are used for the benefit of those who need them, and not to provide entertainment for people on sunny days.

We have to also go on and ask other questions. Do we have adequate emphasis on prevention? What is the quality of health education in Canada? Certainly there have been improvements in health education in the schools in recent years, but what is the attitude that students have toward health education?

I have a son in junior high school. I know the attitude that he and many of his friends have with respect to health education. They do not recognize it as the priority that they should recognize it in terms of the school curriculum. It is something that is every bit as important if not more important to them personally than math, reading, social studies and some of the other things.

We have to look at the quality of health education and we have to look at preventive measures. The most cost efficient health care system is one in which we prevent people from becoming ill who, with some appropriate education, in fact would avoid the illnesses that have got them there.

We have to ask questions about institutionalizing people. It is a simple solution to a problem to say that we will institutionalize them, but that may not be the best solution. Not only may it not be the best solution from a cost point of view, but it may not be the best solution from the point of view of the individual.

This takes us a little beyond simple health care to the question of geriatric care. Are we adequately responding as a nation to the implications of the fact that we live in an aging society, that the percentage of our population who are senior citizens is growing all the time? How are we going to cope with the financial implications of that?

Should we be just simply pushing people toward institutionalization, or should we be making greater efforts to make it possible for people to stay and have independence within their own homes? It seems to me that these are questions we should be asking.

Our system in Canada is unquestionably a good one if we compare it to some others. For example, the cost of health care in Canada is equivalent to 8.9 per cent of the GNP, whereas in the United States it is 11.6 per cent of the GNP and at that there are 30 million people without access to proper health care in the United States.

An hon. member: It is 40 million.

Mr. McCreath: One of my hon. friends says 40 million. Let it be 40 million. The bottom line is that we have a significantly better system. We all know it and we want to maintain the quality of it.

The provinces must take the lead in pursuing reform. For many of these questions, the answers must come from them because they are the delivery agents. It is all well and good for them simply to say to the federal government: "Give us more money". Let us be frank, the federal government has no assurance that the money is even going to be used for health care.

Let us face it that provinces can raise revenues as well. They can raise taxes too. I do not know what my hon. friends opposite think about that, but the fact of the matter is it is there.

The federal government does have a role to play obviously in providing financial support. The federal government also can and does play a significant role in encouraging co-operation among the provinces. Indeed every six months there is a federal-provincial meeting of ministers, officials and so on. There is a variety of

advisory committees which attempt to explore solutions to problems by working together, and that is as it should be.

In the last two years, for example, several new initiatives central to the better management of health resources have been launched. I would like to mention a couple, if I may.

In 1989, the federal government, the provinces and territories created a new Canadian co-ordinating office for health technology assessment and a new National Health Information Council was established. A project was undertaken on health care quality assurance and a paper was commissioned on medical manpower issues and the strategies available to better manage human resources. There is a role for the federal government to act as a co-ordinating agency.

We have to remember first and foremost that we have our responsibilities as a federal government, but then the provinces have theirs and they must live up to theirs.

In conclusion, what we are here to talk about is our commitment to our health care system. It seems to me there are four bases upon which Canadians can establish and confirm, as it were, their commitment to our health care system. First, we must have a cadre of well trained and committed health care professionals supported by a large number of volunteers committed to the system. That we have.

Second, we must have good health care facilities, the infrastructure for health care facilities. While these things can always be improved, compared to the other countries of the world it seems to me we have pretty excellent facilities.

Third, Canadians themselves must believe in the importance of our health care system and our medicare system. I would submit that every member of this House would recognize the commitment that Canadians have and the high level of value that Canadians place in their health care system.

Fourth, we must have a solid financial base to ensure the long-term security of that health care system. That comes from governments that manage their affairs soundly and that live within their means. It ensures that we have sound financial management of the government, which in turn will lead to a sound economy in the country. That is probably the most important reaffirmation and confirmation of the long-term viability and future of our health care system in Canada.

• (1730)

Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the member's comments and to professions of commitment on the part of the government to the health care system in Canada, while all the while it is ensuring that the provinces have inadequate resources to fund their medical systems.

If the member wants to look close to home, he will see the Newfoundland budget just last week with cuts in beds in the health care system there. In the Manitoba budget it is in the same situation. The budgets of today will no doubt be reacting to last month's federal budget.

We see the implications of the cuts to medicare, the cuts in transfers to the provinces, very quickly by seeing the cuts that have been made at the provincial level. Let us not pretend that this government's budgetary and financial measures are not having immediate detrimental impacts on the health care system across this country.

Let us not pretend that we could not predict that is what was going to happen. After three years in a row of cuts by this government we are seeing major inroads into the quality of our health care system.

It is interesting—and I will come to my question in a moment—that the Liberal Party moved the motion referring to a commitment to medicare. After all, when it was in government, on at least two very clear occasions it also cut funding from the federal government to the provinces for medicare. While in government both the Tories and the Liberals have ensured that resources available to the provinces for health care have been cut. In opposition, both those parties say different things.

If we go back and look at the record, we see that when the Liberals were making cuts the present Minister of Finance was chastising them for undermining the future health and post-secondary education prospects of Canadians. As soon as the role reversal takes place, we have cuts made by the Conservative governments and protestations by former Liberal government members.

We have both parties attacking medicare when they are in government and, when they are in opposition, saying positive things about the health care system and the need for further support.

I want to ask the member two questions. In terms of determinants of health care, we are well aware that lower income Canadians are much more subject to problems with their health than those Canadians who are better off. Their problems with nutrition, problems with housing, and problems with lower levels of education illustrate themselves in a much greater use of the health care system and much more morbidity in that community.

I want to ask the member one very simple question. If he is so concerned about the health care system, why is it that his government has chosen to attack social programs across this country, putting more and more people into more difficulties with poverty, attacking the very poorest of our society? Why is he doing that if he is so interested in ensuring that the health care system survives?

I want to ask him one last question. I would like to ask him who he thinks said the following in 1983: "The problem with medicare arose because the federal government reneged on commitments it made to the provinces and cut back very drastically on the dollars it sent to the provinces who are charged with administering and paying for medicare. The problem has arisen because of unilateral arbitrary cutback by the federal government to the provinces who are charged with footing the bill. That is the problem".

I will put the member out of his suspense. That was the present Prime Minister who said that and now, while he is in government, he is of course making exactly those same cuts that he criticized. I wonder if the member might want to comment on the question that I raised.

Mr. McCreath: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. friend for his contribution to the debate. Indeed I will attempt to respond to his question as best I can.

I think his good friend, the premier of Ontario, is going to find out a little bit about the realities of being in government as opposed to the realities of being in opposition; being in opposition where one can do, as my hon. friend does and say: "Spend more, spend more, spend more. Don't worry about who is going to pay the piper at the end of the day".

The reality of the situation is that it is not that simple. I would remind my hon. friend that we are not going to be able to have any social programs at all in this country if we do not get the finances of the nation under control.

My hon. friend uses the example of the recent budget in Newfoundland to illustrate his point. Perhaps I might be permitted to quote the premier of Newfoundland himself who he will admit, I am sure, is a most definitive source. Mr. Wells' comment on the federal government was, and I quote from the news report:

> I am kind of relieved, I would say. It will not cause us to make significant changes to our own budget.

He went on to say that that documents was expected next week. Mr. Wells does not share my hon. friend's view that the federal government's budget is going to interfere.

There is no question that they may have some problem in the financing of the Government of Newfoundland. I know that in our own province all Nova Scotian taxpayers including myself await with trepidation the provincial budget that is going to come down there. They forecast a $30 million deficit this year and, as of four months ago, they had it up to a $150 million deficit. I have some concerns about that.

However the bottom line is—and this is what my hon. fiends in the New Democratic Party seem to forget sometimes—that at some point in the process we have to pay the bills.

I was raised—and maybe it is an old value—to know you have got to cut the cloth according to the pattern. I was brought up to believe that you have to pay your bills, that you just cannot endlessly borrow money and let the thing go and go and go until you have bankrupted the next generation who are left with it.

As I said in my remarks—and I know with assurance that my hon. friend listened very, very carefully to them—the best support for a health care system, as for other programs that Canadians want and value, is a sound basis for the economy of the government as well as for the economy of the nation. That is the strongest basis upon which we can support our health care system.

Unfortunately my hon. friends opposite may not share that view. They have credit cards that evidently do not have bills sent back to them at the end of the month. They have credit cards that evidently do not accrue

interest. But it is not that way in the real world and it is not that way in government.

Mr. Dingwall: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It has nothing to do with the remarks being made by my colleague from Nova Scotia.

I wonder if I might seek unanimous consent of the House for my colleague from Scarborough—Agincourt to make a brief statement of personal privilege. I indicate to the House that it would take no longer than 30 to 40 seconds, and I seek unanimous consent.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Does the House agree with the request of the opposition House leader?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

APOLOGY OF MEMBER FOR SCARBOROUGH—AGINCOURT

Mr. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of personal privilege.

As members will know, I just returned from a trip to Trinidad and Tobago which caused a great deal of controversy. I stand here to apologize unequivocally to the members of this House, to the leadership of my party, to the people of Canada, and to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for my actions.

I shall henceforth not engage in activities outside my responsibilities as critic. I have taken this statement to the leadership of my party and apologized to my leader and to my Liberal colleagues for this unfortunate incident.

* * *

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S. O. 81—HEALTH CARE

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Pagtakhan (p. 18648), and the amendment of Mr. Karpoff (p. 18662).

Mr. Brian L. Gardiner (Prince George—Bulkley Valley): I have just a very quick question, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if the hon. member could pass on his opinions to me about whether he thinks there should be guarantees that federal funds on health and education sent to the provinces are actually spent on health and post-secondary education.

Mr. McCreath: Mr. Speaker, naturally, as with all members of this House, I would like to think I could control what other people can do, but one of the things I have learned in life is that one cannot do that. One of the things I learned when I studied the history and the politics of my country is that we are a federal state.

• (1740)

The provinces have their responsibilities, and the Government of Canada has its responsibilities. As much as the Government of Canada, in its wisdom and particularly because we have such an excellent and wise government in Canada today, might wish to dictate to the provinces of the country what they shall do, unfortunately that is not the nature of our federal system in Canada and unfortunately that is not possible for us to do. It is phoney, unrealistic and fundamentally dishonest to suggest that it would be appropriate for this government and this House to attempt to do that.

Mr. George Proud (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me to rise tonight to take part in this debate on this motion:

> That this House reaffirm its commitment to Medicare.

I feel very strongly that one of the saddest facts in our country is the growing gap that separates the health care of the rich and the poor.

Health care statistics speak for themselves. Well-off Canadians live longer and healthier lives than do poorer, low-income families. In my view, the health care gap can be measured by two standards: the have provinces and the have not provinces.

This can be translated into terms of people, the gap between the high income Canadians and the low income Canadians, which also translates into 10 to 11 years of longevity for high income Canadians compared to that of low income Canadians.

It was in 1986 when the present government finally recognized the health care gap. Let me quote what one of Health and Welfare Canada's many documents said: "The first challenge we face is to find ways of reducing inequities in the health of low versus high income groups in Canada".

Instead of doing this, it introduced Bill C-69 which limited funding to the provinces. In the next two years, Prince Edward Island, which is the smallest province in Canada, will lose $12 million in transfer payments. This

will spell higher taxes, less social programs and, most of all, the cutting of Atlantic Canada's lifeline.

The fabric of social programs is starting to fray and medicare will be the first to go. Smaller provinces or territories will not be able to hold the system together or to support the development of the new and innovative health programs that are needed.

How can the federal government expect a small province or territory to maintain national health care standards, given that it has slashed Established Programs Financing. Moreover, the estimates of accumulative loss to provincial and territorial health care funding from 1986–87 to 1991–95 will total at least $22 billion.

It is frightening what this government is doing to what once was called a sacred trust of our country and our community. It is ironic that Canada has been held up as a model for the United States while we ourselves, are in danger of losing our medicare and ending up with a worse system than they have with user fees, extra billings and, most of all, two systems; one for the rich and one for the poor.

Speaking of my own province, we have a small tax base with 125,000 or 130,000 people. Has the Government of Canada forgotten the small areas of this country? With an already aging population and with the youth of the province going to have to leave and relocate in the Golden Triangle of central Canada, P.E.I. has a higher than average age group.

With this age group comes a greater demand for health care. Of course, with a greater demand for health care comes a greater need for financing. The freeze in federal–provincial transfer payments, as was said in the House a few minutes ago, has already resulted in the harshest budget ever handed down in Newfoundland.

Nine hundred health care jobs were lost; 360 hospital beds were closed. If this plan of action continues, health care will be eliminated.

In conclusion, I just want to say that I have heard the member opposite from South Shore speaking that his commitment to medicare will continue. I hope that the members of this House will see that we will not lose this sacred trust that is famous and renowned world-wide.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): It being 5.45 o'clock p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply pursuant to Standing Order 81(14).

The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Call in the members.

The House divided on the amendment, which was negatived on the following division:

(*Division No. 395*)

YEAS

Members

Althouse	Arseneault
Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing)	Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre)
Baker	Barrett
Bélair	Bellemare
Berger	Bevilacqua
Black	Blackburn (Brant)
Blaikie	Blondin
Boudria	Breaugh
Butland	Caccia
Callbeck	Catterall
Clancy	Comuzzi
Dingwall	Dionne
Ferguson	Finestone
Fisher	Fontana
Foster	Gaffney
Gagliano	Gardiner
Gauthier	Gray (Windsor West)
Guarnieri	Harb
Harvard	Harvey (Edmonton East)
Jordan	Karpoff
Keyes	Langan (Mission—Coquitlam)
Langdon (Essex—Windsor)	Laporte
LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso)	Lee
MacDonald (Dartmouth)	MacLaren
MacWilliam	Manley
Marchi	Marleau
Martin (Lasalle—Émard)	McCurdy
McGuire	Milliken
Mills	Mitchell
Murphy	Nault
Ouellet	Pagtakhan
Parent	Parker
Peterson	Phinney
Proud	Prud'homme

Riis	Rodriguez
Rompkey	Samson
Simmons	Speller
Stewart	Taylor
Tobin	Vanclief
Wood	Young (Acadie—Bathurst)—80

NAYS

Members

Andre	Attewell
Beatty	Belsher
Bernier	Bird
Bjornson	Blais
Blenkarn	Bosley
Bourgault	Boyer
Brightwell	Cadieux
Campbell (Vancouver Centre)	Cardiff
Chadwick	Champagne (Champlain)
Charest	Clark (Yellowhead)
Clark (Brandon—Souris)	Collins
Cooper	Corbeil
Corbett	Côté
Couture	Crosbie (St. John's West)
Darling	DeBlois
de Cotret	Della Noce
Desjardins	Dick
Dobbie	Dorin
Duplessis	Epp
Fee	Feltham
Ferland	Fontaine
Fretz	Friesen
Gibeau	Gray (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)
Greene	Grey (Beaver River)
Guilbault	Gustafson
Harvey (Chicoutimi)	Hawkes
Hicks	Hockin
Holtmann	Horning
Hudon	Hughes
Jacques	James
Jelinek	Johnson
Joncas	Jourdenais
Kempling	Koury
Landry	Langlois
Lapierre	Larrivée
Layton	Leblanc (Longueuil)
Lopez	MacDonald (Rosedale)
MacDougall (Timiskaming)	Malone
Martin (Lincoln)	Masse
Mazankowski	McCreath
McDermid	McDougall (St. Paul's)
McKnight	McLean
Merrithew	Monteith
Moore	Mulroney
Oberle	O'Kurley
Paproski	Plourde
Porter	Pronovost
Redway	Reimer
Ricard	Richardson
Roy-Arcelin	Schneider
Scott (Victoria—Haliburton)	Siddon
Sobeski	Soetens
Sparrow	Tardif
Tétreault	Thacker
Thompson	Thorkelson
Tremblay (Rosemont)	Tremblay (Québec-Est)
Tremblay (Lotbinière)	Turner (Halton—Peel)
Valcourt	Van de Walle
Venne	Vézina
Vincent	Weiner
White	Wilbee
Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia)	
Wilson (Etobicoke Centre)	Worthy—125

• (1810)

Mr. Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether or not there is a predisposition in the Chamber to apply the vote just taken to the next issue.

Mr. Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker: The next vote is on the main motion in the name of Mr. Pagtakhan.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five Members having risen:

Mr. Speaker: Can I be dispensed from ringing the bells?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The House divided on the motion which was negatived on the following division:

(*Division No. 396*)

YEAS

Members

Althouse	Arseneault
Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing)	Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre)
Baker	Barrett
Bélair	Bellemare
Berger	Bevilacqua
Black	Blackburn (Brant)
Blaikie	Blondin
Boudria	Breaugh
Butland	Caccia
Callbeck	Catterall
Clancy	Comuzzi
Dingwall	Dionne
Ferguson	Finestone
Fisher	Fontana
Foster	Gaffney
Gagliano	Gardiner
Gauthier	Gray (Windsor West)
Grey (Beaver River)	Guarnieri
Harb	Harvard
Harvey (Edmonton East)	Jordan
Karpoff	Keyes

Langan (Mission—Coquitlam)
Laporte
Lee
MacLaren
Manley
Marleau
McCurdy
Milliken
Mitchell
Nault
Pagtakhan
Parker
Phinney
Prud'homme
Rodriguez
Samson
Speller
Taylor
Vanclief
Young (Acadie—Bathurst)—81

Langdon (Essex—Windsor)
LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso)
MacDonald (Dartmouth)
MacWilliam
Marchi
Martin (Lasalle—Émard)
McGuire
Mills
Murphy
Ouellet
Parent
Peterson
Proud
Riis
Rompkey
Simmons
Stewart
Tobin
Wood

NAYS

Members

Andre
Beatty
Bernier
Bjornson
Blenkarn
Bourgault
Brightwell
Campbell (Vancouver Centre)
Chadwick
Charest
Clark (Brandon—Souris)
Cooper
Corbett
Couture
Darling
de Cotret
Desjardins
Dobbie
Duplessis
Fee
Ferland
Fretz
Gibeau
Greene
Gustafson

Attewell
Belsher
Bird
Blais
Bosley
Boyer
Cadieux
Cardiff
Champagne (Champlain)
Clark (Yellowhead)
Collins
Corbeil
Côté
Crosbie (St. John's West)
DeBlois
Della Noce
Dick
Dorin
Epp
Feltham
Fontaine
Friesen
Gray (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)
Guilbault
Harvey (Chicoutimi)

Hawkes
Hockin
Horning
Hughes
James
Johnson
Jourdenais
Koury
Langlois
Larrivée
Leblanc (Longueuil)
MacDonald (Rosedale)
Malone
Mazankowski
McDermid
McKnight
Merrithew
Moore
Oberle
Plourde
Pronovost
Reimer
Richardson
Schneider
Siddon
Soetens
Tardif
Thacker
Thorkelson
Tremblay (Québec-Est)
Turner (Halton—Peel)
Van de Walle
Vézina
Weiner
Wilbee
Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia)

Hicks
Holtmann
Hudon
Jacques
Jelinek
Joncas
Kempling
Landry
Lapierre
Layton
Lopez
MacDougall (Timiskaming)
Masse
McCreath
McDougall (St. Paul's)
McLean
Monteith
Mulroney
Paproski
Porter
Redway
Ricard
Roy-Arcelin
Scott (Victoria—Haliburton)
Sobeski
Sparrow
Tétreault
Thompson
Tremblay (Rosemont)
Tremblay (Lotbinière)
Valcourt
Venne
Vincent
White
Wilson (Etobicoke Centre)
Worthy—122

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion negatived.

Motion negatived.

Mr. Speaker: It being 6.30 p.m., this house stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

The House adjourned at 6.23 p.m.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, March 20, 1991

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 31

[*English*]

FORESTRY

Mr. Réginald Bélair (Cochrane—Superior): Mr. Speaker, the Forest Resource Development Agreement with the province of Ontario expired in March 1989.

This deal was for $150 million, funded equally by the provincial and federal governments.

During the last two years, the Minister of Finance has cut the Department of Forestry's budget by $60 million. It is no wonder that the Minister of Forestry had only $25 million to offer Ontario to renew the agreement. Provincial officials had no choice but to refuse such an offer. An offer that contains a cut of 66 per cent in funding is unacceptable.

I therefore urge the Minister of Forestry to stand up for the forest industry at the cabinet table and obtain the necessary funds to renew the agreement with the province of Ontario.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION

Mr. Gaby Larrivée (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, hon. members, I would like to take a few minutes of your time to reflect on the importance of Thursday, March 21 the International Day for the Elimination of Discrimination.

Canada is known as a country where justice and equality are the rule. We all know that but today, that is something that bears repeating. We have the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Employment Equity Act and the Canadian Multiculturalism Act. Soon we will have a new Canadian Race Relations Foundation and a new Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship.

Racism exists, however, and unfortunately, some Canadians do not live up to our reputation as a nation.

That is something to think about, Mr. Speaker. Racism is a pernicious evil and it requires our utmost vigilance. It undermines people's confidence and prevents them from reaching their full potential.

Only when we have managed to root out this evil will we be worthy of Canada's reputation as a just and tolerant society, a model for the rest of the world.

* * *

LEBANON

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Mr. Speaker, the conflict in the Persian Gulf has managed to obscure completely the very serious situation that exists in Lebanon. Canadians of Lebanese origin have made an impressive contribution to Canada's economic and social development. For this reason—one of many—it is unacceptable for the Canadian ambassador to be absent from Beirut. Lebanon is an occupied country. There are flagrant and constant violations of international law. Unfortunately, Canada has been very slow to react and to denounce those responsible. This is an intolerable situation. The Canadian government's silence on this matter should be a reason for Canadians to do everything they can to help the Lebanese people recover their independence and freedom.

* * *

[*English*]

EQUALITY

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, it is shocking but not surprising that the 1990 report of the Canadian Human Rights Commission highlights how this government has perpetuated gender based discrimination.

Canadian women are still over-represented in underpaid and part-time jobs. "Better child care arrangements", the report states, "would give women a better chance to participate in the workforce on an equitable basis".

But where is the national child care program that this Prime Minister has wholeheartedly promised more than once?

The broken promises are as abundant as the pink-collar ghettos that this government has increased, and that this report laments.

We should all be lamenting the fact that last October our Status of Women minister was quoted as saying that her government has no intention of adding targets and timetables to the hollow Employment Equity Act.

No targets, no timetables, no commitment. That is the record of this government on women's equality.

* * *

DUCKS UNLIMITED

Mr. Felix Holtmann (Portage—Interlake): Mr. Speaker, Ducks Unlimited of Canada has been in the business of conserving waterfowl habitat and enhancing our wetlands across Canada for over 50 years.

Last year, Ducks Unlimited spent close to $60 million on projects from coast to coast, $60 million that went toward preserving and constructing new wildlife habitat.

Ducks Unlimited is a good corporate citizen. It not only spends this money on preserving waterfowl habitat, but it spends it as well to educate and inform Canadians, particularly young Canadians, about the value of our environment.

Ducks Unlimited deserves recognition and the thanks of all Canadians for a job well done. Even before it was popular to be an environmentalist, Ducks Unlimited was on the job of conserving.

When a flock of waterfowl fly over you this spring on their way back from the south, give a thought of thanks to Ducks Unlimited.

[*Translation*]

LA FRANCOPHONIE

Mr. Gabriel Desjardins (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to announce today that at the next Francophone summit, Canada intends to move a resolution that would designate March 20 as the *Journée internationale de la francophonie.*

In 1986, at the first Francophonie summit, the Francophone community project took shape. Since then, there have been summit meetings at Quebec City and Dakar. Participating countries have constantly broadened the cultural concept to include science, technology and economic issues. Consisting of more than 40 nations and nearly 400 million men and women, *la Francophonie* is based above all on language and a set of values. It has already set a number of goals in the areas of training, scientific research, and the advancement of cultural industries and communications. *La Francophonie* is not utopic but a forum for exchanges of views and a source of growth for all member countries.

* * *

[*English*]

REVENUE CANADA

Mr. Jim Jordan (Leeds—Grenville): Mr. Speaker, the attempt to show support for our Canadian merchants in border towns by introducing a fast lane at border points is nothing more than a licence to import goods illegally into Canada. I suggest the revenue minister would be hard pressed to find one Canadian border town merchant who would support this initiative.

What was needed was more employees at border point crossings to enforce the import rules. In an effort to facilitate Americans entry into Canada, the government has abandoned the concerns of Canadian businessmen in border towns just at a time when they are already witnessing severe business downturns.

This new procedure does not even warrant a trial period. On behalf of the retailers in all Canadian border towns, I am asking the government to close the fast lanes now and start to show some real concern for the problems confronting merchants in border towns.

[*Translation*]

GALA DES FIDÉIDES

Mrs. Suzanne Duplessis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Science and Technology)): Mr. Speaker, last Thursday evening in Quebec City, 800 people attended the *Gala des Fidéides* to celebrate excellence and top performances in the business world.

I would like to congratulate all finalists and award winners: Restaurant Melrose, Transport Besner, Berclain Gestion Opérationnelle, Multitel Inc., *Centre d'arbritrage commercial national et international du Québec, Systèmes Fortune 1000* and Glaverbec, and pay special tribute to the organizer of this event, the Sainte-Foy Chamber of Commerce, which together with other local chambers of commerce made this evening a tremendous success.

This is further proof that the Quebec City area has a dynamic business community.

* * *

MANPOWER AND OCCUPATIONAL TRAINING

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, annually, the federal government and the Government of Quebec spend nearly one million dollars on manpower and occupational training programs. Forty per cent of these expenditures is earmarked for program administration.

Duplication and overlap resulting from both governments' failure to co-ordinate their initiatives are responsible for another $100 million being wasted. In fact, what we have here is a net loss of $500 million. Taxpayers are getting only 50 cents worth of direct services for every dollar invested.

That is why the Conseil du patronat, the central labour bodies, the Co-operative Movement, the Quebec Liberal Party, the Parti Quebecois and the Equality Party are asking for patriation to Quebec of all powers with respect to manpower and occupational training.

• (1410)

[*English*]

CHILD POVERTY

Mrs. Christine Stewart (Northumberland): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the National Council of Welfare, an advisory committee to the government, tabled a report which stated that this government is the first government in history to pull back from its basic commitment to the needs of the poor.

In January, the Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology tabled its report "Children in Poverty: Towards a Better Future". In its list of 16 recommendations, the committee calls on the government to fully support the objective of substantially reducing child poverty in Canada and show leadership by undertaking co-operative strategies with other levels of government and the public at large to address the needs of our country's children.

The report also recommends that a national conference involving all levels of government and the general public on the subject of shared solutions to the problem of child poverty be held within the next 12 months.

In light of the Prime Minister's commitment and that of his government to the ratification of the UN declaration of the rights of the child, it is indeed pressing that such a meeting be called. Allowing children to grow up in poverty is not an option we can afford to leave unaddressed.

* * *

EARTH DAY 1991

Mr. Stan Darling (Parry Sound—Muskoka): Mr. Speaker, 10.02 p.m. tonight marks the vernal equinox, the beginning of spring, the time when light and darkness are equal in both hemispheres of our planet. It also marks the celebration of Earth Day 1991, which this year is being held at the United Nations General Assembly.

At exactly 10.02 p.m., the United Nations Peace Bell, a symbol of global harmony cast in 1954 and made from melted coins collected by children around the world, will be rung three times by the personal representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations signalling a global moment of silent reflection and prayer for the well-being of Mother Earth. After the minute of silence, all available ambassadors from UN member states will each ring the bell one time to indicate global solidarity and the desire to preserve and nurture our common home, Earth.

In speaking with the Canadian Ambassador to the United Nations, the Hon. Yves Fortier, yesterday morning, it is my understanding that Canada will be represented at the ceremony.

At the moment the United Nations peace bell rings, I hope all Canadians will pause and pray with the world community that we all find the strength internationally to become responsible trustees of earth, each in our own area of ability and influence.

* * *

CANADA ASSISTANCE PLAN

Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the National Council of Welfare, the government's own advisory board, said what the NDP has been saying all along: Cuts to the Canada Assistance Plan are irrational and unconscionable, especially at this time of a recession.

It is just the latest indication of how ill-equipped the Minister of Finance is to deal with issues of social policy, and how inappropriate it is for him to attempt to do so. The budget is not the appropriate vehicle for major changes in social policies such as the cap on CAP.

Where did the Minister of Finance get his advice from? From bankers and businessmen who have never spoken to a person on welfare in their lives? Where was the highly publicized Children's Bureau when the latest cap on CAP was being considered? Was it even consulted, or are its powers so limited that it has no real say in how the policies of this government affect children? These policies do affect children because children make up 37 per cent of Canadians receiving welfare.

If this is what the Prime Minister means when he says children are our most valuable resource, then I fear for the future of children in this country.

This government does not listen to Canadians, but should it not listen to its own advisers and stop these attacks on Canada's social programs?

SPRING

Mr. Stan Wilbee (Delta): Mr. Speaker, over the past dozen or more years, CKNW-98 in New Westminster, British Columbia has celebrated the arrival of spring by distributing B.C. grown daffodils to all members of Parliament.

In spite of the snowiest winter of the last 40 years on the B.C. lower mainland, these daffodils remind us that spring comes to B.C. first and symbolize the start of a new season of tourism in British Columbia.

Thousands more daffodils are being distributed to shoppers throughout the lower mainland today by CKNW hostesses.

By the way, the station CKNW stands for Canadians Know Nice Weather. We welcome you all to truly beautiful British Columbia.

* * *

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Mr. Scott Thorkelson (Edmonton—Strathcona): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, March 21, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, commemorates the day in 1960 when more than 70 people were killed and over 180 wounded while demonstrating peacefully against apartheid in Sharpville, South Africa. Six years later the United Nations proclaimed this date as a special day of observance when people of all nations should not just examine their own record on racism but do more to combat it.

Racism is a violation of human rights and dignity. It limits an individual's potential and dehumanizes both its victims and it perpetrators who themselves are victims of ignorance and fear.

I invite every citizen of our great country to renew his or her commitment to equality and freedom. The Canadian dream will not be complete until all people across this nation are accorded equal dignity, equal access and equal participation. In our hearts and minds we have to make every day the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. We have the vision; we have the drive; we have the will.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*English*]

PROSTITUTION

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Acting Prime Minister.

Over the past several weeks we have been raising a number of concerns about this government's abandonment of Canadians most in need.

Seeing the Prime Minister now, as well as wishing him a happy birthday, I would like to ask him a very serious question.

As the Prime Minister knows, there is probably no sadder situation than young people who have turned to street prostitution. I have now had a chance to review in depth the decision of the Minister of Justice to refuse to fund programs to help get street prostitutes off the street. Is the Prime Minister aware that, in rejecting these programs, the Minister of Justice stated that she was doing so because of:

> —the reality of budgetary constraints, the multitude of issues competing for government's attention—and the need of the government to spend money where it's most needed.

What can be more needy than the need of the street prostitute to get off the street? My question is to the Prime Minister.

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member refers to a very complex social problem. I have not said that I am not willing to participate in such programs. My remarks were made in the context of a response to a report by the standing committee of the House, and my concern is that the evidence shows that many street prostitutes are not getting off the street. Therefore, if we focus our program solely on those who are willing to come off the street, we will miss the opportunity to provide a very important connection between society and its caring services and those who are on the street.

However, I made it very clear in the report that I was interested in discussing the matter further with provincial governments who have the primary responsibility of delivering services in that area, and I am very open to supporting programs that can be shown to be effective.

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, in fact the studies show the exact opposite. The studies show that the majority of young street prostitutes want to get off the street.

Does the Prime Minister agree with the statement made by his Minister of Justice, which reads:

> It is open to question whether such projects—

That is referring to projects to get prostitutes off the street.

> —would have much impact on prostitutes, given the reality of the minimum wage that is available after having completed most training programs.

The minister's statement can be interpreted in one of two ways: either the minister is admitting that government training programs are a complete failure and people would be better off in prostitution, or she believes that people choose to be prostitutes in order to make a lot of money.

Will the Prime Minister dissociate himself from the remarks that were not made off the cuff, were not made in passing in a random interview, but were tabled in a report in this House? Are those his views and the views of his government?

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's comments on my remarks are in a sense taken out of context of what I was doing, which was responding to the recommendations of the standing committee. I have in fact been involved in the city of Vancouver with programs that are designed to help people who want to get off the streets, not just prostitutes but other kinds of street kids.

• (1420)

Clearly it is a complex situation. The report of the standing committee seemed to be of the view—solicitation was in fact what it was reviewing; it was making recommendations on how to deal with the solicitation of responding or doing a review of the application of the government's law—that there was a simple connection between those programs and getting people off the street.

I was simply making the point that that is not clear, that it is a much more complex problem than that, and that all of those young people who are on the street need to be dealt with whether or not they show at any time a

willingness to get off the street, as opposed to providing programs for those who indicate a willingness to get off the street before they enter the program.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that the hon. minister has not even read the Badgley Report on this subject. If she had, she would know that the majority of young street prostitutes do not want to be on the street. She is giving the wrong impression. It is absolutely not true that they are on the street because they want to and this is a totally ridiculous answer to a genuine social problem. I will direct this question to the Prime Minister. Given that his Justice Minister has turned her back on the young street prostitutes, will the Prime Minister at least give the young men and women who want to get off the street the chance to do so with federal programs or will he also turn his back on this major social problem?

[*English*]

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member will know, the program is designed to assist young people on the street, whether they are prostitutes or not. The program is delivered by three levels of government. I come from a city in fact where the question of street solicitation is in fact more severe than in any part of the country, and I do not have anything to learn from the hon. member about that.

My response was to a suggestion that getting young people off the streets and out of street solicitation was a simple question of providing those kinds of programs. That is not the case. It is a much more complex problem than that. I believe it has to be dealt with by all of the levels of government that are involved in it.

I indicated very clearly in my response my willingness to continue to discuss these programs with provincial governments that have the primary responsibility in that area.

* * *

ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

Ms. Ethel Blondin (Western Arctic): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Acting Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

The Human Rights Commissioner indicates that the list of aboriginal issues continues to grow. The government has repeatedly ignored its responsibility to address the complex issues aboriginal peoples face. Many native communities are living in Third World conditions.

Will the minister commit himself to end the tragic price aboriginal peoples are forced to pay because of government policies that foster economic dependence instead of autonomy and self-reliance?

Mrs. Dorothy Dobbie (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the question from the hon. member today, because it gives me an opportunity to speak on behalf of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and say that the four pillars the Prime Minister announced in last September's speech are well under way.

There is a very great concern in this government to see that the issues that have been dealt with in the human rights report are addressed. We are working toward that as rapidly as we possibly can.

Ms. Ethel Blondin (Western Arctic): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Human Rights Commissioner would like to hear that, because it is a very well-kept secret if anything is happening. I assume that even CSIS does not know about it, it is such a well-kept secret.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Aboriginal people and their leaders continue to be excluded and ignored in all serious constitutional talks. Last night, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development withdrew the government's promise of last summer for a royal commission on aboriginal issues. Another promise is broken.

Will the Prime Minister today announce a specific timetable and agenda for including the aboriginal people and their leaders in the constitutional process?

Mrs. Dorothy Dobbie (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, nobody has ruled out the possibility of having a royal commission.

However, I think the program the government has launched on right now is one that is working and that should be allowed to work.

If the hon. member is really serious—and I am sure she is—about seeing that these very real concerns of the aboriginal people of this country are addressed, she will join with us in helping to resolve these issues through

step-by-step progress on the four pillars that this Prime Minister announced. That is what we are doing.

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BANKRUPTCIES

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

The news gets worse. Bankruptcy is up 68 per cent. Our national exports are down by $353 million. This means thousands of people have seen their dreams across this country die. It also means that the government's hopes of an export led recovery look out of sight.

The Canadian dollar continues to rise against other currencies. Will the government admit that this is forcing thousands into bankruptcy, cutting back our exports, and seriously threatening the national unity of this country?

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): Mr. Speaker, nobody is pleased with bankruptcies.

Although the bankruptcy report today is not a pleasant one, there are signs that the incidence of bankruptcy has dramatically slowed down. Therefore we feel that the economy is starting to turn around.

I might remind the hon. member that in the period of time from February 1990 to February 1991 there have been 132,613 new incorporated businesses in Canada. So businesses are being created; put that in the proper perspective.

There is economic activity going on, and there are businesses being created. We do not take heart in the statistics that came out today, but we do see signs that that type of activity is slowing down and that the economic activity is starting to perform much better.

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, in fact in the past year there have been 430,000 permanent jobs lost in this country. If that is prosperity, you can have it, because we do not want that kind of prosperity in this country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, here is my supplementary. Last November, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs promised to introduce a new bankruptcy legislation to protect the workers. All that has happened so far is that the number of bankruptcies increased every month. The government did nothing. Why? Why not have helped the people during this terrible recession?

Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, as mentioned earlier and as I said myself on a number of occasions, the government is just finishing the outline of reform of the Bankruptcies Act. As soon as all is in place, we will announce the concrete steps that will be taken and, considering the effort that was put into this, I am convinced that the Canadian people will be satisfied with what we will put on the table.

* * *

[*English*]

CANADIAN GOVERNMENT BONDS

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. I hope I have his attention.

I think we should keep in mind that most developed industrialized countries do not pay their investment brokers to sell government bonds.

How does the Prime Minister justify taking money from children to reduce the deficit when at the same time his government is paying Bay Street investment brokers $20 million to $60 million to sell Canadian bonds?

• (1430)

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): Mr. Speaker, this has been done for decades. The hon. member knows that. He is bringing a red herring to the floor of the House of Commons as usual.

* * *

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. In the past 24 hours we heard that 1,800 employees lost their jobs at General Motors in Sainte-Thérèse; 125 jobs were lost at Emballage Sommerville in Longueuil and 90 jobs were lost at Ballin Inc. at Saint-Laurent, where a foreman and a vice-president were wounded by an employee who was told he was fired.

My question to the Prime Minister is this: When will he and his government announce economic policies that will stop this steady stream of unemployed workers that is engulfing Montreal? Montreal has become the unemployment capital of Canada. When is he going to do something about it?

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Labour and Minister of State (Transport)): Mr. Speaker, speaking on behalf of the Minister of Industry, Science and Technology, I welcome this opportunity to answer the question put by the hon. member for Saint-Léonard. As far as General Motors is concerned, the hon. member claims that 1,800 employees were fired, while the truth is that General Motors management announced they were considering temporary lay-offs to prepare for the new Firebird production line, which takes quite some time. Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Saint-Léonard is probably aware that our government, together with the Government of Quebec, was responsible for bringing General Motors to this location by providing a $220 million interest-free loan, and that employees affected by these lay-offs will be 95 per cent protected as far as their salaries are concerned.

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard): Mr. Speaker, there we have the results of the government's economic policies. After investing over $200 million, we now have 1,800 employees laid off for a year. So much for the government's policies! When will you introduce policies that will put Montrealers, Quebeckers and Canadians back to work?

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Labour and Minister of State (Transport)): Mr. Speaker, speaking on behalf of the Minister of Industry, Science and Technology, I may again remind the hon. member for Saint-Léonard that he is hardly in a position to criticize the government, since the party to which he belongs was responsible for record job losses in the Montreal area from 1980 to 1984. When they fortunately were defeated in 1984, Montreal Island had been laid waste by a government that did absolutely nothing for Montreal Island during all the time they were in power.

[*English*]

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Etobicoke North): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister, in the absence of the Minister of Finance.

One of the principal justifications for the GST was that in replacing the manufacturers' sales tax it would promote Canadian exports. Yet, today Statistics Canada announced that in January imports rose by more than $500 million while exports declined by more than $300 million.

If the GST was intended to help our exporters, why has Statistics Canada concluded that "the net effect of the tax change was to generate an upsurge in imports, not exports"?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman who just asked the question is one of the most intelligent members of the opposition, so it throws me into despair that he would ask such a question when he knows that we cannot go by the immediate short-term one-month results. Everybody has to look at a period of at least five or six months to see what the trends are.

At the end of this year, believe me, the GST will have more than proven itself with the improvement we will have in our exports during the year. However we simply cannot go by one month only, and he knows that.

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Etobicoke North): Mr. Speaker, the minister might prefer to read the comments of Statistics Canada if he does not want to worry so much about what I say. The fact remains that the success of the recent budget will depend in large part on export led growth. Yet, recent trade figures suggest that the very opposite is happening. This is a direct result of this government's failure to close the major gap between Canadian and U.S. interest rates and to lower the value of the Canadian dollar.

How can the Minister of Finance expect export led growth when he persists in maintaining interest rates that do little or nothing to close the gap between Canadian and U.S. interest rates?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, apparently the outside world looks very favourably upon Canada and wishes to invest in Canada. We can hardly blame our Minister of Finance and the government because we have done such a good job that more people want to invest in Canada than want to deinvest in Canada.

One of the penalties is that our Canadian dollar increases in value. This is not something that we can deliberately wreck.

I would like also to point out to the hon. gentleman that today we are announcing that we are accelerating tariff elimination again at the insistence of the private sector. We are going to have a second acceleration of tariff reductions with the United States on over $2 billion worth of goods to follow up on last year's accelerated tariff elimination, which once again proves the success of the U.S.–Canada Free Trade Agreement.

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Dan Heap (Trinity—Spadina): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

Human Rights Commissioner Max Yalden has said that the number of complaints received by his office increased by 10 per cent last year. He expressed concern about racist incidents that have taken place in many parts of the country, such as flag trampling and the desecration of graves.

My question to the Minister of Justice is: When will she finally bring to this House the important amendments to the Human Rights Act that she has promised?

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I hope to bring them forward some time this year. It is a source of regret to me that I am not able to bring them forward at this time. It has simply been the press of work and the other things that have gone forward from the Department of Justice.

It is a very, very comprehensive review, and I hope within the year to bring the amendments before the House.

Mr. Dan Heap (Trinity—Spadina): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the minister acting for the Minister for Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

Yesterday, the Minister for Indian Affairs and Northern Development, according to *The Globe and Mail*, rejected Mr. Yalden's call for a royal commission on aboriginal affairs.

Will the acting minister tell this House why the minister rejects that proposal and how their government plans to address what Mr. Yalden calls, and I quote: "this country's number one human rights priority"?

Mrs. Dorothy Dobbie (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, nobody has rejected anything in terms of dealing with the question of Indian affairs.

What the government has done is launched on a program of real progress to address some of the issues that are outstanding.

For example, we have made great progress in the outstanding land claims issue in B.C., in spite of the court case that we heard a while ago. We intend to continue with that commitment regardless, in co-operation with the Indian bands out there and in co-operation with the B.C. government.

We also have a chiefs' committee which is in the final throes of discussions about how to fast track some of the specific claims that have been outstanding for years and years and years. We feel that we will be able to bring that forward very shortly.

We have just signed a framework agreement with the Westbank band of B.C. for self-government. We have many AFA agreements. Two of the latest: one in Saskatchewan gives the Lac La Ronge band the authority to manage $54 million and there was another one in Nova Scotia. There are a couple of AFAs coming up in Manitoba next week.

* * *

PROSTITUTION

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton—The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. I want to know what the Prime Minister thinks about the tragedy of young people forced into prostitution.

We know what the Minister of Justice thinks because in her reply to the Standing Committee on Justice report on prostitution she said: "The Badgley committee and the Fraser committee have demonstrated that very few prostitutes really wish to leave the street solicitation trade".

The Badgley report says that 57.2 per cent of prostitutes wants to leave prostitution and start a new life.

Outreach and community workers are appalled by the fact that even a low statistic like that would be quoted by a reputable group like Badgley. They say it is much higher. Why is the government backing away from this? Why are they trying to slough off this problem? Why does the government not show some overdue and much needed compassion by bringing forward educational programs for the prostitutes to get them away from prostitution and on with their lives?

• (1440)

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, it must be a slow day on the other side of the Chamber for the hon. members to be—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Ms. Campbell (Vancouver Centre): —repeating the same questions over and over again. I addressed the same question when it was asked by that member's deputy leader.

Mr. Speaker, I can understand why the Acting Leader of the Opposition would ask that question, but I am surprised that the hon. member would ask it since he is a lawyer and would have the knowledge of the Constitution of Canada and the constitutional jurisdiction. He would know that the provision of social services falls primarily within the provincial level. I can tell him that I am aware of and have been involved in discussions with people offering services at the provincial level to deal with those who are on the streets.

If the hon. member would be intellectually honest and would read the whole of my response to the standing committee report, he would know that I responded to three recommendations. Among the things that I did for example was indicate that I would not follow the recommendation of that report to fingerprint prostitutes, which is a very distinct way of confirming their identification as criminals and making it harder to get them off the street and back into a life. They are not criminals as such. They are people with deep social problems that need to be addressed.

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton—The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, the definition of slowness is how long it is taking this minister to act on this very serious problem.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. MacLellan: How can we as Canadians and parliamentarians go blindly forward, knowing that the average age for young people entering into prostitution is 15—sometimes as young as 10 and 12—and they are out of the business by the time they are 25. If it is so lucrative, as the minister would have us believe, it is strange that they are out of this profession by the time they are 25. They do not want to get into prostitution. They are forced into prostitution. Physical violence and drugs threaten their every day.

Why will this government not act to do something to provide immediate help for these people?

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, regrettably volume does not improve the coherence of the hon. member's comments.

The hon. member knows that social services are delivered primarily at the provincial level. The two senior levels of government have very specific responsibilities and I believe that our government has addressed its responsibilities seriously. Street prostitution and prostitution among young people are symptoms of a much deeper social problem. One of the aspects of that problem is family violence. Many of these young people go on to the street as a result of trying to escape from violent and abusive relationships in their families.

This government has just announced a very significant program to deal with that and the justice aspect of that is quite considerable. My colleague, the minister of health and welfare, is the lead minister on this.

We have our particular responsibilities as a federal government and our responsibilities push us in the direction of addressing some of the root causes of this

terrible social problem. We are doing that. We are living up to our responsibility.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CROWN CORPORATIONS

Mr. Jim Peterson (Willowdale): Mr. Speaker, how can the Prime Minister reconcile Canada's national interest and the sale of our key Crown corporations to foreign competitors?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): What key corporations, Mr. Speaker? For if the hon. member is asking me whether there is something incompatible between the sale of some Crown corporations and the national excellence of Canada, quite the contrary is true. For too long now the federal government has endorsed intervention into the private sector on the part of the central government and its public servants who have not always had the experience required to run some of these companies which normally should operate in the private sector.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Peterson (Willowdale): Mr. Speaker, yesterday de Havilland announced 110 more lay-offs at its plant in Downsview. These lay-offs are just part of the downsizing of de Havilland to make it more attractive so that the Italian and French governments can buy it off.

Will the Prime Minister step in a block this sale of de Havilland to its major international competitors, or is the Prime Minister still insisting on going down in history as the architect of Canada's deindustrialization.

This government's policies are so bankrupt that that bankruptcy is matched only by Canada's record bankruptcies today.

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Mr. Speaker, that particular firm announced a productivity strategy in 1989 which stated that there would be some downsizing. The whole market for aircraft around the world has levelled off and has declined. They cannot be immune from that plus, these cutbacks were in the productivity plan tabled over two and a half years ago.

TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport.

A series of Conservative ministers of transport have presided over the destruction of our national transportation infrastructure, VIA Rail and trucking in particular. Now this Minister of Transport wants to add the marine sector to the list of transportation modes disabled by the government.

Will the Minister of Transport listen to the warning voices from the marine industry and cancel the government's cost recovery program?

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, under the previous ministers of transport of this government, there has been a great increase in the amount of service to the Canadian public. The trucking industry has had some difficulties, but we are working on that.

The airlines have increased service, and my friend well knows that particular fact.

The question of cost recovery has come up. I put out a discussion paper and allowed three months for input. I was asked to extend that deadline and I did so, from November 1 to the end of January. There were several submissions to my officials. We are looking at them and reviewing them and trying to come up with a solution which is reasonable for both the airline industry and the marine industry.

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the people of Brandon who lost all air service because of deregulation would be pleased to listen to the minister's remarks on the great things that deregulation has brought us.

In *The Montreal Gazette* this morning, the Canadian Exporters Association is quoted as saying:

> The higher charges will unreasonably discourage Canadian exports and encourage the expanded use of U.S. sea and air ports by Canadian shippers.

They said that in a letter to the department.

Given the fact that we have already had a number of ships reflagged to foreign countries, a number of ships carved up for scrap, because there is not enough work on the Seaway or on the Pacific coast, will the minister not recognize that at very least in the marine industry, we

cannot afford any additional costs. If we do so, there will be less ships, less taxes paid and less people working.

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Transport): As I indicated to my hon. friend, we are looking at the submissions made by the marine industry and will factor them into whatever decision we come up with.

My friend made some comment about air services. I tell my hon. friend that we are working on a rather new concept these days. It is called market determining service.

* * *

DISASTERS

Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport.

As the minister is aware, an unfortunate tragedy occurred in my riding on Monday when a Coast Guard ice-breaker collided with *The Captain K*, a smelt trawler, about 20 miles south of Port Dover with a tragic loss of life.

How could the ice-breaker *Griffon*, part of the Coast Guard's fleet responsible for the safety of our Canadian waters, with radar equipment which should detect boats in a 10-mile radius, not know *The Captain K* and crew were in its path. What assurances do the fishermen and their families have that every rule of safety was followed, that all the equipment used by the Coast Guard vessel was checked regularly and was completely functional the afternoon of March 18?

• (1450)

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I join with my hon. friend, and I am sure, everyone in this House and in the country, in expressing regret about the loss of life.

I can tell my hon. friend that the search has been undertaken by the OPP. We are providing any and all assistance we can to the OPP in that search. The circumstances of the accident are under investigation by the Transportation Safety Board.

Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk): Mr. Speaker, a supplementary for the same minister. Will the minister give his commitment in this House today that an independent federal inquiry will be held so as to assure the fishermen and their families that everything is being done to determine the cause of this accident and prevent any further occurrence of such a disaster?

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to my hon. friend that the Transportation Safety Board of Canada is in fact an independent board. I have every confidence that such an independent investigation will take place.

* * *

FRIGATE PROGRAM

Mr. Maurice A. Dionne (Miramichi): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Supply and Services.

The minister said in the House yesterday with regard to the $100 million contract for the translation of the frigate technical manuals:

> —the cost of doing the translation through the company which was set up by the prime contractor is competitive with the cost of doing translations within government and other areas.

Will the minister tell us exactly what he means by competitive costs of such a task?

Hon. Paul Dick (Minister of Supply and Services): First of all, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is dead wrong. It is not a $100 million contract. It is a contract for $21.9 million.

An hon. member: That is a big difference.

Mr. Dick: The Department of Supply and Services canvassed industry throughout North America and around the world to see who could do some bidding. Industry has cited to DSS cost estimates of $300 to $500 per page for this type of technical translation. That works out to a contract, for the amount of pages being done, of between $30 million and $50 million. In fact, we were able to arrange a contract with a firm in the province of New Brunswick for $21.9 million. That is a cost saving to the Crown of Canada.

Mr. Maurice A. Dionne (Miramichi): Mr. Speaker, the figures I have seen are quite different. If the minister was doing his homework he would know, through the Secretary of State's translation department, that he is paying about three times the normal price for that kind of technical translation. The cost of such a job is about 35 cents per word. Canadians would save at least $50 million.

In view of this situation, will the minister explain why a contract of such magnitude was given without public

tenders having been called? The minister refused to answer yesterday and today. Canadians want answers.

Hon. Paul Dick (Minister of Supply and Services): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are getting answers, unfortunately the member is not listening.

Translating incredibly complex technical design pages is much different than doing instantaneous translation here in the House of Commons. We insist on making sure that we have good translations. We are not prepared, in any way, to jeopardize the safety of Canadian men and women at sea because the manuals, which explain how this sophisticated ship functions, are inaccurate or slightly different in their English and French versions due to translation errors. The law requires translation and we believe that francophones in this country should have the same opportunities on those ships as anglophones.

* * *

NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

Mr. Scott Thorkelson (Edmonton—Strathcona): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for science and technology.

The National Research Council has laboratories in every province except Alberta, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. In its five year plan, the NRC stated that it would like to build a major laboratory in Alberta. The lab would compliment Alberta's economic strength and help us in our drive to diversify the economy.

My question is this. When will the government establish a major NRC presence in Alberta?

Hon. William C. Winegard (Minister for Science): Mr. Speaker, I cannot give a definitive answer, but I can tell the member that the five-year plan for the National Research Council has been approved. The regional initiatives have all been approved in principle, and we are going to continue to develop the plans for these regional initiatives. When those plans are complete, we will then look for the appropriate funding.

[*Translation*]

MANPOWER AGREEMENTS

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration.

Shared jurisdiction over manpower creates over-all duplication of programs and wanton waste of human and financial resources. This is why Quebec is asking for the repatriation of its powers. In the short term, however, that is between now and March 31, agreements between Quebec and the federal government will end.

Therefore I would ask the minister whether these agreements involving $433 million will be renewed on a temporary basis to avoid penalizing unemployed Quebeckers, particularly in Montreal which now has the highest unemployment rate in Canada?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, for quite some time now officials of both government levels have been discussing the terms of the agreement due to expire at the end of this month. But we have often said that the Canadian government does not negotiate on a piecemeal basis with the Province of Quebec, that is clear.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, I am not asking for total repatriation, I am asking for the renewal of the current $433 million agreements within the existing constitutional framework.

I want to know whether the minister intends to renew these agreements on a temporary basis, in fullest respect for the letter and spirit of existing agreements. That is a clear question.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I think the minister gave the appropriate answer. We do not share the member's opinion concerning the dramatic outcome he envisages without first consulting all Canadians.

Indeed I am not the only one who thinks that way. In an article published in the March 15 *Vancouver Sun* the deputy leader of the Bloc Quebecois, Mr. Lapierre, is reported as saying, and I quote him because this is an interesting comment which the hon. member ought to read: "Well, as long as the political contract remains

unchanged, I am a Canadian", said the Bloc Quebecois House leader on Thursday, "I am still a Canadian, I still have my Canadian passport and, in the end, I will probably remain a Canadian".

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

* * *

[*English*]

HEALTH

Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. On December 10 I asked the minister—I will wait until the House quiets down a minute.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member will please put his question.

Mr. Karpoff: On December 10 I asked the minister whether he would uphold the Canada Health Act in respect of deterrent user fees planned by the Government of Quebec for people using hospital emergency wards. At the time the minister said that he would ensure that the principles of the Canada Health Act would be fully respected and that he would communicate this to Quebec.

My question for the minister is this. Since the Quebec minister of health made it clear yesterday that he was proceeding with the introduction of deterrent user fees, can the minister tell the House if he did inform Quebec that these fees are a violation of the Canada Health Act and will he inform the House how he intends to enforce the Canada Health Act now?

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, Quebec is well aware of the provisions of the Canada Health Act. As the hon. member knows, following the proposals made by Minister Côté in Quebec, the federal government got in touch with the Government of Quebec to request more information.

• (1500)

The minister in Quebec has indicated that he believes that what he is doing can be done within the confines of the Canada Health Act. The ball is in Quebec's court to demonstrate that it can be done.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Hamilton East on a single question.

* * *

PROSTITUTION

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my single question to the Prime Minister. It is in response to the ridiculous answers that his Minister of Justice gave to the opposition's suggestion that 15-year old prostitutes should be given help to get off the street.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister to give us his view of whether in fact he supports the position of the Minister of Justice that there should be no federal assistance to help get street prostitutes off the street, or whether in fact he rejects the position tabled by his minister on the first—

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the question is: Do I support the position of the Minister of Justice, as described by the Leader of the Opposition? No.

Do I support the position of the Minister of Justice, as articulated by the Minister of Justice? Yes.

Apart from the sensitivity and knowledge that the Minister of Justice conveyed in her responses, she also conveyed an intention of the Government of Canada to work very carefully with the Government of British Columbia, other provincial governments, and the municipalities, to make certain that as a society, since it is an important societal problem, Canadians make progress to ensure that this problem is dealt with in an effective way.

That is what the Minister of Justice said. That is the policy of this government. And that is what we are going to do.

* * *

POINT OF ORDER

ESTIMATES—SPEAKER'S RULING

Mr. Speaker: On Friday, March 8, 1991, the hon. member for Ontario rose on a point of order to object to the inclusion of items in the Supplementary and Main Estimates which would authorize the payment of $153 per diem allowance to senators. He argued that the authority to pay such an allowance should have been sought by means of an amendment to the Parliament of Canada Act. He quoted extensive authority to the effect

that spending estimates cannot be used to amend legislation, and he invited the Chair to use its authority to rule the offending estimates out of order.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands spoke to the issue on March 11, 1991. He asked the Chair to take into account that the Estimates are recommended to the House by the Governor General but that this recommendation is secured on the advice of Ministers of the Crown.

[*English*]

The hon. member then referred the Chair to two precedents. One concerned provisions in Appropriation Act No. 2 in 1965 for the payment of a gratuity to the spouse of a deceased member. The second related to the inclusion in vote 1 under Privy Council Office in Appropriation Act No. 3 in fiscal year 1989-90 of the salaries for ministers of state who do not preside over a ministry of state.

The hon. member for Churchill expressed the view that vote 2c in the Supplementary Estimates violated the Financial Administration Act in that it sought moneys to be used beyond the current fiscal year. Furthermore, he noted that the allowances in question should have been sought through an amendment to the Parliament of Canada Act. For this reason, he explained, the decisions of previous Speakers have been breached.

Finally, the hon. member for Churchill concluded that it was particularly inappropriate to secure an individual profit for certain members of Parliament by a means that are in any way questionable.

[*Translation*]

As both the items objected to are estimates requested by the Upper House, the Chair's initial reaction was to consider the propriety of this House interfering with the Estimates of the other place. In the last 20 years or so that the items from the Senate have been before committees of the House of Commons, no witnesses from the other place have appeared before the standing committee charged with considering the Estimates from the Upper House. Therefore no guidance can be sought in the review of those Estimates.

[*English*]

The "parentage" of the particular items challenged also remains doubtful. The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands pointed out that these estimates were recommended to the House by the Governor General, and by constitutional convention, he notes, that must indicate that they are approved by cabinet. The hon. member for Churchill was more direct. He claimed that the government had improperly brought these estimates before Parliament and that the government had responsibility for ensuring that they were in proper form. The hon. member for Calgary West, on the other hand, has clearly distinguished between government estimates and the estimates from the House of Commons and the Senate.

These latter two, he stated, are not government estimates and come before us through the mechanisms specified in the Parliament of Canada Act. Now, section 51 of the Parliament of Canada Act provides that the estimates of the House of Commons "shall, on approval by the Board of Internal Economy, be transmitted by the Speaker to the President of the Treasury Board who shall lay them severally before the House of Commons with the estimates of the government for the fiscal year." On a plain reading of these words, it appears that the hon. member for Calgary West is perfectly correct in claiming a special status for the House of Commons estimates. The Chair was not, however, referred to nor has it uncovered any similar legislative provision as respects the Senate.

[*Translation*]

Against the issue of ownership of the Senate Estimates and the propriety of any intervention by the House of Commons is arrayed a formidable force composed of a substantial body of significant rulings by my predecessors and the provisions of the Financial Administration Act and citation 233 of Beauchesne's fourth edition which states that:

> "The cardinal principle on which the whole of our financial system is based is that of parliamentary control, and by this is understood not the control of Parliament in its constitutional sense, but control by the Commons alone."

[*English*]

The hon. member for Ontario has made his case carefully and well. In his intervention, he set out all the relevant sections of the Parliament of Canada Act to demonstrate that there is no provision in that statute upon which the Senate's present request for an allow-

ance could be based. The hon. member then marshalled the various rulings of the Chair since 1971 in support of the concept that authority to act is received through legislation, whereas money to finance authorized action is received through the passage of an Appropriation Act. He contended that the allowance sought by the hon. senators should have been obtained by means of an amendment to the Parliament of Canada Act and, in an impressive survey of Speakers' rulings, demonstrated that in the past, attempts to legislate or to amend statutes other than Appropriation Acts by means of items inserted in the estimates have been disallowed.

The hon. member for Churchill agreed that there was an attempt here to do through appropriations what should be done through legislation and that this was in breach of the Speakers' rulings. He also made the point that the estimates according to section 27 of the Financial Administration Act should relate only to expenses for the current fiscal year and drew attention to the fact that Senate vote 2c in the Supplementary Estimates sought authority for the payment of the allowance in the current and subsequent fiscal year. It should also be noted that Senate vote 5 in the Main Estimates 1991–92 seeks the same authority not only for the current and subsequent fiscal years but for all subsequent fiscal years.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands in his intervention did not question the impact of the authorities quoted by the hon. member for Ontario. Rather, he provided for the Chair's consideration two precedents which the Chair will discuss briefly.

[*English*]

It appears common ground in the arguments that have been made, first, that statutes ought not to be amended by means of items in the estimates; second, that authority to act in cases where statutory provisions already exist should be sought by the passage of amending legislation and only then the money to finance that action should be sought through appropriation acts and, third, that funds requested in the estimates must relate only to the fiscal year for which they are requested.

• (1510)

In this event, there remains only for the Chair to decide, as the member for Kingston and the Islands put it, whether the items in the estimates providing for the senators' allowance fall into the impugned type of estimates.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member referred the Chair to a particular item in the schedule to Appropriation Act No. 2 for 1965 which authorized the payment of a gratuity to the spouse or estate of a deceased member of the Senate or House of Commons. I believe the hon. member himself recognized that this precedent is of little utility in the current circumstances, because it relates to a time when there was a radically different supply process in this Chamber and, of course, it predates the significant ruling of the Chair in the 1971–84 period.

[*English*]

The hon. member's second precedent referred to an item in the schedule to Appropriation Act No. 3 for the financial year 1989–90. Vote 1 under Privy Council Office, he noted, provided for the payment to ministers without portfolios, or to ministers of state who do not preside over a ministry, a salary equal to the salary paid pursuant to the Salaries Act to a minister of state who presides over a ministry. There are other provisions therein, but it is not necessary to quote at length. On June 18, 1982, the hon. member for Calgary Centre challenged precisely this item. He said, as recorded at page 18607 of *Debates*:

> In spite of the Chair's very clear rulings there is one vote—which seeks to amend legislation. I am referring to Privy Council, vote 1 which states:
>
> > Program expenditures, including the operation of the Prime Minister's residence; the payment to each member of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada who is a minister without portfolio or a Minister of State who does not preside over a Ministry of State of a salary equal to the salary paid to Ministers of State who preside over Ministries of State under the Salaries Act, as adjusted pursuant to the Senate and House of Commons Act—
>
> The Salaries Act, as amended last July, states the remuneration to be paid to each minister. Section 5 states:
>
> > The salary of each Minister of State, being a member of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, who presides over a Ministry of State is $30,800 per annum.
>
> What Vote 1 of the Privy council seeks to do, is amend that act, because it says that ministers of state who do not preside over a ministry of state will have a salary equal to that paid to a minister of state who does preside over a ministry of state. That is exactly parallel, Madam Speaker, to a vote which you ruled out of order, appropriately so, last

year, being vote 30 of Agriculture in the 1981–82 Main Estimates. That vote stated, and I quote:

> Agri-Food Regulation and Inspection—Contributions including compensation at rates determined in the manner provided by Section 12 of the Animal Disease and Protection Act to owners of animals affected with diseases coming under that Act that have died or have been slaughtered in circumstances not covered by the Act.

So that vote attempted to extend the act to situations not covered by it. Quite properly, Madam Speaker, you ruled that was an amendment to the legislation. Privy Council, vote 1 does exactly the same thing, and is clearly out of order based on your ruling of last year.

Madam Speaker Sauvé ruled on June 21, 1982, as recorded at page 18646 of *Debates*:

> The next item objected to by the hon. member for Calgary Centre is Privy Council, Vote 1 on the grounds that it seeks to amend legislation and, on this basis, the hon. member makes a parallel with Agriculture, Vote 30 in the 1981–82 Main Estimates which was ruled out of order on June 12, 1981. I must admit this vote caused particular concern to the chair. Agriculture, Vote 30 was specifically seeking to go beyond Section 12 of the Animal Disease and Protection Act and was ruled out of order for attempting to amend existing legislation, whereas Privy Council, Vote 1 does not refer to specific legislation but is in fact a continuation of a vote in the 1981–82 Main Estimates covered by the Appropriation Act No. 2, 1981–82. In other words, Privy Council, Vote 1 does not attempt to amend the Salaries Act but provides for the salary of certain Ministers of State assigned by virtue of Section 23 of the government Organization Act, 1970, which is itself the legislative authority required. The authority for the amount can be found in the Appropriation Act No. 2, 1981–82. I therefore find Privy Council, Vote 1 also in order.

That 1982 precedent, based, as it was, on existing legislative authority, is not on all fours with the present case. By extension, neither is the 1989–90 identically-worded item referred to by the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

There is a clear line of authority evinced through Speakers' rulings as to the distinction between the proper subject-matter of legislation and the proper subject matter of supply.

[*Translation*]

Twenty years ago on March 10, 1971, when the House was just embarking on the present supply practice, Speaker Lamoureux ordered three one-dollar items struck from the motion to concur in the Supplementary Estimates. He explained as recorded at pages 4125–7 that such items when "—they are clearly intended to amend existing legislation should come to the House by way of an amending bill rather than as an item in the Supplementary Estimates." Speaker Lamoureux had occasion to confirm this principle in both 1973 and 1974.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker Jerome, called upon to rule on a number of disputed items in Supplementary Estimates on March 22, 1977, characterized the central question to the issue as "whether or not the government can obtain, through the passage by Parliament of a supply item in an appropriation bill, authority which it does not have under existing legislation." He capsulized the discussion held in respect to that central question around two key points:

> First, changes in legislation ought to be dealt with by legislation and not by supply items. The opportunity to debate, to consider, and to discuss the two are totally different. Therefore, where changes to legislation are sought, they ought to be done in the proper way of all stages of a bill. The second point is that appropriation acts have temporary duration, being for the balance of the fiscal year. Therefore, they ought not to be used as a vehicle to finance or authorize ongoing programs.

That is in *Debates*, page 4220. In pronouncing on the general question for the sake of providing future guidance, Mr. Speaker Jerome said:

> On the general question, it is my view that the government receives from Parliament the authority to act through the passage of legislation and receives the money to finance such authorized action through the passage by Parliament of an appropriation act. A supply item in my opinion ought not, therefore, to be used to obtain authority which is the proper subject of legislation;

That is in *Debates*, page 4221. This was further expanded upon on December 7, 1977, in a similar ruling where Mr. Speaker Jerome said:

> I think all honourable Members understand that the supply process is confined in its method of debate and exposure to the House in that it is put forward by way of an estimate which is examined by the committees of the House, and, at the end of that process when the estimate is deemed to be reported or in fact reported back to the House, it is dealt with rather quickly by way of a supply bill on the final supply day of the particular semester in which the estimate was originally advanced.

Speaker's Ruling

> This is a process which has long been adhered to by the House which provides for an examination of the estimates in rather great detail, but does not provide for extensive debate between the various stages of the supply bill. As a result of that, it has long been a tenant (sic) of the House that supply ought to be confined strictly to the process for which it was intended; that is to say, for the purpose of putting forward by the government the estimate of money it needs, and then in turn voting by the House of that money to the government, and not to be extended in any way into the legislative area, because legislation and legislated changes in substance are not intended to be part of supply, but rather ought to be part of the legislative process in the regular way which requires three readings, committee stage, and, in other words, ample opportunity for Members to participate in debate and amendment.

That is from *Votes and Proceedings*, page 184.

[*Translation*]

As the hon. member for Ontario acknowledged in raising his point of order, Madam Speaker Sauvé in a carefully-structured ruling on June 12, 1981, set out the principles established by her predecessors. She said: This history shows that during the past ten years, members have objected that in one way or another the estimates that have been submitted from time to time by the government have attempted to do more than set out the spending requirements of the government for the next fiscal year. This is of course supposed to be the acknowledged purpose of estimates and appropriation acts. (*Debates*, page 10546)

• (1520)

[*English*]

In light of this line of authority, the direction the Chair must take in this regard is evident.

The language of both Senate vote 2c in the Supplementary Estimates 1990-91 and of vote 5 in the Main Estimates 1991-92 is specific. Vote 2c reads as follows:

> To authorize the implementation of the Forty-first Report of the Standing Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration, 2nd session, 34th Parliament, adopted by the Senate on June 5, 1990, and to authorize, in the current and subsequent fiscal year, payment of the allowance referred to within the report.

Vote 5 reads:

> To authorize the implementation of the Forty-first Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration, 2nd session, 34th Parliament, adopted by the Senate on June 5, 1990, and to authorize, in the current and subsequent fiscal years, payment of the allowance referred to within the report.

In both instances authority is sought, first, to implement the Senate committee report which recommended the allowances and, second, to pay the allowances. The very wording of the votes confirms that there is no existing statutory authority under which the allowances could be paid. If the statutory authority existed there would be no need to seek approval for implementation in this fashion. The type of authority sought here is akin to approval in principle and, as was made clear in the rulings of both Speakers Lamoureux and Jerome, should be sought through legislation other than appropriation bills.

The lack of legislative authority on which to base a request for funds exceeding an existing and continuing act of Parliament, alone, would be reason enough for the Chair to order that the offending items be struck from the estimates; but authority is also sought to spend in a time period beyond the current fiscal year. That too is also clearly prohibited. The cycle of supply is articulated at page 677 of May's 18th edition "According to the "principle of annuality", which is strictly enforced every financial year is treated as a closed period separate from every other financial year. Money voted for and revenue received during a particular year cannot be applied to the use of a subsequent year; furthermore citation 483 of Beauchesne's fifth edition refers to "the Main Estimates to cover the incoming fiscal year". Citation 484 states:

> The purpose of the Estimates is to present to Parliament the budgetary and non-budgetary expenditure proposals of the Government for the next fiscal year.

[*Translation*]

May and Beauchesne read together leave no room for doubt on this point. Supply requests, through main or supplementary estimates must relate solely to the fiscal year for which they are granted.

[*English*]

The weight of precedent and the strength of the argument made by members in the House compel me to find that vote 2c under Parliament in the Supplementary Estimates 1990-91 and vote 5 under Parliament in the Main Estimates 1991-92 are not properly before the House, and are therefore deleted from the estimates. All proceedings relating to those specific votes are declared null and void and there can be no further proceedings relating to those two votes.

The Chair extends its appreciation to the hon. member for Ontario who so carefully set out his point of order

and to the hon. members for Kingston and the Islands and for Churchill and for Calgary West for their contributions to this procedural debate.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

STANDING COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT

Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, my question of privilege deals with the Standing Committee on Transport. I raise this matter now, based on the motion agreed to last week by the House pertaining to the standing committee on corporate affairs. That decision impacts directly on the point I want to make today.

My colleague from Ottawa—Vanier correctly pointed out, at page 18323 of *Hansard* for Tuesday, March 12, that the consumer and corporate affairs committee had not been convened for some time due to the resignation of the chairperson and had not met because there was no chair to preside.

I will spare the Chair the remaining details of that case. However I cite it for reasons of precedence because the next day, at page 18427 on Wednesday, March 13, the government Whip introduced a motion, agreed to by the House, that facilitated the committee's resurrection. In fact the Whip then noted the actual date and time the committee would be convened to hear representation regarding the Spicer commission.

Your Honour also conjectured, at page 18326 on Tuesday, March 12, as to why a resignation of the chair of the consumer and corporate affairs committee had not yet been filled. As the House knows, the chairman of the transport committee also resigned six months ago and the committee has not been able to meet say for one token attempt.

I respectfully submit that the transportation committee has a great deal of important work to cover in the interests of Canadians, including the parliamentary scrutiny of nearly $50 million in supplementary estimates, public fund expenditures which will not have been examined because of this government's refusal to have the committee sit.

I request that a similar motion to that adopted with respect to the consumer and corporate affairs committee be moved immediately.

Mr. Speaker: I may be able to assist hon. members. First of all I think I should point out that if I had to rule on this I would have to say, given the circumstances, it is not a question of privilege. It is more a point of order raised probably to invite the government to respond.

As I had to say the other day, this is not something in which the Speaker, under the present rules, can intervene. The Speaker can encourage hon. members to try to settle these matters. There may very well be discussions taking place at this very time. It is not necessary for the government to respond under the circumstances, but I would invite the hon. member for Calgary West to comment if he so chooses.

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for raising the issue. It has been of considerable concern to government members that we have had eight of our committees, one special and seven standing committees that do not represent the balance of the House. We were pleased to be able to stand last Wednesday and resolve one of the problems.

The government's point of view on this from the beginning has been that there is a need, if we want to retain the same number of committees, to reduce the size of committees because the large size committee of 14 was not working well. The solution we had for consumer and corporate affairs was to increase that one to 15, which provides something closer to the composition of the House.

I want to report to the House that that committee has met successfully twice, but of the seven seats assigned to opposition members only three have been filled on each of those occasions. Thus there have been four vacant seats.

The obligation of governing has required us to fill the eight seats. Last night that led to a dilemma in that opposition members who were present did not want the government members each to have their turn in questioning the witnesses from the Spicer commission. They felt that the questioning process went on too long because there were in fact 10 members involved before getting to the second round. In fact some visitors to the committee who are Independents in the House walked out because they were having to wait so long and did not have a chance.

I think it speaks to the issue from the government point of view that if the committees in many cases, not all, were to be somewhat smaller then the participation rate of members both on the opposition and the government side would be fuller and more complete and we would not have the phenomenon of filling the chair simply to fulfil the voting function of a committee.

With that in mind—and I do not know if the member who raised this issue speaks for his party—I have said to at least one Whip of a recognized political party in this place that I would be only too happy to guarantee the consent of my side of the House immediately, if members would like, to a motion that would create the transport committee based on the same membership that we established for a special committee on transport in December and November to deal with a major transport issue. That is different from the solution for consumer and corporation affairs. That was to make the committee one larger. As I say the experience with that is the largeness was not really necessary and in fact has not been helpful.

• (1530)

If we go to the special committee which we created for November and December to look at the issue of open skies, that committee is smaller. It has eight members. It is something that approximates much better the balance in the House. If we have unanimous agreement at this point, within the next three minutes we could have that committee formed, and then I would be glad to instruct the Table to call a meeting to select a chairman.

It is an eight-member committee, with five government and three opposition members. That is the composition of it as a special committee. It worked very well on the open skies issue. What I am objecting to is too many 14-member committees where government members have to attend, but it frustrates the opposition because those who come from the opposition do not have adequate time and certainly the government members do not have adequate time. All we have been after is restoring the composition to reflect the House in all eight cases.

In this particular case, a committee of eight has already demonstrated its capacity to work well and would work well in the future. I stand here right now prepared to agree to that as a resolution if I can have agreement from the other two parties.

Mr. David Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, we appreciate the offer which has been extended by the chief government Whip and we will take it under advisement.

I want to put on the record that in point of fact some of the statements alluded to by my colleague opposite are not correct in their totality. The member, I think, referred to the fact that the committees are not working. That was part and parcel of his understanding and desire to have change, particularly in the composition *vis-à-vis* the number of members on each of those committees.

From our perspective there are times and occasions whereby members of Parliament who may be assigned to a particular committee may not be able to attend for a variety of reasons, constituency related or what have you. By and large the committee system we are operating under has worked reasonably well for most members of Parliament, particularly those of us in the opposition. I cannot speak for my colleagues in the New Democratic Party. I wanted to put on record that there was no profound dislike for the committee system we operate under at the present time.

We have difficulties in the fact that the government has not wanted to proceed with calling these committees together for the purposes of reviewing various estimates and various Orders of the Day as they pertain to those committees.

I thank the hon. member for his offer. We will give it due consideration.

Mr. Keyes: Mr. Speaker, having raised the point, I too want to thank the hon. member opposite. I also plead with the Chair and the House to take one step back for a moment. I am not trying to raise an issue where we can go into a period of negotiation across the way.

I respectfully submit that point of privilege I raise is a point of privilege because I do feel my rights and privileges as a member to participate on the transport committee to do its work are being infringed upon. That aside, Given the precedents of the past, last week; given the concern of Canadians on the transport committee, I am asking you, Sir, to rule specifically on whether that committee, as it is presently structured, will come together again to fulfil the work we were sent here to do, and not enter now a period of negotiation with the Whip across the way.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member has certainly put forward his case with great courtesy and obvious sincerity. I thank the hon. member for that. I thank the hon. member for Calgary West for indicating, as the hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond has responded in like kind, a willingness to discuss the matter.

As I have said to the hon. member for Hamilton West, I have some serious doubts as to whether there is in this matter any question of privilege. However, he has asked me if I would look at it quietly. I will take that into consideration. I think hon. members know that it is a rare case indeed where the Speaker ought to try to intervene in a committee. There is an indication on the government side that maybe this can be resolved and an indication by the hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond, speaking for Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, that that willingness is at least appreciated. I suggest that hon. members might want to have further discussion concerning the matter.

I think it is legitimate to say that all members are concerned, and I would think that the public would be too, when a long period of time goes by without a committee being able to function, whatever the cause of that might be.

I thank hon. members. I will come back and comment on the point made by the hon. member for Hamilton West.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

THIRD REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

Mr. A. H. Harry Brightwell (Perth—Wellington—Waterloo): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the third report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture in relation to Bill C–98, the Farm Income Protection Act, with amendments.

In recognition of the importance of this bill to Canadian farmers, I would like to thank the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of State for Agriculture, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister, the officials, farm groups and my committee staff who worked so diligently to allow us to make a rapid yet thorough examination of this bill.

Finally, may I thank the members of my committee, particularly those from the two opposition parties, who at all times worked toward the welfare of the farm community without partisan debate.

[*Translation*]

PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS—PRESENTATION OF TWENTY-SIXTH REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the twenty–sixth report of the Standing Committee on Elections, Privileges and Procedure regarding joint sittings of standing committees.

[*English*]

TWENTY–FIFTH REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE ON PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS

Mr. Scott Thorkelson (Edmonton—Strathcona): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the twenty–fifth report of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections in relation to the order of reference from the House of Commons dated April 30, 1990, in relation to the rules and procedures as they relate to the limiting of debate in cases where the committee has reached an impasse.

[*Editor's Note: See today's Votes and Proceedings.*]

* * *

PETITIONS

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, I have a series of petitions from residents of my constituency who note that property taxes are escalating for health care, education, infrastructure replacement, social and leisure services, and protective services.

In that regard they note that the federal government should continue to bear at least 30 per cent of the cost of maintaining security of Canadian citizens and petition this House to continue with the 70–30 per cent cost sharing ratio between provincial and federal governments so that the RCMP can continue to be a national police force throughout this country.

They reject the federal government's proposal to off–load that on to the provinces and make it a 25–75 per cent sharing.

[*Translation*]

MIDDLE EAST

Mrs. Marie Gibeau (Bourassa): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by 412 people to present on behalf on the students of Polyvalente Henri-Bourasse who are concerned about the effects of the war on their future. These high school students are asking us to look actively for peaceful solutions to the diplomatic stalemate in the Middle East to allow them to keep faith in dialogue and in life.

Mr. Speaker, the war may be over but there are still problems in that part of the world. A solution will have to found that is satisfactory to all concerned if we want it to be lasting. In the name of my constituents, I urge the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for External Affairs and all members of Cabinet to pursue their efforts, using the influence gained by Canada among the members of the United Nations, to identify and implement means of ensuring durable peace for our young people.

* * *

• (1540)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Shall all questions be allowed to stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[*English*]

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

BORROWING AUTHORITY ACT, 1991-92

MEASURE TO ENACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-97, an act to provide borrowing authority, as reported (without amendment) from the Standing Committee on Finance.

Hon. Barbara McDougall (for the Minister of Finance) moved that the bill be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

Mrs. McDougall (for the Minister of Finance) moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Len Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Mr. Speaker, as we start the third reading on this borrowing bill, I am sure that most of us in this House of Commons realize that the greatest issues facing this nation today is national unity and of course the recession.

This borrowing bill allows the government to raise money under the Financial Administration Act:

> —by way of loan or by the issue and sale of securities of Canada, in such amount or amounts not exceeding in the whole twenty-six billion, four hundred million dollars, as may be required for public works and general purposes.

At the outset, I want to say to the Minister of Finance that when he stated during the 1984 election campaign that it would not be necessary to raise taxes to cut the deficit because all that needs to be done is cut government expenditures, he was laying the groundwork for his own financial management failure.

Since that time, not only has the government cut government services but the Minister of Finance has raised taxes 33 times. The last big tax hike was the GST. What is very discouraging to all Canadians is that in spite of all the cuts and the tax increases, the national debt is still growing by leaps and bounds. Financial management on the part of the government appears to them to be out of control.

Added to this is the longstanding and ongoing concern about the national unity of our country. This does nothing to create confidence in the economy of our nation, and that is sad. It is also sad that we are in the middle of a government created recession.

In spite of six years of economic growth which the Minister of Finance himself has called extraordinary, and in spite of 33 separate tax increases to which I have made reference, the accumulated public debt has more than doubled from $166 billion in 1984 to $351 billion in March 1990, and is expected to climb to $389 billion this year. In six years this government has more than doubled the national debt and is well on its way to tripling it. Yet the Minister of Finance back in 1984 thought that this whole matter was so simple that all he had to do was to gain power, get the finance portfolio, cut government expenditures, and the deficit would go away.

That did not happen. Canadians should not bother to listen to what this Minister of Finance has to say about the deficit and the public debt because he has no credibility left on this issue or on any other. The made-in-Canada recession, the Conservative government's first ever made-in-Canada recession, has reduced domestic demand and created an extra burden for our producers here at home.

The Conservative government's monetary policy has caused the dollar to increase from a low of about 69 cents U.S. in February 1986 by 26 per cent to its present level of nearly 87 cents U.S. The Canadian Exporters Association has reported that each cent increase in the exchange rate costs Canada $1.3 billion in lost export sales. That is certainly beginning to tell on the jobs and the unemployment figures across this country.

High interest rates have been used to prop up the Canadian dollar. Although Canadian interests rates have dropped dramatically from a high of over 14.05 per cent on May 24 of last year, they are still about four percentage points higher than the United States rates. This has made the cost of borrowing to modernize or expand prohibitive.

For those in the forest industry, it has had another effect. That famous memorandum of understanding was signed by the present government a few years back on the eve of the signing of the free trade agreement with the United States, whereby Canadian softwood lumber producers were charged a 15 per cent export tax to sell their lumber into the United States. They called it free trade.

Our Canadian manufacturers have had to find other markets and some have gone to Europe. In so doing, after they have sold their product and shipped it, they found that they had to wait for a long time—90 days and even over 100 days in some cases—for their money. As a result, they have to borrow money in order to keep their business floating. They borrow at high interest rates, and this adds to their costs of operation in addition to the 15 per cent that blocked them out of the United States markets. These people are having a very difficult time.

Then there is the old story, all the promises and all the rhetoric about research and development. In spite of Conservative government commitments to raise the level of research and development to 2.5 per cent of the GDP, spending on research and development has declined steadily over the six years of the present government's management, from 1.43 per cent in 1986 to a measly 1.28 per cent of GDP in 1989. The Conservative government has cut funding to the National Research Council by over 20 per cent since 1984-85. Certainly other scientific ventures in this country have been attacked as well.

• (1550)

At a time when the government brags about cutting back and being thrifty, the Fraser Institute, a private non-profit research organization, which monitors government spending and taxation trends, stated in a release on February 18 that "government spending is at an all-time high". The report goes on to say that "spending on defence, police and fire protection across the country are receiving a declining share of the financial pie".

It is very interesting to note that spending on defence, police and fire protection amounts to $835 per capita and has not kept pace with other categories of spending. In fact these functions now get a smaller fraction of total government budgets than they did in 1970.

Cuts in transfer payments to the provinces have meant that provincial funds have had to be redirected in order to make up the shortfall at the provincial level.

Last fall unemployment insurance certainly became a great issue in my area as it did in many others. The bill which was stalled in the Senate for a long time and which was supposed to be such a great boost to all Canadians came into force. In that bill there was a clause that emphasized the benefits to Canadians who are working for relatives, called the arm's length clause. Certainly we can use eastern Ontario as a good example because we have family owned businesses all over the place. When a

father laid off his son or brother-in-law or sister-in-law, they then went to apply for unemployment insurance only to find their case had to be passed on to National Revenue for a special ruling to make sure that they were at arm's length from the business.

The Minister of Employment and Immigration says: "That is right". I just wish that minister had been standing in my office when I had some of these people there making representations to me when they had not had a pay cheque for eight or nine weeks and that included Christmas. The government should be ashamed of itself for imposing that kind of restriction on people.

One person had worked for 20 years and had never claimed unemployment insurance. When he went into the office to apply, he ran into this great unemployment insurance rejuvenation bill that was supposed to be such a great boost to him only to find that he had to go through Christmas and New Years and nine weeks without a pay cheque.

There were so many calls over this that the department finally started getting it sorted out. The fact remains it was mismanagement of the legislation. Neither the department of employment nor was the Department of National Revenue was ready for it. Yet we heard screams in the House day after day about how terrible it was that this legislation was being held up. There are many people out there who wish today that it was still being held up.

I have obviously got my message through to the minister today, and I am glad, because many people have suffered through her trying to straighten out her department's relationship with National Revenue and to get the system working. It was not they who straightened it out, it was all those who had complaints and who were having their livelihood taken away from them or denied them.

Mr. Speaker, on the issue of national unity in Canada, which has so much to do with the future direction of our country, in fact almost everything to do with it, I want to share with everyone a very moving experience I had yesterday.

There is a little humorous incident I would like to relate to everybody. While we were in the VIP lounge at Uplands yesterday with the Governor General, the Prime Minister, the Minister of National Defence, senior military personnel, policy people, and several others, a colonel stepped out and in his usual brisk and efficient manner said that they were going to divide the group into two parties. He said: "We are going to have the red party and we are going to have the blue party". At that stage, the Prime Minister spoke up and said: "Len Hopkins is going to be very lonely out there, we will have to give him a podium all by himself".

The irony of the whole matter is that the Prime Minister ended up in the red party and I was in the blue party. Can you imagine a situation like that for parliamentary unity? There are some great sacrifices one has to make from time to time in this place.

The other thing I want to really zero in on here is the tremendous welcome home for the first field hospital group. They were so glad to hit Canadian soil. You have to witness it to realize what an impact it really has on people. One young man said to me: "Len, I just feel like getting down and kissing the ground". A young nurse said: "You know, in this country we say we live in the greatest country of the world. But you never witness it until you have gone abroad, up to your ankles in mud, unhealthy conditions, see the economy in other certain parts of the world, see the difficulties that people face. You come home and you thank God for your nation".

Mr. Speaker, I am sure you and every member of this House, and all Canadians, will agree that these people are great ambassadors at home for the work they do, but they are fantastic ambassadors when sent abroad. They have done a super job for us.

It presented a real challenge to me yesterday to talk to these people who had gone outside the country, and who had performed their duties so well for Canada, and who delivered the good Canadian message to foreign groups. Here we are at home, in this great nation they love so much, and we have issues here that could split the country wide open.

If there is anything that we, as Canadians, must take from this great experience, it is that we should back off a bit. We should take a look at ourselves in a mirror—and I do not mean just some, I mean everybody—and ask ourselves where we are coming from. Here we do in fact have everything that any human being would want on the face of this earth. God has blessed us with everything that any human being would really want.

• (1600)

The Fathers of Confederation put this nation together with great difficulty. Other people have come along since that time and have had tremendous input into it. Many people across this land have come from many other countries and built this nation and developed it. They worked long, hard hours.

I remember, even though I was not very big, the Great Depression of the 1930s. I was not even going to school, but I can remember what people went through at that time. I sometimes look back and wonder how people ever survived that. I think of my mother and father. The thing that I feel brought them through it and helped them to face up to those issues of providing food for their family and remaining very loyal to their country and very interested in their country and managing their affairs very scrupulously was the fact that they had a faith. They had a faith through their own religious beliefs and they practised them.

I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that you have witnessed this yourself, where your own parents taught you many great qualities: humanitarianism, your religious duties, your duty to your country, your duty to do a day's work for a day's pay, and a duty to look toward the future and find out what you can do for mankind.

I can really get carried away on this subject because there is nothing that is more important to every Canadian, from coast to coast and from south to north in this nation today, than to sit down and talk and put this nation together so that it is going to last for generations and centuries to come. It is going to mean a flexibility of our minds. We cannot all be staid in our ways and it is either my way or the highway. That is not the philosophy we are going to have to exercise in this country. It is part of our relationship with our own fellow people.

We as civilians in Canada need the same kind of dedication, breadth of mind, personal discipline, desire and seriousness to keep this country together. We will require a commitment on the part of all Canadians and a flexible attitude on many matters. That is what those young Canadian Forces personnel taught me yesterday. I have been groping for some time to find a real, sincere and open way to express my feelings. I must say, with the words they were expressing yesterday and what they have come through and their dedication to duty, we must as civilians in this Canadian nation can do our work out there across the country, we must, as 295 members in this House of Commons do our work in a sincere and dedicated manner for this country and open up our minds and communicate well with each other and have a firm commitment. But we must also have faith in ourselves, we must also have faith in our maker and ask for his guidance and we must have faith in our fellow parliamentarians. That is what is going to keep this nation together. I think it would be a great idea if all parties in this House of Commons, perhaps even through you, Mr. Speaker, had a world day of prayer for the Canadian nation, a special service in every church, in every religious centre across the country.

I am delivering this type of speech at this time because we are today passing a bill to borrow billions of dollars to cover the costs of operating the country. We cannot just go on doing this forever. We must work closely together to put things together in this nation and to build the Canadian nation, but we must have that communicating factor and have our total act together.

Those men and women who have returned from the Persian Gulf are expecting parliamentarians in general to work to keep our country strong here at home. If we can do our work here at home as well as they are able to do theirs abroad, we will have it made.

It is important to have a strong federal government in Canada, one that relates in realistic terms to the regions of this country. If Canadians are going to continue to have any of the fine qualities and services of life that have been available to them for many years, this must happen.

There is another angle to this. If Canada is strong at home then we can continue to perform constructively and with humanitarianism in international affairs. When we look back over Canadian history, we have seen many Canadian statesmen who have led the way in many very useful operations in international affairs. Canada has played a role in international affairs far beyond our size and, I suppose, importance as a nation but it has been done. Only if we are strong here at home and have a unified nation in the future, only then can we continue to be a great influence on other nations of the world.

In order to put this country on a solid footing, accountability on the part of government is extremely important. We had a recent example in this House, and it was raised again today, and I was very much interested in that subject when it was raised in the House today because I had it in my notes to mention it here this afternoon. We had a recent example where the government actually referred the Supplementary Estimates which contained the estimates for the Spicer commission to a parliamentary committee that had not had a chairperson since last September. As you know, this led to a great confrontation in this House.

It also had implications for the public accounts committee, which I have the privilege of chairing because, as you recall, some members in this House wanted to refer the matter to the public accounts committee. That could not happen because I had to reply to a letter that I received requesting this, and I know it was brought to the Prime Minister's attention as well. I must point out that there are serious procedural limitations contained in the mandate of the public accounts committee to carry out such an inquiry in this House at that time. Standing Order 108(3) defines the mandate of the public accounts committees as follows:

> The mandate of the Standing Committee on
>
> (e) Public Accounts shall include, among other matters, review of and report on the Public Accounts of Canada and all reports of the Auditor General of Canada, which shall be severally deemed, permanently referred to the Committee immediately they are laid upon the Table;
>
> and any other matter which the House shall from time to time refer to the standing committee.
>
> The term "among other matters" refers to an order of reference from the House of Commons.

• (1610)

The most recent public accounts tabled in October 1990, before the establishment of the Spicer commission, are a comprehensive record of government expenditures for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1990. Expenditures after that date would not be shown in the 1989–90 public accounts and, therefore, we had no estimates from the Spicer commission.

Similarly, the last report of the Auditor General of Canada covers the period ended March 31, 1990. The Spicer commission was brought in after that, so it was not included in that report either.

I regretfully had to say that our existing mandate of the public accounts committee does not permit us to carry out the relevant enquiry. The committee would need an order of reference from this House. However, it is important to note that all commissions of inquiry are accountable to Parliament for the expenditure of public funds. Treasury Board policies govern these expenditures, including the guidance given to all departments and agencies in matters of financial administration by the Office of the Comptroller General.

In addition, financial controls are exercised by the Receiver General's department in the disbursement of moneys. Of course, these expenditures are subject to audit by Parliament's auditor, the Auditor General of Canada.

As members are aware, Supplementary Estimates C, 1990–91, relating to the Citizens' Forum on Canada's Future, have been referred to the Standing Committee on Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Government Operations. Because this committee does not have a chairperson, it has not been meeting. Failure to take steps to appoint a chairperson and activate the committee in question will simply indicate a lack of will on the part of Parliament to control the public purse effectively and credibly.

I am glad to see today that Parliament is grappling with that question and I hope it will soon be settled.

The other item I wanted to bring to the attention of the House is a letter that was written to me by the President of the Treasury Board, and it gives me great concern. It does deal very specifically with public accountability.

He said:

> In response to the concerns expressed in your previous letter about the participation of my officials at a meeting that was held on November 28, and in the future I would like to make my position clear.

We had requested certain officials to be there to reply and that did not occur. There were officials there, but they were sitting back against the wall.

> It is my view that officials of the secretariat should, in general, testify as witnesses before the committee in two circumstances.

The rules of this House point out very clearly the powers of committees, and a minister of the Crown should not be telling a parliamentary committee, and particularly the public accounts committee, that on two specific occasions would his officials appear.

The first he said is, and I quote:

> —when the Auditor General has specifically directed recommendations or observations to the Treasury Board.

The second is:

> —when, in certain instances, it is useful for the committee to have officials of the secretariat available to respond to general questions on specific Treasury Board policies. Beyond these two instances, however, I feel that it is generally inappropriate for secretariat officials to testify as witnesses on matters that relate primarily to the operations of other departments.

The problem here is that Treasury Board is supposed to be the controller of the purse, and lays down guidelines for government departments and their expenditures.

We have taken it, and it has been a tradition, that officials from Treasury Board can appear when the Auditor General is there or appear when people are there from other departments.

Going on with the minister's letter, he says:

> The accountability of other departments to the Public Accounts committee would not, in my view, ordinarily be served by such participation. These criteria govern the arrangements that were explicitly made with members of your staff regarding participation of the secretariat at the committee meeting of November 28, 1990 which was addressing the project to modernize the CCGS *Louis Saint-Laurent*, the icebreaker.

There are differences of opinion on that discussion as well. He goes on:

> Pursuant to discussions with senior officials of the secretariat, your staff agreed that my officials would only observe at the meeting.

I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that that was not my understanding at all.

> It was also agreed that any issues raised by the committee touching on the role of Treasury Board would be promptly followed up on thereafter.

With regard to "thereafter", the purpose of holding committee meetings, particularly those on accountability, of an accountability role, is to have these people there to answer questions, and put those answers on the records of the committee meeting at the time. A person who was there did not come up to the table at the time when we asked for a person from Treasury Board. Another person did, but apparently nobody was really designated to do it.

The minister went on to say:

> With respect to the meeting of your committee on December 18, 1990 on the subject of the *Louis Saint-Laurent* icebreaker, please be advised that either Mr. David McEachran, deputy secretary of the Administrative Policy Branch, or Mr. Richard Paton, Assistant Secretary in the same branch, will be attending in order to respond to questions of the committee on Treasury Board's policies touching on the management of projects.

They came to that meeting. There is no sense in senior officials advising ministers that they do not have a role to play at committee meetings in the House of Commons. I totally disagree with the suggestion that Treasury Board should not be present at meetings when they are asked to be there in relation to other departments. I want to make that very clear.

It is spelled out clearly in *Beauchesne* that a parliamentary committee can send for persons, papers, et cetera, and can invite people to appear before the committee. If those people do not want to attend, the committee can order them to attend. You are well aware of that, Mr. Speaker.

I want to send a message to senior people in Treasury Board that they, too, are accountable to the Parliament of Canada.

I hope that Parliament will come to grips with picking a chairman for the Standing Committee on Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Government Operations so that that issue can be heard and decided upon.

• (1620)

I want to touch briefly on Public Service 2000, which is a very important part of government policy in the management of its employees. Our public accounts committee recommended that a special committee be set up to hear the Public Service 2000 issues. We felt that this would have to be an in-depth study. We certainly did not have time to do it, even though it was in the Auditor General's report. We had about six meetings on it and we submitted our report to the House. The President of the Treasury Board said that he would like to have a special committee study Public Service 2000. He also went on to say that he was going to consult with other people in the Public Service and with unions.

There was a time at a news conference when I was a bit concerned because the President of Treasury Board had indicated that there was no agreement for a special committee on this, and he blamed my own House leader at the time as one who did not agree with it. That was certainly not true. Our own House leader did agree with it.

I hope that the President of Treasury Board will continue to agree, as he did in a recent letter to me a second time, saying that he will refer the matter for a special hearing. There are certain things about which Treasury Board has the full right, as the government of the day, to make regulations. However, as we continue here, we should have some in-depth hearings on this because these people are the backbone of government in doing the work and providing a service to Canadians.

Budget matters are closely related to the bill before us today because the borrowing bill supplements what the budget does not provide for. There are many things here that are really very important to Canadians. Again, it is a matter of getting our house in order.

The government of the day is simply passing the responsibility for a larger share of medicare and post-secondary education over to the provinces. This is coming right down to the municipal level in the provinces because the provinces have to transfer more money into providing these other services and they have fewer grants to offer to municipalities. Therefore, the addition has to be made up in the taxation of the local municipality.

The government now admits that it will need amendments to the Canada Health Act to protect Canadians. It will have to use a big stick in the provinces, forcing them to provide proper services to Canadians because the federal government is refusing to give the provinces the cash.

Then we go on to unemployment, where the Minister of Finance in his budget predicted greater unemployment. We are certainly seeing it across the country and we are certainly seeing it in my own region of eastern Ontario.

We forecast that the government would have to raise unemployment insurance premiums to cover the cost of unemployment insurance changes contained in Bill C-21.

The government promised gradual increases. Its interpretation of gradual increases was the 24 per cent increase that it brought in, in the budget, to cover UIC changes. That has hurt small business and it is certainly taken from the people's paycheques.

Training and education have both been hit by the budget. A new study on transfer payments is supposed to come out this spring. I have said before, and I will say it again, that the day is not far off when there will have to be a royal commission once again into the study of the dividing up of the financial pie in this country between the federal government and the provinces. Otherwise, the whole thing is going to be out of whack again.

I am talking about a commission similar to the Rowell-Sirois commission of 1937, which has served us well over the years but which is now being torn apart.

Regional development was not really mentioned. It is going to come later, and we can expect that it will be all bad news. In eastern Ontario we have lost VIA Rail service from Ottawa to North Bay. The forest industry is down. Large numbers have been laid off in that industry. Agriculture is certainly not witnessing very pleasant days in many respects. Industries have closed. Nobody seems to be listening. We do not have any regional development plans for eastern Ontario.

I do not want to burden the Minister of Employment and Immigration any more. I hate to see her disturbed because she is such a nice individual to talk to. She is approachable as a minister, but I know she has been rather upset by some of my comments on that terrible UI legislation.

I want to close by making a tribute to the Auditor General of Canada. I can well recall some of the governments which I supported over the years; we did not always like what the Auditor General said. This government is no different. As parliamentarians, and the Auditor General being a servant of Parliament, there is not a member of the House who should not support the Office of the Auditor General very firmly.

I think Kenneth Dye has served this nation well. I have had the privilege of working very closely with him over the last two years plus, as have other members of the committee. We have found him to be very candid, open, up-front and well informed on his subjects.

He comes out with his reports and we see in this House where they become a great foofaraw for a couple of days. Then it dies down, and it is left to the public accounts committee to do the work for days thereafter. It is a pleasure to do that. We who serve on the public accounts committee have enjoyed it. It is a very broad perspective on government.

Kenneth Dye is a dedicated man. He has done his utmost to serve Canadians and this Parliament well. He is also served well by a very capable staff, people who are in place to do a job for him, to do his research. Also, in his important role to Canadians, he is seen as the defender of the purse.

I said to him the other day that during his term in office he learned the approach of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, when Franklin Delano Roosevelt used to have his little fireside chats. He would turn on the American nation, get them over to his side, and then Congress would have to vote along with him or the pressure came from the American public. We have known Kenneth Dye to be an outspoken person who had no hesitation to raise issues publicly. When the Canadian people heard him speak, they respected him and brought that to the attention of parliamentarians. This is an office, Mr. Speaker, that reports to Parliament through you. The Auditor General is a servant of Parliament. We thank Ken Dye and his people for the service they have provided to the House, to the Parliament of Canada in general and to the people of Canada.

• (1630)

We wish our new Auditor General every success. It is not an easy job dealing with politicians from time to time, but they all come into it knowing full well what their role is. I hope the new Auditor General will have the support of this House as he takes on his new duties.

There are other things about which I would like to speak, but I am going to stop here because I am sure there are other people who want to comment. Besides that, I am losing my voice, so it may not be by voluntary consent. I want to thank you for your time, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the members of the House for their patience.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Under Standing Order 43, the hon. member did have unlimited time with no questions or comments.

We will now proceed to the next speaker who will have 20 minutes plus 10 minutes of questions and comments.

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speakers, I have first to congratulate my predecessor on a marathon session which has covered a great deal of ground. As usual he has made some very important points reflecting his experience in the public accounts committee.

We have in front of us a very large amount of money which this government is asking this Parliament to grant it. This bill, if it passes the House, will authorize the government of this country to borrow as much as $26.4 billion.

That is such a large amount of money that it is almost inconceivable to the average person in this country. It is not the kind of thing which is easy to think about. If we think of it in terms of this country of 26 million, each of us is permitting the government to borrow $1,000 on our behalf. Each and every person across this country is giving authorization to this government to borrow $1,000.

We have to ask the question: Is this a government which has earned the right to do that kind of massive borrowing on behalf of the people of Canada? Since it came before Parliament and last asked for authority to borrow from the people of Canada, does its record in the past year show a sensitivity to the concerns of the people of Canada? Does its record show that it has financially organized its affairs well? Does its record show that its economic leadership in particular gives reason for confidence to those 26 million Canadians?

Mrs. McDougall: Absolutely.

Mr. Langdon: The minister says: "Absolutely". I have to say absolutely not.

I am sure when the minister has had a chance to work her way through the large amounts of correspondence with which she has to deal and looks at some of the fresh statistics which have emerged today, she will realize how devastating they are with respect to this government's record. I am sure that she cannot be pleased to see that the number of bankruptcies in this country are up by 68

per cent in the past year. Bankruptcies, especially in the province of Ontario, are more than double what they were.

Mrs. McDougall: There is an NDP government there.

Mr. Langdon: She mentions that there is an NDP government there. The reason for that is that the Liberal government in Ontario, as well as this government, did such a poor job that on September 6, 1990 it was swept out of power, just as this government will be hopefully swept out of power in the very near future. I hope the minister survives because the minister is somebody I look forward to facing when she is in opposition.

A total of 430,000 jobs have been lost in this country in the last year. This government used to boast about how it would have created 200,000 jobs a year. I think at one stage it even got up to 300,000 jobs a year. Whereas in one year it has lost 430,000 permanent jobs. That comes directly out of Statistics Canada's own figures, in case the minister is searching for the source.

The impact has been especially difficult in the manufacturing sector. Employment in manufacturing has declined by 11.7 per cent in the past year. That means that out of every 10 jobs in manufacturing a year ago, 1.2 of those jobs has disappeared. Can you conceive that there has been such a destruction of jobs in manufacturing, Mr. Speaker? If you think that is bad, you just have to look at construction where the result has been a decrease of 12.1 per cent in the past year.

Part-time employment, it is true, has increased. Part-time employment has gone up by 98,000. That is not because people want part-time jobs. It is because that is all they can get. However, 430,000 of those permanent jobs that they would prefer have disappeared.

It is not just bankruptcy statistics and unemployment statistics. It is the international trade statistics that came out today that we should also look at. What the government said to us was that we in this country were going to thrive because of free trade. Free trade was going to be the solution. The minister's business friends went across the country spending millions of dollars to buy the last election for this government on the promise that there would be hundreds of thousands of new jobs thanks to trade.

What has happened? Let's look at the statistics.

The statistics tell us that for January exports actually decreased by $352 million and that instead of imports decreasing too, imports increased by $244 million.

• (1640)

That means in fact that the surplus which existed in January of this year was just $166 million. That compares with a surplus of a billion dollars in the month previous. In fact, if we look at the trend, it has been downward in that surplus. Instead of the free trade deal giving us benefits, it has been costing us exports and leading to new imports into this country.

That is why we see the jobs disappearing across Canada. That is why the 430,000 jobs that have been lost, disappeared in this last year. Of course it has to do with things like the high interest rates this government has followed. It has to do with the fact that the value of the Canadian dollar, which they have kept, is far too high.

A former cabinet minister from this government suggested that this was part of the free trade deal arrangement, that the dollar had to be kept high, to keep the United States interested in signing the free trade deal. The 430,000 jobs lost as a result of that high dollar and the high interest rates are probably related to the free trade deal too.

I can tell you that in my constituency, and in the constituencies of many of the people that are around me today in the House, there has been a devastating loss of jobs directly, because of free trade.

In my constituency, 40 plants shut last year, 40 factories that were providing work with people. In many cases they not only shut down, they transferred their operations to the United States or to Mexico. The government, with its immense wisdom, looking at this trend, has decided to make it even easier for companies to transfer to Mexico. Instead of trying to do something about the loss of jobs and the loss of factories, they have entered into trade negotiations with Mexico, to try to make it possible to shift even more jobs to the low wage parts of Mexico. Sheer insanity.

If this was just a set of statistics, if it was just a set of bad numbers, if it was just something one could point to as signs that the government had not given us what it promised, that would be one thing. What we have seen is terrible, terrible human consequences across this country as a result of what has taken place. These consequences are obvious when you talk about hundreds of thousands of jobs being lost.

What is even worse is that many of those people who in the past would have been able to get unemployment insurance so that they could support themselves and help the rest of the economy through the support they were getting, have as a result of this government's deliberate policy been cut off unemployment insurance.

The consequence has been contrary to anything that the minister of employment ever predicted would happen. We have thousands and thousands of people, in her own home city, who are having to go on welfare; skilled workers, people who are anxious to find training, people who go to unemployment insurance offices and ask for training. They ask for the chance to be part of training programs, and you know what they are told, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Milliken: You're on your own.

Mr. Langdon: They are told: "Well, we'll put your name on the list, but we have a two-year waiting list".

Mrs. McDougall: That is because you held up the legislation.

Mr. Langdon: They are told that there is a massive waiting list. They are told that this government which promised people training has instead cut $100 million from the Canadian Jobs Strategy.

For instance, if they happen to be refugees they are told—as a group who spoke with us on Monday night, the Ontario Coalition of Agencies Serving Immigrants, a group which later met with the minister's department—that there simply is not enough money.

Every time the minister comes back into the House she gets straightened out. I am sorry about that.

The reality is that her extra money which she talks about for language training has led to groups telling us on Monday night, for instance groups from her own home city, who are part of this Ontario Coalition of Agencies Serving Immigrants, that they had only 75 places to be able to offer and over 3,000 people were asking for the chance to get help, for the chance to have an ability to learn languages, to be able to work in this country. I am sorry she has been scared out again.

The reality is, as somebody from Peel told us, that they have pages of waiting lists of people who need help and who are not able to get that help.

The reality is that people across this country are being severely damaged. Refugees, of course, but also millions of Canadian families who have seen people within their family face unemployment, have not been able to get unemployment insurance and have had to go on welfare. They have seen their dignity, their pride in their ability to provide for their families destroyed.

What does this government do in its budget, having cut back unemployment insurance already? It takes the next step and it cuts back its support to welfare payments.

This is a shameful government. It is a government which has shown on issue after issue, case after case, that it does not care about people. It has shown that it is incompetent as well.

An hon. member: But cares about some people.

Mr. Langdon: As my colleague from Edmonton suggests, it cares about those people to whom it extended the 21-year trust agreements. It did not have to do that, but for those large family foundations, those family fortunes which were tied up in trust, that were supposed to run out this year, yes it had something for them. It has had something for the large corporations that wanted to maintain their memberships in golf courses and their special boxes in the Sky Dome, and their special boxes for Edmonton Oilers games. Oh yes, it permitted

[*Translation*]

And also for the Quebec Nordiques!

• (1650)

[*English*]

It permitted those companies to continue to deduct 80 per cent of the cost of those entertainment expenditures from the taxes that people across this country pay. It ends up, Mr. Speaker, and I know you feel as strongly about this as I do, that you and I and the 26 million Canadians across this country have to pay more taxes to support these freebies for corporate executives and their friends who get to go to sporting events.

Now you and I, Mr. Speaker, both like to go to sporting events, but we are prepared to pay the cost, as people across this country pay the cost, unless the giant corporations in this country get the chance to buy in to special privileges and deduct it from taxes that you and I have to make up.

Lest you think that this is just a New Democrat raving in the wilderness, let me quote from another judgment on the budget from the Toronto Dominion Bank. I think you would agree—even the minister of defence would agree—the Toronto Dominion Bank is not usually an ally of the New Democratic Party.

Mr. McKnight: The Toronto Dominion Bank is a friend of the socialists.

Mr. Langdon: See, he agrees, it is not usually an ally of the New Democratic Party. Therefore, let me quote from the Toronto Dominion Bank's analysis of this budget. I could quote a great deal from this, but let me just quote perhaps the most devastating comment: "This 1991 budget is probably the most economically inept and destructive budget since the 1930s." That is not us speaking, that is the Toronto Dominion Bank.

What we have got is a set of judgments from across the country from the people whom we represent that tell us this government has lost its compassion, if indeed it ever had it. It has lost its ability to listen to Canadians. It has lost its ability to care about Canadians and, most important, it has lost its ability to lead Canadians. Canadians no longer trust this government. That is why we will be voting against letting this government borrow over $26 billion from the Canadian people.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, I was listening to the hon. member of the NDP, who said earlier that members on this side of the House work only for Canadians who are well off. Perhaps I may comment and I will also have a question a little later on that I have three riding offices. In those offices, I have assistants who are working with me on cases involving disabled persons. We even work on cases involving the province, unemployment cases, welfare cases, cases of economic hardship, and we certainly do not work exclusively for families that are well off. We also work for the middle class, including miners.

He referred earlier to freebies for big corporations. Perhaps we should also talk about isolated post allowances for people who live in Abitibi and in northern Quebec, and I am referring to the designation of isolated posts for the purposes of Northern benefits, something we have finally been able to obtain for our workers, our union members, miners, forestry workers and nurses. Everybody—low-income people, the middle class and the upper class—will be on the same footing. They will all get these isolation allowances from the federal government. This is important in the north and in Lebel-sur-Quévillon, Matagami and Joutel. The same applies to Chapais and Chibougamau. In Chibougamau, they were never able to get these allowances but they are now getting 50 per cent. This is wonderful, and we won thanks to the work done by ministers like Benoît Bouchard who represents the riding of Roberval an excellent minister.

I also have a question for the hon. member. He often refers to newspaper articles. In today's papers, Mr. Speaker, and more specifically in *La Presse*, on the business page there is a reference to something he didn't mention in his speech, and I am talking about mortgage rates. He didn't mention those at all. However, it's all here in the papers. But I know why he didn't mention this, because when he read the papers this morning, while he was having breakfast, he must have felt he couldn't mention this in his speech because the news was much too good.

I have here an article by Nicole France Bernier which says: "Outlook for mortgage customers brighter than in 1982. The number of people in arrears on their residential mortgages has increased substantially over the past few months, but the situation is certainly not alarming, according to financial institutions contacted by *La Presse*. In fact, it compares favourably with the situation during the last recession". The article goes on to say, Mr. Speaker: "At the *Confédération des caisses populaires et d'économie Desjardins*, which has about 40 per cent of the residential mortgage market in Quebec, Mr. Gaston Sirois, vice-president, financial credit, said that in his opinion, the recession in the early 80s had been much harder on residential mortgage holders, because interest rates were much higher, which made things much harder for people who had to renew their mortgages."

So I would like to say to the hon. member that the situation is better than in Ontario, because in September 1981, mortgage rates were as high 21.5 per cent, compared with 11.5 or 11.75 per cent today.

My question is: Why didn't he mention mortgage rates in his speech?

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, it is not for me to say that Conservatives and Liberals are different. It is not for me to say that the Conservatives kept interest rates lower than the Liberals did during the previous recession. That may be true, but the important question for ordinary people, for all Quebeckers, is this: With the Conservatives or the Liberals can we expect to have an economic policy which would be a promising approach for ordinary people?

I for one cannot see that. I see very high interest rates with the Conservatives, and I saw very high interest rates with the Liberals. I saw the Conservatives offer a number of tax concessions to the major corporations, just as I saw the Liberals do the same thing. There is no difference. Here is the important message getting through to the people of Quebec, to the voters of Quebec. The important message is that there is another choice, there is an alternative, and that is the NDP which can change the situation for a good many Quebeckers. That is reality.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions and comments are now terminated. The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader on a point of order.

* * *

• (1700)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, there is consent for the following motion:

> That notwithstanding Standing Order 76(1), the House waive the usual 48 hour notice required to debate Bill C–98, an Act authorizing agreements between the Government of Canada and the provinces to provide for protection for the income of producers of agricultural products and to enable the Government of Canada to take additional measures for that purpose in the name of the Minister of Agriculture at report stage on Thursday, March 21, 1991.

Mr. David Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, we concur.

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, it is not possible for us to concur at this stage. This is the first I have heard of this. It is certainly something I will consult about with others who have responsibility for these matters in my party, but it is not something which I can immediately concur with.

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, if the request is to drop the 48–hour requirement it is our understanding that that would in fact happen provided, of course, the amendments are permitted to be put in a shorter time as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): It is so ordered.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

BORROWING AUTHORITY ACT, 1991–92

MEASURE TO ENACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre) that Bill C–97, an act to provide borrowing authority, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. David Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to participate in this debate on such an important piece of legislation affecting the Canadian economy.

Last February when the Minister of Finance presented his sixth budget, we in the Official Opposition said that it was a blueprint for a made–in–Canada recession.

As I rise to address the House today, we have a made–in–Canada recession and the blame for it lies squarely on the doorstep of the Minister of Finance and his boss, the Prime Minister of Canada.

We told the government and members of Parliament on that side, if they continued with their high interest rate, high dollar policy that thousands of Canadians would go bankrupt and hundreds of thousands would lose their jobs.

Just today, the statistics for the month of February were released and we find that bankruptcies have increased significantly in this country, particularly in the province of Ontario, and we are seeing thousands upon thousands of Canadians losing their jobs on a monthly and regular basis.

We told the government of the Prime Minister that if it insisted on cutting payments to the provinces for things like health care and higher education, it would lead to cutbacks in service, higher tuition fees and higher provincial taxes. This has come to pass. We told the government at that time if it went ahead with the GST, it would push an economy on the brink of recession into full recession and add dangerously to inflation. It too, came to pass. But the government would not listen. It would not listen to the concerns of the opposition and, more important, it would not listen to the concerns of Canadians from coast to coast. It would not listen to the unemployed, to people struggling to pay their rent and to meet the mortgage. They are victims of its terrible, terrible economic planning. It would not listen to leading economists and business people, all of whom warned the government that it was on an economic collision course. The government, much to my chagrin and I am sure to that of many Canadians, still is not listening with regard to the Canadian economy.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you know that the Minister of Finance did not even have the common decency to stay in the House of Commons to listen to the budget response of the Liberal finance critic, the hon. member from Windsor. In fact, there was only one government minister in the House, the Minister of unemployment and immigration and she was so wrapped up in what she was reading that she didn't seem to hear a word of what our finance critic was saying on behalf of thousands of Canadians across this country.

We now have an economy in serious recession. Unemployment is at 10.2 per cent nationally—and I want to come back to that, Mr. Speaker—10.2 per cent nationally. It is more than 11 per cent in Nova Scotia, and in my constituency in the Cape Breton region, it is a shameful 18.5 per cent.

The figures in parts of Newfoundland are equally high. Parts of northern Ontario and other communities throughout the country, even in the city of Montreal, unemployment is at a shameful high.

It all adds up to close to a million and a half unemployed people in this country, every one of them a tragedy in economic terms and, more important, in human terms.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, is there anything in this budget for those people that would help them find jobs or learn the skills necessary for good jobs?

The answer, unfortunately, is no.

All the government has done for the unemployed in this country is to take off $100 million under the Canada Jobs Strategy program. All the Minister of Finance, the Prime Minister, and of course his senior political minister in my province of Nova Scotia are saying to the unemployed, those thousands of individuals in my small province, is that "you're on your own; the federal government will not be there to assist you in any way".

In this very budget the Minister of Finance is predicting double digit unemployment right across the country for the rest of this year. He is predicting not much better for the year following, 9.8 per cent right across this country. Shameful predictions, and I think it indicates quite clearly that the government and this Minister of Finance and this Prime Minister have lost control of the economic agenda in this country.

What he is saying is, in effect: "We don't care what the cost is in economic and human terms. Stay the course and, before you know it, this cut and slash approach will lead us out of the recession". Ha, ha, ha; that is what Canadians say to the Minister of Finance. Or, better still; shame, shame, shame on the Minister of Finance of this country.

I see the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader has entered the House. He knows only too well, coming from a province like Alberta, that they understand, particularly in his riding, what it means to be unemployed. I am sure that he shares with me wholeheartedly my sentiments as expressed toward the Minister of Finance.

Canadians have good reason to be sceptical about this government. Last year the Minister of Finance told Canadians that after a bit of a slow period in the spring and summer of 1990, we will be into a mini-boom by the fall. That is what he said—Ripley's "believe it or not".

When his economic policies drove the country into a real recession, he was the last to admit it. No matter how hard he tried, he just could not get that "r" word, "recession", to roll off his tongue.

His boss, the right hon. Prime Minister, had an easier time. Not only did he acknowledge that the economy was going down the drain, he, in this House and outside the House, had the unmitigated gall to try to take credit for it.

• (1710)

When asked last October about the recession, the Prime Minister said:

> We have induced a slowdown. Mr. Wilson said as much in his last budget. Look at the budget. It is as clear as spring water. Mr. Wilson spelled it out.

That is what the Prime Minister said, and he and the Minister of Finance took credit for inducing the first ever made–in–Canada recession. I say again through you, Sir, that that is shameful behaviour coming from the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister of this country.

If the Prime Minister wishes to take credit for this made–in–Canada recession, he must also take credit for inducing a million and a half Canadians out of their jobs. That is no laughing matter. That is a serious indictment against any government and against any Minister of Finance. Now we are in a recession and the government has taken credit for it. What is it going to do? What are the ministers going to do to try to get us out of this recession? I wonder what the Minister of National Defence, who is in the Chamber, would do if he were the Minister of Finance. Does he have a plan? No, there is no meaningful plan.

When you pick up the plan for economic recovery, there is nothing in it. It is the government's so–called plan for economic recovery, over nine pages long and not even full–size pages at that. That is all that the thousands and thousands of economists, statisticians and analysts working for the Minister of Finance could come up with for the million and a half unemployed people in this country. I would have thought that the Minister of Finance, who is from one of the wealthiest areas in the country, could have found within his budget a small sum of money to enter into a contract with numerous consultants to come up with some better economic plan than nine short pages for the million and a half Canadians that are unemployed because of this government's first ever made–in–Canada recession.

The Minister of Finance ought to be, must be, ashamed of himself and of the policies that he has been putting forward for quite some time.

We know it is not in the budget. There is no meaningful and complete plan to get us out of the recession created by the Minister of Finance. There is nothing to help the unemployed. The victims of the government's made–in–Canada recession accept the $100 million cut, as members on this side have alluded to on numerous occasions. But what is in the budget? The Minister of Finance would say that there are no new income taxes in the budget. That is what he said in response to my colleague, the deputy leader, the hon. member for Hamilton East, and to the finance critic for our party.

What he will not admit, Mr. Speaker—and I know you find this somewhat misleading; I would not want to say that it is unparliamentary—is that there are things in the budget that will be quite taxing to people's incomes, like the 25 per cent increase in unemployment insurance premiums.

Let's picture for a moment the Minister of Finance saying "no new taxes". A small businessperson running a small store, a retail outlet, a small manufacturing plant, a consulting business, now has to pay higher premiums for the unemployment that he will give to those individuals that he will have to lay off because of the minister's made–in–Canada recession, which he took credit for. The employees will also pay higher premiums for the unemployment insurance that they will get eventually because of lay–off notices.

That is going to take a bite out of the pay cheque of every working man and woman in this country. The Minister of Finance will not come clean with Canadians and call it a tax.

An hon. member: He does not care.

Mr. Dingwall: That is right. A colleague of mine has referred to the fact that he does not care. I think that is a very appropriate statement with regard to the Minister of Finance.

Do not forget either that this is the same minister who, in 1985, hit Canadians with an income tax surtax which he said was only temporary. In 1986, he made it permanent, and in 1989 he increased it from 3 per cent to 5 per cent on the income of every working person in this country. He does not talk about these income taxes in his budget, even though they are still going on. No new taxes. What do you call that? There is also a three cent per cigarette tax. At least the minister is honest about that particular tax.

The most staggering tax in Canadian history, the GST, just took effect this past January. I suggest to my colleague from Newfoundland, that the Minister of Finance would have to be deaf, dumb, and blind, to suggest that this has not hit hard on the pocket-books of Canadians. It is absolutely, unequivocally ridiculous for the Minister of Finance to allude that the GST is not a tax and it is not part of his particular budget. Does he say that in the budget? Of course not. What does he say about the GST? I will tell you. Here is what he says: "The Prime Minister has given a commitment that any above-projected revenues from the GST will make a contribution to deficit reduction".

The Minister of Finance wants to use the GST to reduce the deficit. This is about the most cynical thing I have seen from this government in recent time.

The GST and the implications that it has for average Canadians is absolutely devastating. The member opposite is shaking his head in agreement. I know that the hon. member is an honourable individual. I know it was difficult for him to vote in favour of this government's policies. And I know that if the occasion were to arise again, he would want to stand in his place and say to his colleagues in the government: "Scrap the GST, let us move on to real tax reform; let us not aggravate and exacerbate this first ever made-in-Canada recession by the Minister of Finance".

The Minister of Finance in implementing this particular tax led us to believe it was going to be revenue neutral. Well, that is supposed to mean that when you bring in a so-called replacement tax, it will not bring in any more money for the government than the tax is supposed to replace.

We in the Official Opposition said all along that the GST was much more than just a replacement tax. We said the government was just using the replacement tax concept as a smoke-screen to raise revenues by picking the pockets of ordinary Canadians. But when we raised these points, the Minister of Finance said things like this: "Canadians will not pay one penny of additional tax as a result of the GST." Now, it would be very, very unparliamentary for me to stand in this Chamber and question the honesty and the integrity of the Minister of Finance. But if I may, in candour, share with the Speaker and with my colleagues in the Chamber as to what my constituents say; I am their representative. I have to listen to what they say about the Minister of Finance.

An hon. member: What do they say?

An hon. member: Can you print it?

Mr. Dingwall: They question his honesty and they have used the *l* word, Mr. Speaker. Not the *r* word, but the *l* word. And they even use the *l* word for the Prime Minister. I tell members opposite that they do not mean loving when they use the *l* word. I want hon. members to know that.

• (1720)

There are many things about the economic policies of this government that ought to be addressed in full debate. In view of the fact that I have limited time, some five or six minutes remaining, I want to say that there are two other items which have a profound effect on the economy in Atlantic Canada. One is the continual slashing of the Established Programs Financing Act.

I wish the minister of health were in the House today because we could get involved in a really good debate. He is saying to the people of my province: "We are going to cut your budget". However, he is not saying to the health worker, the janitors in the hospitals, the nurses in the hospitals and all other individuals who are employed in the health care system that there are going to be lay-offs because the economic pie is becoming smaller and smaller and smaller.

Those provincial governments that cannot afford it are going to have to do something as drastic as they did in Newfoundland because of the federal government's policies. It was a shameful act by a shameful government, but Canadians have come to learn and to expect the worst of this lot across the way. That is with regard to health care.

On education, it is equally so. I happen to represent a poorer province in this country. We are going to be further restricted with regard to education and providing opportunities for our young people in our province. The government's answer is: "I am sorry. You are out of luck. You are on your own".

The third and final point is that in my region, in my constituency, this government has done nothing to assist the unemployed other than to exacerbate their situation.

I would hope hon. members opposite, who I know agree with the substance that I have put forward, would see their way clear to raise these integral, important matters in their caucuses; to have the Minister of Finance, the Minister of National Health and Welfare, who has become a complete and utter joke as far as Canadians are concerned with regard to health care in this country, reverse these policy initiatives; and to have them come before Parliament and the Canadian people with an economic plan which will address the high unemployment regions of this country, our health care system, our educational system, as well as our monetary and fiscal policies, as opposed to taking us into the first ever—imagine, Mr. Speaker—made-in-Canada recession.

I say shame on the Prime Minister, shame on the Minister of Finance. Let us get rid of this lot once and for all and put a Liberal government on that side of the House.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

MOTION TO EXTEND HOURS OF SITTING

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I move:

> That this House continues to sit beyond the ordinary hour of daily adjournment for the purpose of continuing consideration of the third reading stage of government Bill C-97, an act to provide borrowing authority.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Before I recognize the hon. member for Abitibi, the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke is unable to move his motion during Private Members' Hour on Thursday, March 21, 1991.

It has not been possible to arrange an exchange of positions in order of precedence, pursuant to Standing Order 94. Accordingly, I am directing the table officers to drop that item of business to the bottom of the order of precedence.

Private Members' Hour will thus be cancelled and, pursuant to Standing Order 94, the House will continue with the business before it prior to that hour.

BORROWING AUTHORITY ACT, 1991-92

MEASURE TO ENACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre) that Bill C-97, an act to provide borrowing authority, be read the third time and passed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): I should like to make a comment, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member asked if there was anything in the budget for us northern residents or for the people of Quebec. I want to tell him that the budget of Minister Michael Wilson does contain something for us. There is something for the people of Quebec and, for the first time, there is a project to build a $15 million research centre or laboratory. Never did we get that under the Liberals, and he is a good Liberal. Never did we get anything from Ottawa that was transferred to Quebec. If this has been transferred to Quebec, Mr. Speaker, it is precisely due to the Conservative caucus, to the members from Quebec who helped us get these $15 million for Abitibi and for Quebec.

I have another comment. The hon. member suggested there is nothing on the economy. We have just learned that a project has been launched this month where 500 people will have jobs. This is a new mine, a new resource and one of my friends is on the board of directors. These 500 new jobs are important. Unemployment declined this month. And there is something else I want to say by way of comment, Mr. Speaker. In the budget we did get something for northern residents, for unionized mine workers, for union members working in forestry, in pulp and paper mills, in sawmills and in hospitals, and this is not to mention northern benefits for people in isolated regions north of the 49th parallel. We got that project after 14 months of constant representations. The workers were mad at the time, but they are in a better mood today.

True enough, Mr. Speaker, we are experiencing difficult times. We are in the midst of a recession, I agree. One thing I want to say is that my staff and I have three offices in my riding. I spend weekends there and when I have an opportunity to visit my constituents I listen to what they have to say. Quite a few of them are getting mad, but they are not bad people. We work together to find solutions. That is what I wanted to say. I hope they will listen to us. There is one topic which the hon. member would rather not deal with, and I refer to mortgage rates. These rates stood at 20, 22 and 23 per cent during the 1981–82 recession when the former Liberal government was in office, but today they are way down around 10 or 11.75 per cent. He did not say anything about mortgage rates in his remarks. I would like to hear what he has to say about that.

[*English*]

Mr. Dingwall: Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to respond to my colleague opposite who I know has a more than average work ethic when it comes to representing his constituents. I understand and realize that he attempts at all times to be very effective on their behalf. I would be remiss if I did not congratulate him on his efforts.

The hon. member opposite must understand that we are not just dealing with his particular constituency and/or a particular portion of his constituency. That is important. I concur.

We are asking the Government of Canada to put before the people of Canada an economic plan which has some semblance of strong pillars that will provide Canadians, not only in a small portion of his riding but also in British Columbia, in Nova Scotia, in Ontario, other parts of Quebec and the western provinces, with meaningful opportunities so that they too can raise their families and enjoy a lifestyle and a quality of living.

However the government has not produced that economic plan. It has been remiss. In fact, there are some Canadians in various quarters who would say that the government, the Minister of National Defence who is there and his cabinet colleagues have been grossly negligent in terms of managing the economy.

My colleague has lobbed a reference to the 1981–82 recession across the aisle. No one has ever said that that was a first ever made–in–Canada recession. It was part of a world–wide recession. What we have today, by the admission of the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance and others, is that this is the first ever made–in–Canada recession.

I do not know if the Minister of National Defence is shaking his head saying yes or he is just nodding to get something off his forehead. He knows that this government has caused havoc for Canadians across this country, whether it be in regard to the EPF, health care, post–secondary education, or whatever it might be. It has so frustrated, so exacerbated the economic plight of Canadians that it is playing havoc with the national unity of the country.

• (1730)

I will give one example to the hon. member who posed a question. Workers in my riding have been fighting for five years to become part and parcel of the Older Workers Adjustment Program.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Order, please. The hon. member should know better than to bring another person into the House.

Mr. Dingwall: Mr. Speaker, I did not know whether you were speaking to me. I know there are numerous members opposite who would want to come over to this side of the House after the interventions we have made, but I say to the hon. member that they have been working for fives years to become part and parcel of the Older Workers Adjustment Program. To date, they have not been successful. These are Canadians 54 to 57 or 58 years of age who have no hope of meaningful employment. This government has denied them not only a program but also the benefits of the existing program that they have in order to make their lot in life more successful. That to me is a prime example of a budget void of any substance to address some of the more important, fundamental and human issues that this country faces.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The hon. member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre brought a person from the outside into the House, and I just want to correct what I said.

No member should be bringing individuals into the Chamber. I am sorry about the outburst, but hon. members should know better than to do that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy H. Arseneault (Restigouche—Chaleur): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for this opportunity to take part in this important debate. It is a very clear message emanating from the Budget which the Conservative government tabled a few weeks ago. It is definitely a disaster for ordinary Canadians. How not to reach this conclusion, when we realize that this Budget will seriously damage the social fabric of our country with its tax increases and spending cuts.

Clearly, Canadians will wonder what they did to deserve such a government. The economic situation now is far from brilliant: 1.5 million Canadians are unemployed because of the government's economic policies. Last year, the number of bankrupticies reached 55,000. One out of every six Canadian children goes to bed every night on an empty stomach.

When faced with such a serious situation, what does the government do? Well, Mr. Speaker, I am going to tell you. It shirks its commitments. Not only is it responsible for the economic mess everywhere in this country, but its policies are only making a bad situation worse. As a matter of fact, the government has withdrawn nearly $1 billion from its programs for the needy and increased by 24 per cent the unemployment insurance premiums and this, right in the middle of an economic recession.

For that matter, Canadians were looking forward to a Budget which would ease to a certain extent the devastating impact of the recession and would help promote national unity. Unfortunately, they were offered a Budget which slashes in the job creation programs, attacks health care, education and the unions, and continues the Prime Minister's policy which is to transfer to the provinces the burden of its federal deficit.

What is really unbelievable about the deficit is that the Tories have the gall to tell Canadians they must tighten their collective belt to reduce it.

Whoever looks at table 3 on page 91 of the document entitled "the Budget", published by the Minister of Finance, realizes that the government is playing an interesting little game. The government has increased personal income tax by 8.7 per cent, while reducing corporate income tax by 3.5 per cent.

Moreover, according to the government's budgetary document, personal income tax will have increased by 22.5 per cent in the fiscal year 1990–91 and 1991–92, while corporate income tax will have decreased by 15.9 per cent. It is unbelievable!

On the basis of these facts, Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the government is not really serious about debt and deficit reduction. In fact, since coming to power in 1984, it has more than doubled the national debt.

Mr. Speaker, I suggest that the Tory government is only using the debt as an excuse for slashing social programs.

[*English*]

The aim of this government is to dismantle Canada's social programs by cutting back in transfer payments to which the provinces have a constitutional right. It is in the Constitution that the Government of Canada has to help out with regional disparities and has to try to equalize. It is those very equalization payments that the government is cutting back. It is cutting back on payments that will serve to go toward health care and post-secondary education.

In the projections of this government from 1986 to 1996 it expects to cut $40 billion on these transfer payments to the provinces. In my province of New Brunswick alone, it expects to cut over a billion dollars in these transfer payments. These transfer payments are for education. They are for health care. Certainly this is a direct attack on medicare.

Speaking of medicare, last evening we had occasion to witness the government in full bloom, so to speak. We had a motion in the House concerning medicare and saying that this House now supports medicare, wants to support it, and wants to continue it. We know how that vote came about and what the results were. Again it is a demonstration that this government has no commitment to medicare. It is a direct attack on medicare. It is just a matter of time with the cuts to these transfer payments that medicare will be a thing of the past.

Looking at the money that this government wants to borrow to institute its budgetary plan, we must look at the state of the economy and see what part of the economy is suffering and what type of plan this government is putting in place to help these people who are suffering.

There are, as I mentioned previously, a million and a half people out of work. The projections the finance minister has given us so far have stated they are going to be in double-digit numbers for the next year or so, and he has accepted that. It is one thing to accept it, but it is another thing not to do anything about it.

The high unemployment rate is a direct link, a direct cause, to the high interest rate and high dollar policies of this government. There is no doubt about it. It has cost businesses jobs. It has cost industry jobs. There is no doubt about it. There is a direct link.

• (1740)

As many members mentioned today on the same topic, the high interest rate and high dollar policy has affected our export ability and has created this first made-in-Canada recession.

What has the government done to help the unemployed? If we look at the budget documents, we find that in the Canadian Jobs Strategy, the area where it is supposed to be helping the unemployed, it has cut $100 million.

If we try to figure out what that will mean to each province, we would have to play a guessing game based on past traditions. In New Brunswick alone, this would mean a cutback of $6.5 million. As you know, Mr. Speaker, there are many places in New Brunswick that suffer from high unemployment.

I come from such a region, and I want to point out some of the figures that exist in my region. In February, the unemployment rate in my riding was 16.3 per cent. The average rate for Canada in February was 10.2 per cent. What has the minister done? He has cut these programs to help these people get back to work.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, there is no relief for the fishermen in my riding. There is no relief for the farmers in my riding. There is no relief for the workers in the mining and forest industries in my riding.

[*English*]

I have to say it is not getting much better. I do not want to seem a pessimist, because I am noted for being a person who likes to move ahead and talk about positive things.

Just this week alone, I received a call giving me some very sad information. Two major industries in my riding; one, a kraft mill—we know what type of employment it has—has been put up for sale because of poor markets and because it is not competitive. It exports, and we know what the high dollar has done to exports. Hopefully a buyer will be found and the mill will continue.

Even sadder, in Kedgwick which is a small community with very high unemployment, the sawmill is up for sale and must be sold by the end of June. If not, the present owner plans on closing. The unemployment rate in that area is probably much higher than most other areas in my riding, well above 20 per cent. That impacts on about 100 full-time jobs and well over 200 seasonal jobs. It is a small community of roughly 2,500 people.

I may as well make the pitch now and hope that the Minister of Employment and Immigration and the Minister of Labour will look upon this area as a special area, that they will try to apply some of the adjustment programs that now exist into this area and that they will use a little more flexibility.

Speaking about flexibility, I should also say that my region has been hit by a number of strikes in the past year. One is still ongoing from July 1990 where approximately 1,500 employees have been out on strike. I have written to the minister asking for more flexibility in applying UIC regulations. I would again hope that for the sake of the families of men, women and children involved, with the suffering that they are going through that the government would show more flexibility in that regard. I would also hope that the government would try to convince both sides to get back to the bargaining table and resolve those labour disputes as quickly as possible without, rightly so, interfering in the process. I know it is private sector.

I would also like to talk a little bit about income tax because the government is saying there have been no increases in taxes. The government is telling us how it has closed loopholes on corporations. I want to refer to this government document entitled "The Budget". I think many of us are familiar with it. On page 91 of the budget, Table 3 sets out budgetary revenues. I guess the government needs money to operate and that is what we are debating tonight. We are looking at where that money is going. When we look at where it is getting that money from, there is a table on page 91 that is very interesting. It is a breakdown of where it gets its money in relation to personal income and corporate income.

We find on that table that in 1990–91, the government would be getting 13.8 per cent more revenue from personal income than the year before. This is an increase. It is getting more revenue from individuals. If you look at the same table for corporate income tax you will see a decrease of 12.4 per cent from 1990 to 1991. What this table is telling us is that individuals are paying more and corporations are paying less.

If we look at the table a little further and in more depth, we will find that from 1991 to 1992, which are only projections but the minister lives by those projections, we will find that the individual personal income tax revenue for the government will increase by 8.7 per cent and the corporate income tax will decrease by 3.5 per cent. If you add up the totals for both years, you will find that the revenue from income tax for individuals will be increased to 23.7 per cent while, in fact, for the corporations it will decrease to 15.6 per cent. Again, individuals are paying more and corporations are paying less. I think it is very important that that point was made this evening.

In conclusion, because I know my time is limited and I do not want to go on too long, I just want to make the point that the government seems to have, as my hon. House leader mentioned a while ago, more or less embarked on a policy of telling Canadians: "You are on your own". We have talked about transfer payments, medicare: "You are on your own, provinces." We talk about post-secondary education for students: "You are on your own."

I was speaking to a student just the other day who was at the ceremony for Rev. Sean O'Sullivan, and I asked him when he was home last. He was from Cape Breton and a former page of the House. He said it had been quite some time. I said: "You did not go home last summer?" He said: "No, I didn't. There was no work back home, unfortunately." He said: "I had to work all summer. I am working now part-time. You know, even with all that work, I still do not have enough money to pay for my post-secondary education."

It is getting worse. There is a tax on the administration of student loans now. What is coming to is that post-secondary education is going to be for the rich, unfortunately, very unfortunately.

This budget and this bill are both linked. Bill C-97 is linked to the budget because it will provide the money for the budget to operate. This is a disastrous budget; it is simply disastrous. It is an attack on the regions, it is an attack on the poor, it is an attack on students, it is an attack on national unity. You may ask, why national unity? We all know the crisis situation that Canada is in, we know that when people are unhappy they like to look at other options. So it is quite obvious what this budget has done.

• (1750)

It is an attack on rural Canada, it is an attack on the fabric of Canada, it is an attack on medicare. I would hope that the government would come back to a compassionate type of system, a system which I think is necessary to solve and to resolve the problems that Canadians are being faced with, not only on a national level but on a regional level as well.

Mr. David Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): First of all, I want to congratulate the hon. member on an excellent intervention on a very important subject affecting the country. However, I have an observation, Mr. Speaker, and then a question to my colleague.

My colleague has shared with me on a previous occasion, and indeed with members of our party, his concern with regard to Canadians who live in rural communities and the lack of services provided to them.

I ask the hon. member if he would care to comment on whether or not the present fiscal policies of the government—borrowing, build, budget, the various cutbacks—are addressing any of the concerns of rural life?

The hon. member will know there has been a large number of post offices closed in rural communities throughout Canada. He is fully aware, as I am, that VIA Rail, which has been an integral part of our transportation system in many parts of the country, has been terminated. He is fully aware that the fishery which impacts on small rural communities has been gutted by the policies of the government opposite. He is also fully aware that privatization has had an exceptionally negative impact on our rural life, I think of Air Canada, for instance, and what it does in providing services to Canadians.

I ask my colleague whether he believes that these policies of the government have been addressed in any way in the budgetary programs of the Minister of Finance, and whether he believes, as I believe, that rural revitalization ought to be a major component of any economic plan that any government would put before the people of Canada.

Mr. Arseneault: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. House leader for the question.

I think, in all honesty, if we were to look at what has happened to rural Canada in the last number of years, we will find that, yes, the budget does address rural Canada, but in a negative way unfortunately.

I don't know whether there is a misunderstanding in cabinet, in government, but it claims that: "Oh, we have the programs, if you can't find a job in rural Canada we are going to move you, you can apply for a little grant and we will move you and you can find a job in Toronto or in Montreal". Well, we know what has happened in Montreal and we know what is going to happen in Toronto and Vancouver.

Its little plan is to take rural Canada and practically dismantle it. That is quite obvious. It is a plan that has been there all along.

We look at the cutbacks to VIA Rail. We look at the cutbacks in the CBC. It didn't worry about the regions. It just said: "Let us cut" and that is it. We look at lay-offs in Marine Atlantic; we look at the GST. Rural Canada is what gave Canada its uniqueness and it is a necessary item. To any government in office it is necessary. It is necessary that the government take care of rural Canada. It is a must.

We look at what is happening in the fisheries on the east coast. We have heard a lot about the east coast, but look at what is happening on the west coast as well. There are problems with the fisheries on the west coast.

What is wrong in agriculture? There are no family farms any more. People are getting out of farming. Why? We have to preserve those traditions. That is what Canada is all about. That is what will keep us united, our uniqueness. There is nothing wrong with being different. But what is happening is that there is a malaise out there. People in rural Canada feel they have been forgotten.

Maybe the service has not changed in the rural post offices. I am not going to debate that point with the government, because they have their point of view and I have mine. Individuals want to go down to the local post office, meet their friends and have a little chat. They want to go by and see a Canadian flag here and there in their community. For many people in rural Canada there are no Canadian flags flying any more because Canada Post does not exist in their community any more. Canada Post, even if they do exist, are flying a corporate flag now. What is wrong with the Canadian flag?

We are facing an identity crisis. We are facing a crisis in our nation and we are refusing to step up front and say that we are proud to be Canadians. I think to be proud to be a Canadian we would have to go back and look at what has made us Canadians in the true sense. We have to go back and look at our roots. We have to go back and look at rural Canada and say: "We are falling apart here. Let us put it back together. Let us put the programs back in to help rural Canada", not necessarily just throw money at the problem. There is a structural problem and we have to handle it.

I suppose some people would have different ways of doing it, but it is important that we sit down someday and decide how we are going to help rural Canada prosper, how to revitalize it because at the present moment there is a serious problem and we are not handling it very well.

Mr. Ross Harvey (Edmonton East): Mr. Speaker, I feel compelled at this point to note for the benefit of those who may be watching these proceedings on television tonight, that we are actually debating something concrete. What we are debating is a request from the government, in the form of a bill, to borrow $26 billion to keep the machinery of government running over the next fiscal year. That is the amount the government estimates it will need to make up the difference between what it proposes to spend and what it assumes it will receive by way of taxation and other revenues.

The question before us tonight is the third reading of the bill that will authorize the borrowing of that $26 billion. I would like just very briefly to note why I, as the member for Edmonton East, cannot support that request and thus cannot vote for the bill.

I would like to start by reminding members that for better than a year and half, in fact, in some instances a lot longer than a year and half, members of the New Democratic Party caucus have been advising the government: "You have to reduce interest rates". The high interest rate policy maintained by the Governor of the Bank of Canada with the delighted acquiescence of the government ministry was crippling the Canadian economy. If those high interest rates were not reduced, unquestionably a recession would be induced and quite possibly it could be a very deep, severe and harmful recession.

That is precisely what has occurred. However, we are now treated with the remarkable spectacle of the finance minister, among others, saying—now that the collapse of the economy has by itself completely destroyed the market for money and thus allowed interest rates to fall, the Minister of Finance and other members of the government are saying— "Well, there you are. We have reduced interest rates".

• (1800)

It is rather like watching the fire truck pull up to the burning house after it has burned to the ground. It is nice to know the fire truck is there, but it is a little late.

If I may extend this little metaphor, what is required now is for the carpenters and the electricians and the roofers and the plasterers to be hired to rebuild the house. We can send the fire truck back to the fire hall. The period of need has passed. What we need now, to make the metaphor plain, is government programs aimed at rebuilding the economy.

That means two things. It means stimulating consumption and it means encouraging new business investment. The budget does neither. The budget discourages consumption by all save the very rich, and has absolutely nothing to encourage business investment in product, plant and equipment.

We are left asking ourselves why the heck then do we need to borrow $26 billion, $1,000 for every man, woman, and child in this country? I regret to say, the answer is what makes it impossible for me to support this bill.

The answer as to why we need to borrow that money is precisely to continue to let the good times roll for Tom d'Aquino's Business Council on National Issues, for whom the ministry and its supporters opposite constitute so effective a fan club.

For several weeks now, members of my party in this House, most notably the member for Winnipeg—Transcona, have been pointing out to the Minister of Finance and other members of the government that, in a budget that is virtually an assault on the wallets, well-being and standard of living of the Canadian people, there is one group that has got off scot free. There is one group that has not been called upon—in the heroic words of the finance minister—to share the burden. It is that small group of Canadians sufficiently wealthy to take advantage of the tax breaks that are there for the rich and the super-rich and the corporations they hold.

In the last couple of weeks, the member for Winnipeg—Transcona has identified five such key loopholes. They are the capital gains lifetime exemption and preferred rates, which will cost the treasury $2.8 billion all by itself. That is enough to exempt the entire population of Alberta from that $1,000 a head required by the borrowing bill.

The business and entertainment tax deduction—the famous three-martini lunch, the box seats for the favoured of the corporate elite that the member for Essex—Windsor was speaking of earlier—that accounts for $1.1 billion a year. The dividend tax credit is another $1 billion a year. The manufacturing and processing tax credit, that gift to the corporate sector which was otherwise so grievously inconvenienced by the manufacturers' sales tax—that is what we were told during the period when the GST was being hawked—that remains, and it is worth another billion dollars a year to those corporations. The interest deductibility rule is all by itself worth $800 million to the wealthy in this country.

Those five considerations alone add up to $6.7 billion. That is better than one-quarter of the entire borrowing requirement identified in the bill. If those loopholes were closed—and closing them would not hurt ordinary Canadians, would not hurt the overwhelming majority of constituents of Edmonton East whom I represent, or the overwhelming majority of constituents of Edmonton North whom you, Mr. Speaker, represent—that borrowing bill could be cut by at least one-quarter. That is real money we are talking about here. There is more.

In its unfettered pursuit of good times for the rich, the continued program of tax reform that this government has pursued has made more inequitable, more uneven, more unfair what was already an unfair income tax system bequeathed to it by previous Liberal governments.

If I may offer a little aside, I was astonished to hear the hon. member for Restigouche a few moments earlier berate the government for making more inequitable the relative shares paid by the corporate sector through the income tax levied on it as opposed to individual Canadians and the income tax levied on them. It is mostly successive Liberal, but as well Conservative, governments since the 1950s that have taken what was a 50–50 share of income taxes paid—and it is virtually a straight line progression—to what is now 90 per cent collected from individuals and 10 per cent collected from corporations.

It is grossly inequitable. For a member of the Liberal caucus to get up and complain about it strikes me as hubris of a truly Homeric scope.

Just to make this point clear, I note that the most recent book of stats we have on personal income tax was published last fall covering the taxation year 1988, which you will recall, Mr. Speaker, is the first year of the much heralded income tax reform. It was when the finance minister's changes to the income tax system were supposed to take effect and make things a whole lot fairer for all Canadians. This book now lets us see what actually happened.

Do you know what happened? What happened—to the surprise of some, I suppose; to the surprise of none in my caucus—was that the income tax system became more unfair. In fact, the average tax paid by Canadians making more than a quarter of a million dollars a year—of those who paid tax—from 1987 to 1988 dropped by 15 per cent. It dropped $20,597. The average tax paid by those earning a quarter of a million dollars a year or more went down.

What happened on the other end? The average tax paid by those making 15 grand a year or less, from 1987 to the first year of tax reform in 1988, went up by 13 per cent, or $71. By any dispassionate measure, that is grossly unfair.

Just to rub salt in the wound, the same year the number of those Canadians earning a quarter of a million dollars or more who paid no tax went up by 40 per cent from the previous year. In 1988 we had 140 Canadians who made a quarter of a million dollars a year or more and did not pay a penny on it, not one red cent. Those earning 50 grand a year or more who paid no tax went up 87 per cent, to 5,430. That is one whale of a tax reform. That is one heck of an example of fairness.

I would suggest that no Canadian who has been paying attention is going to be surprised by these numbers. It is just a continuation of the policy of ever greater unfairness in the taxation system that has been pursued by successive Liberal and Conservative governments since the end of the Second World War.

It is my constituents in Edmonton East, the folk who work at the chemical plants, the folk who work at Gainers, the folk who work in the public sector in the schools and in the federal government offices, who are being made to pay more and more so that the rich can pay less and less.

That is why I, on their behalf, cannot support this borrowing bill.

• (1810)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Benoît Tremblay (Rosemont): Mr. Speaker, with this bill, the government is asking the House the authority to borrow $26 billion, $400 million of which for the 1991–1992 financial year. This request, made necessary by this government's policies over the past few years, must be set in the context of the projections contained in the last budget.

Obviously, the government failed to reduce the deficit after promising to do it. Now, it is presenting a budget that goes against the role traditionally played by the federal government during a recession.

Of course, we are aware of the phenomenal size of the accumulated national debt and the deficit which is remaining high in spite of the repeated promises of the Minister of Finance. We knew that there was little leeway and that not much could be expected from the last budget. Still, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance managed to disappoint us on three grounds. First, the Minister of Finance took no responsibility for the present situation. Second, the measures announced in this budget will deepen the recession and prevent the economy from making a strong recovery. Third, chances of finding effective long-term solutions are very slim.

What responsibility does this government have in the current national finance crisis? For seven years now, the Minister of Finance has been posing as the brave white knight trying to improve a disastrous situation inherited from the Liberals. I have no qualms about condemning the Liberal mismanagement but, as the years go by, the minister must come to realize that his government also made major mistakes that contributed to a large extent to the deterioration of our national finances.

Let me give a few examples of mistakes that were later corrected. There was the $500,000 lifetime capital gains exemption introduced by the Conservatives, not the Liberals. This exemption even applied to capital gains made on rental properties, which brought speculative pressure to bear on those properties without attracting productives investment. The government has to backtrack and reduce the exemption to $100,000.

Another example is VIA Rail. While the Liberal government had the courage to propose the required streamlining plan, this government, when it came to power, was only too eager to cancel it and reallocate hundreds of thousands of dollars to a recovery plan that failed. But they finally carried out the streamlining planned by the Liberals. What was ironic was to see the former minister, the hon. Jean–Luc Pépin, become the major advocate of this government which was carrying out his plan five years too late.

There are many other examples, but I am more concerned, Mr. Speaker, about the mistakes that were not recognized. Think of the Hibernia project for instance. More than $2 billion in federal government funds were pumped into a venture that will never be profitable and which will require more enormous capital outlays to be kept afloat in the years to come. In addition to not being viable, the project's potential for damage to the environment is far greater than in the case of hydro–electric projects.

Actually, the Lower Churchill project, which is marking time as a result of the Newfoundland government's stubborn position, would have created more jobs than the Hibernia project, without government subsidies and with minimal risk to the environment.

How are we supposed to make sense of a decision, that includes the construction of a new shipyard in Newfoundland, at a time when Canadian shipyards are losing money and the industry has been subject to costly restructuring during the past ten years? The present problems at Versatile in Vancouver are just one more episode in the restructuring process we already experienced in Quebec. In fact, Davie Shipbuilding in Lévis, which is technically bankrupt, is still waiting for the federal government's decision, which keeps being postponed, to give the green light so it can continue work on its defence contracts.

The shipyards under construction in Newfoundland will never be viable. How can the Minister of Finance defend such wasteful policies? Is this a sensible way to manage the country's finances? I may add that the Liberals' support for getting the necessary legislation through the House of Commons and the Senate is certainly no guarantee for good management. This is electioneering at public expense.

After seven years, the Minister of Finance can no longer deny his responsibility for the deplorable state of the nation's finances. He must take the responsibility for his government's decisions.

And now, what about the future first of all, the immediate future. What is the government doing to get us out of the recession? Nothing. In fact, it is increasing pressure on wage earners. The most intolerable measure in this entire budget is probably the 24.5 per cent increase in unemployment insurance premiums. This is a clear incentive to increase lay–offs and unemployment. This comes at a time when the minister says one of the major problems in our economy is that our labour costs are higher than those of our competitors. So why increase them in the middle of a recession? I found only one explanation, in the speech made by the Minister of Employment and Immigration when she introduced this bill. She said that if premiums had not been increased this year, and I quote: "The expected deficit in the UI account would have required large premium increases in 1993". Economically speaking, this alternative would have been entirely acceptable, since in 1993, we should be in the middle of an economic recovery. So why not wait until then? Probably for political reasons.

In spite of the polls and the desertions, the government hopes to stretch its mandate up to 1993. Election logic has clearly won over economic logic.

Another cut, that of $70 million in the subsidies to non-profit organizations dedicated to help the needy, is also unacceptable in the present context. In fact, we were not expecting miracles from the Minister of Finance. We are aware of the difficulties involved in public finances. On the other hand, when election logic prevails over a minimum of compassion for the unemployed and the poor in the present situation, it must be denounced Mr. Speaker. But let us look further.

Are there in this budget directions which would indicate that the government will seriously deal with the basic reasons behind the chronic deficit as well as the very ineffectiveness of the federal system. Unfortunately, the answer is no. The government is making cuts everywhere, but maintains its determination to meddle in all aspects of the lives of the people and the provinces. We are back to the era of liberal centralization which built a political and bureaucratic structure which is forever creating deficits, unless the provinces and the people demand a quick change in policy.

Remember the Tory government which preached both decentralization and consultation! Where are we now? By systematically cutting in transfer payments to the provinces, the Tory government decentralized the accounts payable, while maintaining and even increasing its control over the taxation areas. Now that it is no longer able to pay, does the federal government intend to return to the provinces their areas of jurisdiction? No at all; quite the contrary. It intends to introduce new legislation, especially in the health care area, to increase its powers. It intends to give itself the powers it needs to compel others to spend while imposing its own national standards.

Is that the only area, Mr. Speaker? Not at all. Read again the speech which the Minister of Employment and Immigration made when she introduced her bill on March 5 last. She explained her manpower enhancement strategy by saying and I quote: "Our strategy is based on the idea of partnerships; partnerships with employers, with labour, with education and with provinces and territories."

After reminding the House of the announcement concerning the new Canadain Labour Force Development Board, she exclaimed, and I quote: "What a breakthrough for Canada, to be able to build the kind of partnership that is going to be needed in the decade ahead". What breakthrough is the minister talking about?

• (1820)

She talks about a fresh initiative, a new intrusion on the part of the federal government which, no longer financially strong enough to maintain its presence in the vocational training field, chose to grab the unemployment insurance funds and re-affirm its intention to continue with the kind of jurisdiction duplications that led to the wanton resource wastes of which we are all aware. In Quebec, all groups representing management, labour and teachers have refused to sit on this board. They are all in favour of the Government of Quebec repatriating all powers in the field of vocational training. What success is the minister referring to? It is in fact a failure, a new confrontation, yet another example of federal arrogance.

Whatever happened to the willingness of the Conservative government to decentralize? After a few years we have to admit that the willingness has disappeared and been replaced by the old Liberal arrogance. The speeches of the Prime Minister increasingly attest to that fact. Should we be surprised? Who have been his closest advisers in recent months? The likes of Tellier, Dicerney, Gagné and Tassé, the best soldiers Trudeau had to send to the front lines in the referendum battle, a team that is quite prepared to spend hundreds of millions of dollars to maintain an outdated vision of the way to govern this country, a team whose sole aim is to hang on to the power of the federal government's bureaucratic and political machine, not to give this country the political and economic institutions that would meet the aspirations of the Canadian public.

The economic failure of the federal government cannot hide the political failure. The political reality of this country is that it is made up of two nations, two peoples that must quickly undertake an in-depth review of their political and economic institutions. Of course, when the Conservative government came into office, we were hoping for progress in that direction.

But with the Meech Lake failure, confrontation is the order of the day. Quite clearly, the Prime Minister and his government are doing exactly what the Liberal Party did in the past. I am utterly convinced, Mr. Speaker, that that is not what Canadians and Quebeckers are wishing for. Bureaucracy and the federal government's policy have become the main obstacles preventing Quebeckers and Canadians from reaching an agreement. And we will be working relentlessly in the next few months to reach such agreements.

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, I listened well to the Hon. Member for Rosemont. He referred earlier to VIA Rail. When talking either about engines or workers,—I come from a distant area—when talking about the railway line between Senneterre and Montreal and back Montreal—Senneterre—Cochrane and Shawinigan, the way my good friend the Hon. Member for Shawinigan, Denis Pronovost, pronounces it, something must be said. We are reaping what the Liberals have sown. After investigation, the House will remember that the line from Senneterre—Cochrane provides $60,000 in revenues, while it costs a million dollar a year to adminster VIA Rail from Senneterre—Cochrane. Yet, there is something strange. As Members of the Opposition, whether within the Liberal Party or the NDP—and even you who are part of the Bloc Quebecois, although you were elected under the Conservative banner—you accepted a number of things when you were elected. Mr. Speaker, one thing must be said: The VIA Rail passenger train often arrives in Senneterre. But the administrators of this Crown Corporation do not have even the teams they need to drive the train to Amos, La Sarre and Cochrane— Often, however, VIA management doesn't even have a crew to run the locomotive, to go to Amos, La Sarre and Cochrane. I never saw anything like it. That's VIA management for you. It's not the government's fault. This is a Crown corporation.

You mentioned Meech and the fact that we lost everything. I, for one, hope that Quebeckers are pleased with the Canada-Quebec agreement referred to in Meech, the agreement that has just been signed by the federal government and the Government of Quebec, the Canada-Quebec agreement on immigration. The people in our area are pleased with this agreement.

You also referred to the Minister of Finance and his Budget, when you said we had lost everything. Thanks to the Conservative members from Quebec, thanks to the Quebec caucus, Quebec was able to patriate a number of things that were here in Ottawa, including a research laboratory we got in Abitibi. This had never been done before. The Liberals never did it. The NDP never supported us in this respect, and the Bloc Quebecois certainly never gave us their support when it came to patriating research and development.

There is another item I would like to mention in my comments, and that is the matter of isolated post allowances. This was a very positive development for workers, for union members, for all the workers in Matagami, Joutel, Lebel-sur-Quévillon, Chapais Chibougamau. Now they have isolation benefits. That is an important development.

I noticed recently Mr. Speaker, that members of the Bloc Quebecois keep saying they are defending the rights of Quebeckers. I just made a speech on March 7 on the subject of the precautionary withdrawal from work for pregnant women in federally regulated businesses. Well, there are a lot of women in Quebec who work for unions like the FTQ, the CSN, the Metal Workers, but in this debate on the defence of pregnant women, in the federally regulated businesses, the Bloc Quebecois was nowhere to be seen. They never defended us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Would the hon. member kindly put his question?

Mr. Saint-Julien: Mr. Speaker, my question or comment can last ten, twenty minutes, according to Beauchesne and to Mrs Sauvé. Mrs Sauvé has always said that we could speak for ten minutes, make a good speech, and put our question after. We have ten minutes to speak, and that's the truth. Remember what Mrs Sauvé said in the House when she was in the chair, that we had ten minutes to speak before putting a question.

However, there is one thing I wish to say, Mr. Speaker. I hear the member talking over there, she is trying to cut me off—

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): There are hon. members who would like to ask a question or make a comment, so I would appreciate it if the hon. member would put his question.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Saint-Julien: Perfect. My question is thus as follows, Mr. Speaker. It follows from an article in today's *La Presse* which said that the mortgage rates of today are hurting us less than in 1982, according to the *Mouvement des caisses populaires Desjardins.* Does the hon. member for Rosemont agree that the mortgage rates are better today than they were in 1982?

Mr. Benoît Tremblay (Rosemont): I will give a quick answer, Mr. Speaker.

You know, I do not blame this government for the cuts they made in VIA Rail. We find that they did it five years after having spent hundreds of millions of dollars. So this is the thrust of my remark. They have to take the responsibility; they cannot blame it only on the past.

As for the defence of workers, you know, the hon. member for Abitibi is a very sympathetic and hard-working member, whom I respect, but if he really takes to heart the workers' interests, I wonder how the Conservative members from Quebec could vote against the anti-scab legislation put forward by the Bloc Québécois—

Mr. Saint-Julien: I voted for it.

Mr. Tremblay: Yes, I know you voted for it yourself, but your colleagues voted against it. That is why it was defeated.

I agree with you totally that mortgage rates are much better than they were in 1982. It was an absolute disaster in 1982! I agree that, because of the very tight management by the Governor of the Bank of Canada, we now have relatively stable long-term rates. Putting the brakes suddenly is what threw us in a much deeper recession—the Governor of the Bank himself admitted it. I am not blaming it all on him. It was indeed hard to predict, but the Governor did decide to apply the brakes even though everyone was anticipating a recession. Today, he admits that he should have changed course earlier, but we are already in a deep recession.

Why not have waited until 1993 to increase the unemployment insurance premiums? Because the Conservatives hope that 1993 will be an election year. That is why. This is where electoral considerations took precedence over economic considerations. That is the problem.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The questions and comments period is now over. On debate. The hon. member for Nepean.

• (1830)

[*English*]

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean): Mr. Speaker, I too am delighted to have the opportunity to speak during consideration of this stage of Bill C-97, an act to provide borrowing authority. Billions of dollars are to be borrowed to feed an insatiable appetite of a government that knows not what it is doing.

My colleagues on this side of the House have done an admirable job of pointing out the inadequacies of this budget and of laying bare the very twisted ideology which drives this government to deliver blows time and again to the people of this country. I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to add my voice to this debate at this time.

I would be the first person in this House to say that we need fiscal accountability and responsibility in government; there is no doubt about it. I would be the first to say that we must all do our share to rid our country of the deficit so that future generations are not saddled with paying for the government's impetuous spending habits.

However, let us begin by looking at the situation in the manufacturing sector and how the policies of this government in its repeated budgetary fiascos has snuffed out the fires in the so-called "engine of Canada's economy—the province of Ontario".

It would come as no surprise to many Canadians outside Ontario that it is actually this province that is feeling the greatest pinch during these difficult economic times. According to the findings of a Liberal task force, Ontario accounts for four out of every ten lost Canadian jobs. Ontario is now feeling the greatest impact with respect to plant closures, bankruptcies, unemployment and the general economic slowdown.

The issues which are consistently cited as reasons for the dramatic downturn in the economy are: high interest rates, Canada's artificially high dollar, high rate of taxation compounded by the GST, the negative effects of the free trade agreement, and the government's mismanagement of the federal debt.

Here in the national capital region, which my riding of Nepean and my constituents are a part of, we were once known for economic stability. We in the nation's capital are not immune any more to the effects of this government's economic policies, as a shrinking and demoralized Public Service, bankruptcies and rising unemployment in the region all add up to a greater reliance on already strained social service agencies.

In essence, we in the nation's capital are suffering from the trickle down effect, at a time of increasing dependence on social assistance programs brought on by this government's policies. We are watching those programs dry up due to a lack of funding by this government.

In straight economic terms, this budget and this government are costing Canadians dearly, but it is the human cost that is most tragic. The real tragedy is that this government conveniently glosses over the hardships which it has inflicted on Canadians. Middle-class Canadians are taxed to death. They are generally unable to enjoy the same tax loopholes which rich friends of this government enjoy.

Women continue to struggle toward true equality in our society. The government causes further setbacks by cutting funding and programs which might assist women in their cause. In some ways the plight of women has grown worse, not better, under this administration.

It is a well documented fact that the incidence of family violence and family breakdown increases as financial pressures mount. We can be sure that every Canadian family is feeling the bite of the hard economic times brought on by the policies of the government. It is almost always women who are at the receiving end of family violence.

Even then I suspect that a solution would involve a glitzy public relations campaign designed to gloss over the problems of increasing family breakdown and violence against women.

Next in the line of this government's fire are the children. There are approximately 100 million children today living in poverty in Canada and close to 200,000 of them must rely on food banks for their daily bread. That is unconscionable.

I ask: What kind of future will these children have if all they ever know is poverty, hunger and hopelessness? Undernourished, they find it difficult to learn. Many of them will end up by dropping out of school or certainly not doing as well as they could if given better circumstances in which to grow and learn. They will become part of a vicious perpetual cycle of poverty. They will know nothing else. They will grow up with a deeply rooted sense of cynicism and mistrust.

The government which claims to despise the so-called welfare state mentality is actually creating a much greater malaise. Once entrenched, there will be no social safety net to prevent the fall of all of the people who will be in its grip.

This all comes at a time when an international agreement to which 30-some countries throughout the world agreed was signed last May: the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. We may recall that the Prime Minister of Canada went to Washington and chaired, I believe, that committee. We were all so enthused and pleased that Canada was going to be involved.

To this date, Canada has not signed the agreement. What a farce: travelling to Washington, all this hoop-la, chair the committee, and then he does not sign the agreement. It outlines minimum standards for children, among other things, in health care and education. It encourages the development of different forms of secondary education systems both general and vocational. It ensures appropriate health care, family planning and education. This should be available and accessible to all children. The list goes on and on. I could cite many examples.

Does this government expect that the provinces are going to submit happily to spending even more money in the areas of health care and education at a time when the federal government is cutting them off?

I was delighted when Canada agreed to be part of this convention. I do not know what has gone wrong. I would encourage all members on the opposite side of the House to put pressure on their cabinet, on the people who have the power to issue a signature in Washington on the rights of the child.

The public servants of this country have also been singled out for punishment in the budget. Not since this government attempted to deindex old age pensions have I seen a more direct and cynical attack on a specific sector of society. This government believes that Canadians feel their public servants are nothing more than overpaid and underproductive bureaucrats.

The government, by its actions, is telling every employer in Canada that it is acceptable to throw away the right to bargain and it is acceptable to hold over the heads of the workers the threats of job losses and contracting out. Women in the Public Service have also been hurt.

Another sector which is carrying more than its share of this country's economic burden is small business. Any small business that has managed to survive the recession, which this government has created and now ignores, deserve a medal of valour for they have survived a war that has been waged against them by their own government. They are now required, along with the employee, to pay all the unemployment insurance bills. The federal government is no longer paying part of that program. Eighty per cent of new jobs in this country are created by small business and yet this government will turn around and stick a knife in its back.

I had a call from a plumber recently with regards to the FST. He said: "I thought when GST was implemented that I would no longer have to pay the FST." His supplier was charging him for both. He said: "I cannot afford it. What do I do?" I phoned Revenue Canada, and what did it tell me: "The marketplace will sort all this out." In the meantime, there is a plumber who cannot pay for his supplies because someone had refused to remove the FST. It is a paperwork jungle for the small business person. The GST has created horrendous problems.

The finance minister and the Prime Minister are being less than truthful when they say this is a budget aimed at deficit elimination.

• (1840)

Actually they are passing the buck to the provinces, the municipalities and, through the back door route, to the taxpayers of this country. We are already overtaxed; programs to help women, the unemployed, the disadvantaged, have been slashed. Now this government in this budget has furthered its vicious assault on our health care and education programs. It has pitted workers against each other, and it has left the provinces and municipalities holding the bag.

Yesterday, the Canadian Human Rights Commission released its 1990 annual report. It has made recommendations in several areas which require action, not cuts; aboriginal issues; in issues affecting the disabled; with respect to women, immigrants, visible minorities. Many of the recommendations in the report have been on the books for five years or longer. In other words, every year, the Human Rights Commission is recommending these things and the government is doing nothing about it.

The report calls for the acknowledgement of the government of debts owed to aboriginal people. Some 41 per cent of unattached women 65 years of age and older continue to remain below the poverty line, despite a recommendation contained in the 20 year old report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada. When will these women get their due?

The commission report calls for measures to foster improved race relations, yet the pieces of pie for all groups and programs working toward this end, get smaller and smaller.

This government has further proven that it, and its policies, are incapable of saving, let alone building, this nation. This government should try to use some creativity and imagination in attempting to solve our nation's problems. Let us provide, not cut, training and education to get people back to work.

One of the things I have been doing recently in my riding, and I started about six weeks ago, is meeting with the business community. Appointments are set and I meet people from the business community on an average of three businesses a week for an hour, sometimes up to two hours in the morning. I have met with companies as large as Northern Telecom, which employs 3,000 people in the city of Nepean and I have also met smaller businesses that employ maybe only 10 people.

Without fail, the business community is saying to me that this government is destroying business in this country. They cannot compete because of the policies of this government. Some 90 per cent of their business is now outside of the country because they cannot compete within their own country.

A company I visited yesterday has computer systems in the House of Representatives and the Congress in Washington. Do you think he can get something into the Parliament of Canada or in the House of Commons? Not on your life. He told me of the paperwork, the bureaucratic red tape. This gentleman said to me: "I could cry when I see what this government is doing to business in Canada".

Let us provide adequate health care so that people can feel secure and get on with living. Let us reform our system of taxation to a more fair and level playing field, so that the average Canadian does not feel cynical and over-burdened. Let us create a fair justice system so that people do not feel persecuted and resentful.

I say to the government, I say to the Prime Minister, and I say to the Minister of Finance: let us invest in people, and they will give us back much more. We will have a better country. They can spend their time and energy just getting on with living, rather than spending their time and energy resenting the government and each other for their difficult predicament.

This approach, in addition to solving the economic woes of this country, would go a long way toward promoting national unity. The two major issues that I see in the country today are national unity and the economic problems we are faced with. In many ways they probably go hand in hand. With a positive outlook, and with a hand-in-glove approach to the people of Canada, I think we can succeed. We are a great nation. We have a wonderful future, and I think we have to be sympathetic. We have to get to the grass roots and find out what people are hearing, find out what they are saying, find out what they are feeling, and continue to build this great nation.

Mr. Dave Worthy (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Nepean for her contribution to the debate this evening.

I point out that when she commenced her discussion, she indicated she would advocate that this government face up to its deficit, that the people of this country do have to pay for the benefits they have received while living here. But then she proceeded for the next 15 minutes to discuss item after item after item in which the government would have to pay out more money, not less, that would be adding more to the burden, not only to the taxpayers we have now, but more burden to the taxpayers we are going to have in the future, the young people, the people who are truly our future in Canada.

I would like to ask the hon. member to contemplate that situation. Could she go back to her opening statement and indicate to the House and to the people who are watching, how she would propose to achieve all of the things she mentioned, and yet still be responsible to the country, to the taxpayers today and the young people who are going to inherit the debt that we do not pay.

Mrs. Gaffney: Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his question.

I would like to go back to the years 1984 to 1988. Canada had, in those four years, the largest unprecedented growth in its history. In other words, the growth over the anticipated revenue was so large and so massive that it never before happened in the history of this country. That was during the first term this government held office in Canada. Did it reduce one dollar of the deficit? Not on your life. And do you think I can find out what it did with all that money during that time? No, sir, I cannot, because the books are closed to me as an opposition member. This government had billions and billions of dollars, I believe it was something like $100 billion, in excess revenue over anticipated revenue in those four years and it doubled the debt in that time.

What do I say to the member sitting opposite me? If he cannot manage the economy in the good times, and here we are in the tight times and he wants to impose a GST when everybody is already in a tight situation. He wants to increase taxes. In other words, hit a guy when he is down. Oh, sure, hit a guy when he is down and see what it is like. Why did you not hit them when they were up, when we were up those four years. You are poor managers. You do not know how to manage the economy.

For instance, money should be poured into research and the education system. Every one of those businesses I have been attending mentioned this. Northern Telecom used to hire the top ten percentile from the University of Waterloo. They are not staying in this country any more, they are going to the States. Do you know why? Because we are over-taxed in this country. They will not stay here. They can earn $50,000 in the United States and it is worth $100,000 here in Canada. We cannot compete. We are losing our students to the American sector.

Another thing that was mentioned was to hire an American engineer and bring him to Canada. In order for that same engineer who might be making $40,000 in the States, to bring him to Canada to work for a company like Northern Telecom, they have to pay him $75,000. They cannot afford it any more.

Mr. Speaker, while I appreciate the gentleman's question to me, I find it absolutely incredulous that here are people who are unemployed, their incomes have been cut and we are wanting to hit them even harder with the high interest rates, with the GST, with all of the other cutbacks in the programs.

I just say to him that this is not the year to do it. You should have done it between 1984 and 1988. I would still like to know what you did with those billions of dollars. If you ever find time to slip it across the aisle, I would love to have it.

• (1850)

Ms. Beth Phinney (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to speak on the estimates and the budget. The finance minister's budget is a continuation of this government's destructive economic policies. As is the case in all regions of Canada, those living in the Hamilton area are suffering from the made-in-Canada recession.

On January 23 and 24, as chairman of the Hamilton-Niagara caucus, I conducted hearings on the economy and the recession. The participation of the hon. members from Hamilton East, Hamilton West, Haldimand—Norfolk, Etobicoke North, Welland—St. Catharines—Thorold, and London East in the task force on the economy and the recession contributed a great deal toward its success.

We heard from 25 groups and individuals representing a cross section of the community: social service groups, labour unions, food banks, hospitals, small businesses, Mohawk College and McMaster University, low cost housing organizations, the construction industry, and the steel industry, among others. The presentations that we heard put a human face on the cold statistics that we hear in this House day after day.

The citizens of the Hamilton area painted a grim picture of how the region is suffering as a result of this government's policies. It was amazing that witness after witness, representing interests from across the spectrum, all expressed deep concern about the direction this government is leading us. In this time of great national division, the one unifying factor may be the Canadian public's rejection of this government's economic policies.

The shocking thing is that there is nothing accidental about what the government has done, nor is the current recession the result of global factors. This is the Prime Minister's one truly Canadian effort: a made-in-Canada recession. The Prime Minister even bragged last fall about engineering an economic slowdown. Despite his many other failed initiatives, I must admit that on this one the Prime Minister has really outdone himself.

This recession is the result of very deliberate actions by this government. The government's high interest rate policy, for example, is hitting all sectors of the Hamilton economy. Traditionally, Canadian interest rates have been 1 to 2 per cent over their American counterparts. Over the last year, Canadian interest rates have been 4 to 5 per cent higher than those of the United States. This has prevented young families from buying homes, has forced companies to lay off workers, and has prevented small businesses from expanding.

If the government is not prepared to go out and hear what Canadians have to say about their economic policies, then let me make it easier for them by repeating what my colleagues and I were told by witnesses at the task force in Hamilton.

Family Services of Hamilton-Wentworth described at the hearings what high interest rates are doing to young families:

> This stage of the family life cycle is marked by high rates of borrowing and low rates of saving, due to the demands of household formation. As a result, young families are affected by the higher costs of borrowing but receive few of the benefits of the high rates of return on saving.

Alderman Don Ross, chairman of the Hamilton-Wentworth Economic Development Committee, offered the following overview of the problem.

> For improved economy we need the Bank of Canada to reduce interest rates to a level that will enable people, industry, and commerce to feel comfortable enough to re-invest in major capital projects; whether that be a new car, plant or merchandise.

Bob Crockford, chairman of the Hamilton branch of the Canadian Manufacturers Association, raised further concerns with respect to the manufacturers' spending on capital investment.

> —the loss of manufacturing investment may be the single greatest cost of the government's high interest rate policy.

Cameron Nolan of the Hamilton Construction Association described the effects of high interest rates on the construction industry.

> The result has been slower growth and resulting unemployment— Our industry urges the federal government—to amend its interest rate policy to one which calls for reducing interest rates. A reduction will bring us out of the recession.

The Hamilton and District Chamber of Commerce in their presentation focused on the high Canadian dollar:

> The high cost of the Canadian dollar is impeding the country's ability to sustain its export capabilities in world markets.

The introduction of the goods and services tax in the middle of a recession has only served to make a bad situation worse for those in the Hamilton area. By pulling dollars out of an already depressed economy, the GST has dealt a severe blow to the Hamilton area.

Scott Jacks, owner of a small Hamilton natural food store described what the goods and services tax will do to small business:

> Many small businesses find cash flow to be a difficult challenge at the best of times. I must point out that the GST could have a devastating effect on cash flow, even to the point of putting someone out of business.

The wonderful prosperity the Prime Minister predicted under free trade has unfortunately not been apparent anywhere north of the 49th parallel. Since the signing of the free trade agreement there has been a flight of Canadian jobs to the United States. Stelco in its presentation at our hearings noted the increased difficulties in doing business as more and more of its customers are closing their doors and moving production to the United States.

Ed Herchuk, president of the Ontario Council of Labour, told us that under the free trade agreement American construction workers are enjoying far greater rights in cross border work than Canadian labourers and as a result "they daily take jobs away from Canadian construction workers".

The deliberate policies of the federal government have all contributed to the deindustrialization of Ontario, the heartland of Canadian industry. The effects are as clear as they are shocking.

In the last year unemployment has doubled in the Hamilton area. Today there are 30,000 Hamiltonians out of work. For the Prime Minister's benefit, that is more people than live in his home town of Baie Comeau.

Consumer bankruptcies in Hamilton shot up to 1,062 in 1990, an 80 per cent increase over 1989. Business bankruptcies went up 30 per cent during the same period.

Food banks in Hamilton now report approximately 20,000 people using their services each month. Social service agencies report a 67 per cent increase in the case load in the Hamilton–Wentworth region. Line–ups for social assistance housing continue to rise.

And how, Mr. Speaker, in this budget has this government addressed the concerns so eloquently expressed by the witnesses at the Hamilton task force hearings? Obviously, it is not concerned. For example, under this year's budget job retraining funds were cut by $100 million. It is small wonder unemployment has risen 10.2 per cent, just as the Minister of Finance predicted. Hamiltonians only wish he could have been as accurate with his predictions of economic prosperity in the last election.

Another example of the government's lack of concern is with consumers and businesses already struggling due to the GST and high interest rates, the finance minister has decided to hike unemployment insurance premiums by 24 per cent. Funds for social assistance housing have been slashed.

This budget will not only worsen the current economic recession in Hamilton, but it will also prevent Hamiltonians and all Canadians from improving their situation in the long run. Cuts in transfer payments to post–secondary education will hurt our universities and colleges and make it even more difficult for us to compete in the global market.

This government has declared war on Canadians with high inflation, high interest rates and general misman-

agement, a war in which unfortunately the average Canadian now has little defence except the next election.

Mr. Dan Heap (Trinity—Spadina): Mr. Speaker, I am very glad to have a chance to speak in opposition to Bill C–97 by which the government intends to borrow $26.4 billion from the Canadian people and of course, saddle them with still more taxes to pay the interest to those rich Canadians who lend the government the money.

• (1900)

This $26.4 billion is something in the range of $1,500 per year for every Canadian family. The government does it very lightly. This government is not listening to the Canadian people. We can see that by the way the Canadian people rate the government at the bottom of the polls.

It has been cutting taxes on the rich. It has been raising taxes on the poor. It has been cutting the unemployment insurance benefits at a time when it knows that unemployment is going to rise. It has been giving Canadian jobs away to the United States and other countries through the free trade agreement, giving jobs away to corporations that take them to the United States as they took 600 jobs away from the Inglis washing machine plant in Trinity—Spadina within a year of the free trade agreement by lowering the tariffs, or to U.S. based companies for the most part that contract those jobs out to very low wage countries of the Third World.

It has not been listening to the Canadian people about its war spending during 1990 and 1991. It has not been listening to the Canadian people about the many, many millions of dollars that it spent oppressing the native people with the Canadian army around the Oka dispute.

We have all read in our public and high school history about how the English people three and a half centuries ago decided it was time to tell the king and the other rich landed gentry that they did not have the right to raise taxes on the king's whim and to spend the money on the king's whim. They argued that the king did not have the right. He said he did, he had the divine right, that he was made king by the decision of God. Therefore whatever he did had the authority of God. The people did not believe him and under Cromwell they were willing to fight to tell the king that he not only did not have the right, but that he did not have the power. To prove their point, they cut off his head.

Then for a while England became governed more by democratic means through the parliamentary system. But in the last couple of decades this Parliament has been losing even the limited power that it has had. That is to say, the people who are elected to this Parliament as members, constituency by constituency, have less and less control over what this government does. This government makes wildly false promises during election time that it clearly does not intend to keep.

While I was in Mexico last week, I found it interesting to hear the President of Mexico, through the media, solemnly promising that he would not give up one iota of Mexico's control over its natural oil and resources, solemnly promising that he would not make any trade deals that would bring contracts or jobs into Mexico that would damage the environment and so on. It all sounds dismally familiar on the basis of what we heard three years ago from this government. We heard, in 1984 when this government was seeking election, it promise solemnly that it would have nothing to do with a trade deal with the United States because it would be a marriage of the elephant and the mouse and when the elephant roles over, the now Prime Minister said it would be the finish of the mouse.

They deceived the voters at election time and then when representatives elected here to Parliament complained about what the government was doing and used this forum to explain to the people how the government has deceived people, the government used a gag. It has gagged this Parliament more times in the last six years than all governments did before it. It even has the nerve to spend millions and millions of tax dollars, further deceiving the people, as it tried to deceive the people about Bill C–55, the anti–refugee law it introduced three and a half years ago, with misleading, quite false interpretations of it, as it did last year, putting out millions of dollars to mislead people about the goods and services tax which was thoroughly unpopular.

My point is that Canadians have been losing control of their government. We still have the right to vote at election time. They did in Samosa's Nicaragua. They do in the ARENA parties in El Salvador. They can come and vote, but those people under Samosa in Nicaragua and under the ARENA party now in El Salvador do not control their government through that vote.

In Canada it a little more subtle. By law, for example, Canadian people are prevented from acting, through the members of Parliament, to decide whether Canada goes to war. Last year this government sent ships, planes and troops to the Middle East without consulting the Canadian people through their elected representatives. For six weeks Canadians and members of Parliament asked the government to convene Parliament.

There was a little concern about 174 unarmed people with dark skins landing in Nova Scotia. The government declared it an emergency. It talked about an invasion. You would think we were being invaded by thousands of troops armed with machine guns and tanks—174 dark skinned people wading ashore in Nova Scotia was an emergency. Parliament was recalled. A law was passed authorizing the Canadian government to commit piracy on the high seas by seizing ships and turning them away in waters that Canada does not own.

But when the government is going to spend millions upon million upon millions of dollars on a war project in the Middle East, it is no emergency. The government did not use the emergences act which it passed. It sneaked around the corners instead and in connivance, not with the premiers, but with the business interests who profit by war, it simply sent the ships and then later recalled Parliament, not really to give permission, but only to give loyal support, which the government majority gave.

In the same way, it never asked Parliament for permission to send the troops against Oka, a dispute which could have been settled any time in the last 200 years by fair negotiation with the people who lived here before we Europeans came.

Later, after it was all finished, it asked Parliament and its tame majority to pass a resolution approving it. But there was a long, long struggle for months before there was any willingness to have a parliamentary committee open up the facts.

Again in 1991, when President Bush pressured the United Nations Security Council—not the United Nations General Assembly, the only really democratic body of the United Nations, but the Security Council, controlled by a few holdovers from the power system 45 years ago —to pass an ambiguous resolution which President Bush interpreted as authorization for war, it scrapped the sanctions, which were working, because President Bush wanted war. This government delayed recalling Parliament. The American Congress came back to debate it before the bombing began. This Parliament was not allowed to begin debate until the bombing was already upon us.

It made a mockery of this Parliament in that debate. It made a mockery of the speaking and made a mockery of voting.

In Cromwell's time, England was ruled by the rich nobility and the king. It was the merchants, the working classes in London and many of the peasants in the countryside who provided the strength of Cromwell's army which ended that rule.

• (1910)

Canada is now ruled by the Business Council on National Issues, the chief executives of 150 of the largest corporations in Canada. They called for three things: they called for a trade deal, they got it; they called for cuts in the social programs and they are getting it; they called for a boost in the arms budget and they are getting it. Those are the ones who call the tune in this country, not the Canadian people.

It is wider than this. It is not just a matter of Canada alone. Canada has its allies, that is to say this government has its allies. When the Prime Minister was elected the first time, practically the first act he did was to go to the White House to take his orders from President Reagan. Now he does the same with President Bush and the American arms manufacturers and their junior partners in Canada.

Another of the allies of Canada is the landed oligarchy and the army that control El Salvador, not that Canada gives direct aid there except for a few million dollars that it gives indirectly through a so-called aid project, but because Canada keeps silent. Canada keeps silent about the crimes committed by the government of El Salvador and by the army of El Salvador which is armed to the tune of more than a million dollars a day by the government of the United States.

Canada refuses to criticize the U.S. as Canada refused, with one minor exception, to criticize the U.S. proxy war against Nicaragua. Canada refuses to criticize the allies of the United States which maintain corrupt and oppressive regimes, such as the corrupt and wealthy rulers of some of the states in Arabia: the feudal lords and so-called kings in the Middle East who control those oil resources on behalf of the United States and literally for many years past got away with murder.

Now this government is asking Parliament to agree to lend it $26.4 billion. There will be no control over how it is spent because there is no control either over how it is raised. As my colleagues have pointed out before, one-quarter of that amount, one-quarter of that $26.4 billion could have been saved if the government had closed five of the major loopholes. The capital gains lifetime exemption fuels a great deal of the speculation that raises housing prices in Toronto beyond the reach of ability to pay, but the government gives a tax break of $2.8 billion, nearly $3 billion.

The business entertainment tax deduction, over $1 billion to the people who need it least. They claim they have to compete with others. Jones has to have this subsidy to entertain customers, to take them away from Smith, who has to have the same subsidy to entertain customers to take them away from Jones. They all benefit, all these top business people. But the Canadian working people have to pay extra taxes to feed them in luxury.

The dividend tax credit cushions the taxation that might be levied against the people who live partly off the dividends of corporations.

The manufacturing the processing tax credit amounts to another billion dollars. This was supposed to be done away with by the goods and services tax, but the government played a little bit of a shill game there and just slipped it through anyway.

The interest deductibility rule is another welfare scheme for land speculators. Nearly a billion dollars. The total of this is $6.7 billion, one-quarter of what the government wants to borrow.

Another way of putting it is that two or three years ago, in 1988, the average tax paid by Canadians making more than $225,000 a year went down by over $20,000. Twenty thousand dollars is a lot more than some people make by working for a year in Canada. But these people had $20,000 taken off their taxes, about 15 per cent of their income. At the same time, taxes paid by Canadians earning $15,000 or less rose by $71 which is a hike of 13 per cent.

This is the policy of this government. It could have saved one-quarter of this loan by a fair tax system, but it refused to do it, although this question was raised time and time again in Parliament by our party.

It can save another one-quarter of this loan money, if not right away at least soon, by taking our troops out of Europe. Whatever may have been the argument for putting the troops into Europe 30 and 40 years ago, it is agreed now that there is no threat of the Russian tanks rolling into Berlin and Paris. In fact, they are going the other way. But the government insists on spending over $6 billion to keep those troops there, the direct and indirect costs. It could take that money out. Those people could be more appropriately applied back home in Canada or, if necessary, in peacekeeping operations elsewhere.

As I say, if it could not be done all in one year, it could be begun this year.

Instead, this government has shown that it will get this money by cutting the programs for native people, which are a miserable small part of the obligation that we owe them for the land we took from them; by cutting programs that would benefit women who are still earning no more than two-thirds of what men earn in this country; cutting programs for higher education, pressuring institutions such as the University of Toronto to refuse to bargain in good faith with the men and women who keep that physical plant running; cutting programs on health; and, cutting programs on housing.

While I will be voting with my caucus against this borrowing bill, the issue is much larger. What Canada needs is a new Constitution, not just a new back-room division of powers between a Prime Minister and a bunch of premiers, but a Constitution in which the people of Canada participate and build up strong public pressure so that the people of Canada can regain control of the government by regaining parliamentary control of the cabinet.

I see you are signalling that my time is up. I hope that there will be more occasions when these same points can be raised in this House before the government decides to gag all debate.

Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to voice my strong objections on behalf of my constituents in Haldimand—Norfolk to the spending priorities of this government.

My riding has been hit hard by the government's six years of economic mismanagement. Hundreds of farmers have declared bankruptcy. Hundreds of plant workers have lost their jobs. Hundreds of stores and small businesses have shut their doors. People are suffering. I say that to the member for Cariboo—Coquitlam, who is now not going to stay around to listen to this. After six years of taking money from the farmers, the storekeepers and the plant workers of Haldimand—Norfolk and giving nothing in return, frustration and anger is rampant. Cynicism with politicians is at an all time high. I feel it is incumbent upon this government to do something about that cynicism.

For six years, the people of my riding have seen this government cut their agricultural programs, cut their social programs, chop away at the mainstays of rural communities, the post offices, the railway stations and now, the community newspapers. Every year, while this government has chopped away, it has raised taxes. After six years of cutting valuable programs and raising taxes, the public debt has doubled. The deficit still continues to rise.

• (1920)

The government has brought our country into a recession. Canadians want to know where all the money has gone. They want to know why needy Canadians, middle-class Canadians, unemployed Canadians, farmers, fishermen, plant workers, and small entrepreneurs are always the first ones to be taxed and the last ones to be served by this government.

The Minister of Finance likes to paint himself as the sole, lone voice of fiscal sanity, a preacher of fiscal restraint. It is on the basis of these preachings that all criticisms are dismissed as irresponsible, fiscally naive. The problem is that these preachings are little more than self-serving and empty rhetoric, designed to obscure the fact that the government has fumbled its chance of bringing down the deficit and that it has made some major economic miscalculations, which have put many Canadians, including Canadians in my riding, in dire straits. Now the government is asking Canadians to bite a few more bullets.

The fact of the matter is that this government has squandered the public's trust. It has squandered Canadian tax dollars. The Canadian people do not believe the government any more. It is going to make it more difficult for us as politicians to come up with solutions to this fiscal mismanagement and this mess.

This government has very little credibility left. Last year, for instance, the Minister of Finance said that the deficit would fall below $28.5 billion in 1990. In fact it rose to $30.5 billion. Last year the Minister of Finance said that personal income taxes would rise by 9 per cent from the year earlier. Now he says that they will have to be raised by 15 per cent. Last year the Minister of Finance said that corporate income taxes would fall by 2 per cent. Do you know what they will fall by now, Mr. Speaker? It will be 10 per cent.

I do not think that is fair and I do not think Canadians believe that is fair. Unfortunately they do not feel they have a way of telling this government—or they do not have a way of making this government listen—that these things are not fair.

Last year again the Minister of Finance said the economy would grow by 3 per cent. He now says he thinks it will shrink by 1 per cent: 1, 2, 3 per cent. He is not sure. Last year he said employment would grow by 1.2 per cent. Now he says it will actually shrink by 1.5 per cent.

The facts speak for themselves. The Minister of Finance has no credibility. The things I have pointed out show that his credibility is seriously lacking not only in the House, not only with ordinary Canadians across the country, but also with the business community, those so-called people whom he represents, his Bay Street buddies.

This year's spending estimates signal to Canadians that this government has still not learned from its past errors. This government seems to be prepared to mismanage and fumble its way through yet another year and bring yet another year of unnecessary financial hardship all across this country, as each of us has heard in the House and in our constituency offices. On a weekly basis I heard from farmers who have lost their farms and from small businesses that have put enormous amounts of effort, time and money into providing a business and into trying to provide a future for their children. They come to my office in tears because they feel that they have been wronged by this government. They feel that had they just been left alone to their own avails they could have survived, they could have got through this recession.

Because of this government's economic policies they feel they have just not been treated right.

Turning to tobacco farmers, once again this year they were hit hardest by this government's budget, by this government's taxation on tobacco products. This year's budget brought yet another massive tax increase on tobacco products so that an additional $1.5 billion could be pumped into the government's coffers.

It was a tax grab. The finance minister unfortunately knew that if he did not do it the Ontario NDP government would have done the same thing. Every year it seems to be a fight to see who can first put out their budget, who can first tax tobacco products and hurt the tobacco farmers who produce those products.

Not many people across this country realize that tobacco brings in close to $6 billion annually into the coffers of government. Where does that money come from? Unfortunately that is a question this government and the Minister of Finance are not prepared to even look at. He did not have the courtesy before he brought down this budget to have a meeting with the tobacco board, to have a meeting with tobacco farmers, or to have a meeting with the communities affected by tobacco, to see how such an increase in tobacco taxes would affect them.

An hon. member: He doesn't care.

Mr. Speller: As the hon. member says, he doesn't care. It was just a tax grab. He needed the money and he was not prepared to look at the consequences of his taking that money.

That money comes out of my community. It comes out of the corner store that provides the tobacco farmers with their weekly needs. It comes out of the farm implement business, the small business person or entrepreneur there who provides them with the tools they need to farm the tobacco. It comes out of the students who work in the tobacco fields, who will not have a job this summer and who will not have any alternative to turn to because unfortunately the government has again cut money it is giving to youths for summer employment.

These are the Canadians, the people in my riding, who are affected by this government's budget. I wish the Minister of Finance would listen to these people when they say they only want the time to plan. They only want to know what their future holds. Why cannot this Minister of Finance tell these people for 10 years down the line what his plans are? Don't spring it on them one day so that they cannot plan. They need that time.

While the government now collects over $5.5 billion in tobacco taxes, how much is it planning to allocate to the program to help tobacco farmers get out of the business, what is known as the REDUX program?

There is nothing allocated this year. The AEI program, the alternative enterprise initiative, runs out this spring also. It was an initiative to help tobacco farmers, if the government truly wanted to get them out of the business, move into alternative crops. There is a major investment in these crops or in this business by these tobacco farmers, by these tobacco communities. What does the government do? It leaves them high and dry once again.

This government has not allocated one dime out of the $1.5 billion in taxes from tobacco back into the REDUX program.

• (1930)

This the same government whose Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture said just two years ago, to farmers in my riding: "Ottawa wants to send a stronger signal to the industry that we are here to support tobacco producers in their time of need and adjustment". That is exactly what he said. Unfortunately it was another broken promise. You have heard many, I know, Mr. Speaker; you have been in that chair a long time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Years.

Mr. Speller: This was a promise made by this government. The people of my riding of Haldimand—Norfolk have always felt that if a government makes a promise, or if a man makes a promise in rural Canada, it sticks by that promise no matter what the cost. Unfortunately this government has not stuck by its promise and is not prepared even to look at the issue to help these people out. It met with them but gave no commitment whatsoever on programs that it plans on bringing in to help out with the problem.

It is always after the case: knock it out from under their feet. There are 400 or 500 people wanting to get on REDUX. Probably that will triple within the next year or so because of this devastating impact.

This government is taxing a group of people right out of their livelihood. Yet, it does not provide the means for these people to leave their livelihoods with at least some sense of decency.

Members opposite seem unwilling to accept any responsibility for this. Members opposite can no longer expect Canadians to pay for their own mismanagement. Canadians have already paid too heavy a price. They have paid with their money. They have paid with their jobs and their businesses. They have paid with their homes. Thousands of Canadians have been put out of work in the last few years by this government, and yet this government has the audacity to pull its share of funding for unemployment insurance. In so doing, it has signalled that the federal government was no longer willing to accept even partial responsibility for Canada's unemployed.

I see you signalling, Mr. Speaker. I have seven minutes left; I stated at 7.20 p.m. When members opposite pushed Bill C-21 through the House, they promised Canadians that they would consider reintroducing government funding for UI if the fund ever ran into a deficit. They said that the money the government would normally have provided for UI funding would now be used for retraining. That was two years ago.

Today the government is singing another tune. The government is now asking ordinary—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The hon. member started at 7.18 p.m. He has five minutes left.

Mr. Speller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government is now asking ordinary Canadians who still have jobs to pay yet again for a growing number of unemployed. In the recent budget this government announced that employers and employees would face, combined, a 24 per cent increase in unemployment insurance premiums.

Mr. Speaker, do you know what that does to the small entrepreneur across Canada who was just weathering the storm of these sad economic times? He is on the borderline of either making it or not making it. Now he is forced to pay an increase of 24 per cent in unemployment insurance premiums. That is going to put a number of small entrepreneurs out of work and the people that they employ.

What about the money that the government promised to put into retraining when it pulled out of UI funding? That promise like so many before has also been broken. In fact, this budget cut $1 million from Canadian Jobs Strategy.

This government likes to talk about level playing fields and about this new competitive world. This government has thrown Canadians into open seas, but the they are not the level seas of fair and full competition. They are the seas rocked by waves of foreign export subsidies and non-tariff barriers. One would think that the government, seeing Canadians gasping for air, might throw a life preserver or two, such as an adjustment program. In fact an adjustment program was promised in the last election. Instead of throwing life preservers, this government is busy tying lead weights around drowning Canadians.

The government is burdening the economy with high interest rates, a high dollar, and it is cutting real spending on education, training, research and development, and unfortunately on science and technology. Canada has lost over 220,000 manufacturing jobs since January 1989. The biggest losses have been in steel, textile, clothing, furniture, food and beverage, and chemical industries.

My riding of Haldimand—Norfolk has had more than its share of these manufacturing job losses. In the last two months alone three plants have shut down in my riding, leaving close to 300 people without jobs. In a town like Simcoe with 14,000 people, 300 people out of work is a large number. It is tough on an economy that has also been hit by taxation on tobacco.

What hope has this government's budget brought them? Absolutely none; no help. Just more education and retraining cuts and more government abdication of its responsibility. Nor is there in the budget spending estimates any redress for the unfair tax burden that this government has given to middle-class Canadians. After 33 separate tax increases since 1984, the finance minister's tax reform has meant that the average Canadian family is paying more than $1,000 more for tax per year, and that is not including GST. By contrast, 640 of Canadians earning $100,000 or more paid no income tax at all; up from 580 Canadians from the year before. The additional burden placed on the average Canadian family from these increases in UI and tobacco products will be $217 per year.

In the midst of our current recession, the budget estimates offer absolutely no relief to our 1.3 million unemployed or the 500,000 Canadians who must resort to food banks. It offers no relief from the increasing gap between Canadian manufacturing levels and those of the other G–7 countries. There are no measures to assist low income Canadians, women or aboriginal people, and no measures to improve Canada's ability to compete in the new global economy.

It is not a question of getting more money; it is a question of getting more from the money one has. Canadians want fairness, competence and a vision that works. Canadians want a change, and they want a change in government.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this debate on the borrowing bill as it gives me an opportunity to make my comments on the government's recent budget, not having had an opportunity to do so before the vote on the amendment. There are two days remaining in the budget debate, but given the attitude of the government it seems unlikely that we will have those for some period of time.

I can understand its reluctance to discuss this particular disaster.

When I was considering my remarks this evening, I had a look at some old magazines, and I pulled out the *Maclean's* magazine for January 7, 1985, which had this headline on its front cover: "A Confident Nation Speaks Up". The magazine ran a story about polls that had been conducted by some friends of the government, Decima Research.

An hon. member: I didn't know we had any.

Mr. Milliken: The hon. member says:"I didn't know we had any". Well he does not have many left now, but this was in 1985. He may recall that in 1984 his party won a very substantial majority, to the great chagrin of Canadians today. The first paragraph of this article says:

> Treading water is no longer our national sport. Instead of cringing before uncertain economic indicators, shaking fists at politicians or bowing to hidebound social restraints, most Canadians at mid–decade are confident about themselves and optimistic about their country.

• (1940)

That is what Peter C. Newman wrote in an essay based on the Decima poll conducted by *Maclean's* magazine in December 1984 and published in January 1985.

Then I took out the January 1, 1990 edition of *Maclean's* magazine, six years of Conservative government mismanagement. It said: "An Uncertain Nation, Canada at a Crossroads". That was on January 1.

On January 7, it said: "A Shaken Nation Bares its Anger." These are all based on the same poll done by Decima research obviously in late 1990. Six years of disastrous government have brought Canadians to their knees begging this government to get out so we can get a proper government that can administer the affairs of this country in a way that will give Canadians confidence in their future and optimism that the whole place is not falling apart as a result of the policies of this government.

Let me read the quote from the January 7 issue of *Maclean's*. This is describing the Decima poll:

> The poll paints an unsettling portrait of a nation that has lost its way. English–Canadians have only grudging tolerance for continued negotiations over the status of Quebec. As they lose respect for their politicians, people are demanding more personal influence over critical decisions—with a significant 27 per cent flirting with the idea of eliminating government altogether. As well, large numbers of respondents, alienated by the size of their tax bills, want to restrict government's ability to spend. They are less optimistic than ever before in the history of the *Maclean's*/Decima poll about their own, and the country's, economic prospects. And on a personal level, many of them say that they feel unsafe on the streets of their communities—or even in their own homes. Said by veteran pollster, Allan Gregg, president of Toronto–based Decima Research Limited, which conducts the poll: "Certainly, in the seven years that we have been doing this research, we have never identified a blacker mood."

Allan Gregg is no friend of the Liberal Party. He is in on all the Conservative Party conferences. I am sure that all the hon. members opposite have seen him at meetings that their party has had. He is considered their principal adviser on polls. Here he is saying that Canadians are in the blackest mood they have ever found in the polling that they have done.

I say it is the direct result of the disastrous policies pursued by the hon. gentlemen opposite.

I would like to go back again in history to a budget speech delivered in this House on March 23, 1985. We know it was the present Minister of Finance who was finance minister in 1985 who did it. Let me read part of another wonderful quote from the hon. minister's speech of May 23, 1985:

> I am implementing a clear and realistic medium-term plan to control our debt. That plan requires tough actions to be taken now. There will be expenditure reductions and tax increases. The impact of these actions, and those taken in November, will continue to grow. Our actions will directly reduce the annual deficit at the end of the decade by more than $20 billion. Between now and then, our actions will cut a total of $75 billion from the projected increase in the public debt.

I do not know where the Minister of Finance got his figures. I will bet it was from a crystal ball. It ceased to function, because the end of the decade was 1990. That was the end of the decade in which he was speaking, and the deficit in the financial year ended March 31, 1986 which was the year in which this budget was delivered was exactly the same as it is today. Exactly the same.

In other words, the minister defrauded Canadians in March 1985 with his statistics and his figures. He did not keep his promise to reduce government expenditure. He increased taxes. He has increased them 32 times since he took office, and a whole bunch of them were in this budget in 1985.

Government expenditure has continued to increase throughout the period, and the deficit has stayed at $30 billion. It has not gone down. It has gone up for the last three years. That is the record of financial incompetence on the part of the minister that has caused Canadians to lose confidence in their government and their governmental institutions in this country.

Mr. Speaker, in case you think I am being unfairly critical with the minister, let's look at the information that he gets. We all know that the Minister of Finance, in the course of preparation of his budget, consults with various groups across the country. He is sent free advice. He gets it from the Economic Council of Canada, from business and labour groups and, I presume, the minister listens to these groups in the course of his discussions.

I have here the pre-budget submission to the Minister of Finance prepared in December 1990 by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. I apologize for the extensive quotations tonight, but I could not put the words better myself. I should say that the Canadian Federation of Independent Business is not a particular friend of the Liberal Party. It has got, I am sure, more Conservatives than Liberals in it, but listen to what they say about the Minister of Finance and his inability to manage the affairs of this country. I will read from the introduction of their pre-budget submission.

> The Canadian small and medium-sized business community is currently saddled with the greatest number of negative factors affecting their business that they have faced in some time. Even in the recession of 1981-82, the outlook was not as consistently negative as it is today.

Mr. Bjornson: I dispute that.

Mr. Milliken: The hon. member says he disputes it. He should have met with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and disputed it. This is the submission they gave to his minister and his minister knows that this is exactly correct.

It then goes on:

> However, all Canadians are now having to pay for this government mismanagement.
>
> There is no doubt that action on government overspending may soon be forthcoming, but it will be forced upon, as opposed to chosen by, a bankrupt government. Since the government squandered the opportunities available through the mid-to late-1980s to get its spending under control in an environment of economic expansion, it will now be forced to cut back at the worst possible time—in the middle of a serious recession. And even worse, the introduction of a major new tax, the Goods and Services Tax, will only exacerbate the problems for small and medium-sized companies. Although the GST as proposed is rife with structural and design flaws, perhaps its most daunting long-term implication is that with such a money machine in place, any incentive that may currently exist for government to contain its spending will be gone. For all of these reasons, the 1984 to 1990 period can truly be described as six wasted years.

I suggest to you that they were worse than wasted. The government has damaged Canadian confidence in themselves. It has weakened their confidence in their country. It has been more than a waste, it has been a disaster.

The other point that is made in this report, I could go on reading.

> When the current federal government assumed power in 1984, the small and medium-sized business community was willing to give the benefit of the doubt to the election platform promise of improved fiscal management, and believed that small firms would at least be given a fair hearing. It is now apparent to small business owners that they have been disappointed on both counts. As a result of fiscal and

> monetary policies that have been at odds for several years, but notably over the past 18 months, small firms now face the deadly combination of very high interest rates and a burgeoning federal debt. Adding these unfortunate circumstances to an inevitable slowdown in an economy after seven years of economic expansion, and the result is a self-imposed recession, that will be deepened and prolonged by government policy.

For weeks and weeks in this House, we have been asserting this fact that the policy of the government has contributed to the recession and has deepened and made it worse for Canadians.

The one other point I think that is worth mentioning in this report, and I could go on at great length on this, unfortunately my time is limited, is the gap between Canadian and U.S. interest rates. The report says of them that although these rates did not widen in 1981–82 although rates in both countries rose, this gap has been persistently in excess of 4 percentage points for some time.

> The devastating impact of such an interest rate differential, and its role in maintaining the Canadian dollar at an uncompetitively high level, has been demonstrated in the recent spate of layoffs, plant closings, bankruptcies, the migration of Canadian firms to more competitive environments in the U.S. and elsewhere, and in the increased competitive pressure Canadian firms are experiencing from foreign firms from their own domestic markets.

The hon. member for Etobicoke North has asked questions regularly in this House on this subject demanding to know why the Minister of Finance will not stop his crazy interest rate policy, why he will not tell the Bank of Canada Governor to stop paying himself and his employees substantial increases and get the interest rate down, take a penalty instead of a bonus for their incompetence in managing this aspect of our policy and see that we get the differential and the rates down between Canada and the United States to increase our competitive position.

Unfortunately his pleas fall on deaf ears. The Minister of Finance gives facile answers and we get nowhere.

• (1950)

The other aspect of the budget that I think is extremely important is the cuts that the government announced to the provinces in respect of medicare and education. Clearly, they have put our medical care system at risk. Clearly they have weakened the ability of our provinces to deliver in the education and medical field.

We keep hearing from the government, whenever this objection is raised, that: "No, no, we have no intention of dismantling medicare. Everything is safe and sound". Although it has not used this term recently, I suspect it is nervous, the sacred trust argument is something that medicare once was. We have not heard that expression lately, but I expect if we press the Prime Minister on it, he would say it is still a sacred trust.

Yet last night in the House we had the spectacle of the Prime Minister of Canada and every single member of the Conservative Party who was here rise in his place and vote against a motion that read as follows:

> That this House reaffirm its commitment to medicare.

In other words, the Conservative Party disaffirmed its commitment to medicare last night in the House. The Conservative Party, through the government House leader, who squawked and yacked yesterday afternoon about this, said that it was not possible for him to vote for this motion because somehow it would bring the government down.

He has a very short memory. On November 24, 1989, in this House, and this government was sitting on those benches, I was sitting on this side, there was an opposition and there was a government, the same one, the government allowed to pass unanimously a motion on a supply day moved by the hon. member, as he then was, for Oshawa, Mr. Broadbent. The motion talked about aid for children, expressing its concern for children living in poverty. The government could vote for that and yet it could not support medicare. In other words, the Conservatives said: "We are prepared to write medicare off". They said it by their vote last night and we know perfectly well that their actions in the budget have purported to do exactly that.

Mr. Keyes: It is a secret agenda.

Mr. Milliken: It is a secret agenda, as the hon. member for Hamilton West says.

The government has no intention of assisting the provinces in this regard. It is saying to the provinces: "Raise your own money. If you can't afford the medicare system that can be afforded in Hamilton, or Toronto or in Kingston, that's too bad". Canadians are going to end up with different standards of care across this country. This government could not give two hoots about it. That is the attitude, that is the approach. I submit it is not a good approach.

I could go on about waste too. I am tempted to do so, but let me pass on to education. The minister also received advice in respect of education. The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada in its pre-budget submission to the Minister of Finance in December 1990 among other recommendations recommended this:

> That the government commit itself to a genuine reform of the Established Programs Financing arrangements.
>
> That, until such time as the Established Programs Financing arrangements are reformed, the federal government honour its EPF funding commitments in support of postsecondary education as they stood prior to the introduction of Bill C-69.

Not only did the government not honour the commitments that existed prior to the introduction of that much opposed bill, but it also changed the rules to reduce the payments under EPF transfers to the provinces for a period following the restriction contained in Bill C-69. That is hardly the way to enhance and improve the quality of education in Canada. I of course having a very famous university in my riding, two in fact—Queen's University and the Royal Military College—I can only point out the disastrous consequences of these cuts.

While all of these events may not have happened at Queen's, they are happening at other universities across the country, in McMaster for example in the riding of Hamilton West and I could name others. Obviously there cannot be many in Conservative ridings or they would be more concerned about this. Members on the other side would be up condemning their government for cutting these transfers.

It is stated to me, and I have every reason to believe it to be so, that first and second year science students in Canada are denied a place in the laboratory to work. They are not allowed to work in a lab because there is not sufficient laboratory space in the universities for them to work in those labs. How can one maintain an interest in science if one is denied hands-on work in a laboratory as part of your educational experience until year three on a limited basis and then in year four.

Class sizes have increased enormously because there is not enough money to pay for professors to be hired in the universities to do the teaching. Equipment and facilities are deteriorating in universities because they cannot be maintained on the tight budgets they are operating on. They cannot be replaced on the tight budgets they are operating on and new purchases cannot be made because there is no funding available.

In the province of Ontario, my home province, the situation unfortunately, is probably going to get worse, because not only have we got a tight-fisted Conservative Government in Ottawa, but we are saddled with the New Democratic Party government in Toronto who has done nothing to show leadership and try to offset the disastrous consequences of federal government policies launched by this government on the other side.

Indeed, we have no expectation that the situation will improve in Ontario with the government there.

An hon. member: Order over there.

Mr. Milliken: Even my hon. friend from Edmonton East would acknowledge that the NDP government has been a terrible disappointment in the many months it has been in office.

At the end of my remarks I would like to say that we in the Liberal Party would have expected this year, certainly a continuation of the policy of restraint we supposedly have witnessed for six years. I say that we have not had that kind of expectation when there has been a serious recession put upon us by the government's own policies in the latter part of 1990.

Mr. Bjornson: Spending your way out of a recession does not work. We found that out in 1981.

Mr. Milliken: We expected the government to come up with some extra generosity. Loosen the purse strings to help Canadians who are finding themselves unemployed because of the hard-hearted policies of the government.

An hon. member: Is there anything good about this government?

Mr. Milliken: At a time when the government is asking Canadians to restrain themselves, it goes on spending binges and wild extravagances on little things. But they add up.

I just got an answer the other day to a question on the Order Paper. I put a question on the Order Paper about royal commissions. We know about the Spicer Commission and its budget of $27 million.

Mr. Bjornson: Is Spicer wasting money? Say it. Say national unity is a waste of money.

Mr. Milliken: The hon. member asks if Spicer is a waste of money. I say the Spicer Commission is costing millions more than it should be costing if it were properly managed. He knows it. And if he does not know it, he should go to the consumer and corporate affairs committee and hear it.

Mr. Bjornson: I was there last night and I listened.

Mr. Milliken: Well listen again on Thursday.

I want to talk about the other royal commissions. I know the hon. member does not want to hear this. He is embarrassed by these facts and he should be. The Royal Commission on National Passenger Transportation is projected to cost $23 million. The Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies, $24.7 million and the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing, $19.9 million. We have over $100 million committed to royal commissions in Canada, that this government has set up in order to generate business for a good number of its friends and keep the various researchers and so on, working in Canada. I say this is not a wise or prudent expenditure of public funds. It is time the government acted the way it is preaching and tightened up the purse strings in reasonable areas, instead of cutting training programs for those who are unemployed. It is a hard-hearted way to run a government.

An hon. member: Resign. Resign over there.

Mr. Milliken: I suggest the Minister of Finance should be ashamed of his budget and withdraw it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed.

Mr. Speaker: It being eight o'clock p.m., this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 11 o'clock, pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

The House adjourned at 8 p.m..

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, March 21, 1991

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

PETITIONS

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to eight petitions.

[*Editor's Note: See Today's Votes and Proceedings.*]

* * *

[*English*]

CANADIAN NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

PRESENTATION OF 22ND REPORT

Mr. Bob Hicks (Scarborough East): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34, I have the honour to present to the House this morning, in both official languages, the 22nd report of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association.

* * *

PETITIONS

AIR CANADA

Mr. Ross Harvey (Edmonton East): Mr. Speaker, I rise under the provisions of Standing Order 36 to present a petition, signed by 135 citizens of Edmonton who note that Air Canada intends to yank 200 jobs from the Edmonton International Airport and the Edmonton reservation office. I believe this is a proposal that has since been implemented. They call upon Parliament to express its profound opposition to the further centralization and retrenchment of its regional services by Air Canada, our former national air carrier, and urge the federal government to request Air Canada to revoke the proposed lay-offs.

• (1110)

It is obvious that these 135 citizens are joining with millions across the country to express their dismay at the ongoing dismantling of national institutions by this government.

RURAL REVITALIZATION WEEK 1991

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake): I am proud to present this armful of petitions today during Rural Revitalization Week 1991, a week in which we celebrate the organization Rural Dignity and oppose government cutbacks in rural services.

These petitions are signed by the residents of rural Saskatchewan who live in The Battlefords—Meadow Lake constituency. The petitioners claim that the GST, cuts to VIA Rail, rail line abandonments, farm support program erosions, cuts to the CBC, and the closure of rural post offices constitute an attack on the rural way of life, and they call on Parliament to support, not attack, that rural way of life, including the maintenance of rural post offices and postal services.

The petitioners say they want Parliament to reject any more cuts or closures.

* * *

[*Translation*]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Shall all questions stand?

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I am sure the parliamentary secretary is aware that question No. 410 standing in my name has been there since November 29, 1990. It is a 45 day rule, as I understand it, for response to such questions. It is simply seeking information about the government's green plan on the costs of polling and contracts, public relations advertising and promotion.

I wonder if the parliamentary secretary can explain why in four months there has not been an answer produced. I thought that 45 days would have been more than adequate.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I have been watching the hon. member's question with some interest and concern, and I do recognize that it is late. It is my understanding that it is in the minister's office now, with some final drafting to be done. Certainly I will deliver an answer to him as quickly as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Shall all questions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

FARM INCOME PROTECTION ACT

MEASURE TO ENACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-98, an act authorizing agreements between the Government of Canada and the provinces to provide for protection for the income of producers of agricultural products and to enable the Government of Canada to take additional measures for that purpose, as reported (with amendments) from the Standing Committee on Agriculture.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): There are 11 report stage motions on today's notice paper in amendment to Bill C-98, an act authorizing agreements between the Government of Canada and the provinces to provide for protection for the income of producers of agricultural products and to enable the Government of Canada to take additional measures for that purpose.

Motions Nos. 1, 2 and 3, standing in the name of the hon. member for Mackenzie, caused the Chair to examine at length the procedural acceptability of the motions. But, after careful reflection, I have decided to give the benefit of the doubt to the member.

Motions Nos. 1, 2 and 3 will be grouped for debate and a vote on motion No. 1 will apply to motions Nos. 2 and 3.

Motion No. 4, standing in the name of the hon. member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre, motion No. 5, standing in the name of the hon. member for Prince Edward—Hastings, and motions Nos. 6, 7, 8 and 9 standing in the name of the hon. member for Algoma, are all procedurally acceptable. They will be debated and voted on separately.

Motion No. 10, standing in the name of the hon. member for Prince Edward—Hastings, and motion No. 11 standing in the name of the hon. member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre, both deal with reports to Parliament, more specifically review of act. Both motions are in order. They will be grouped for debate and an affirmative vote on motion No. 10 obviates the need for a vote on motion No. 11. A negative vote on motion No. 10 will require the question being put on motion No. 11.

I will now propose motions Nos. 1, 2 and 3 to the House.

MEASURE TO ENACT

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie) moved:

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-98 be amended in Clause 4 by striking out line 37 at page 2 and substituting the following therefor:

"program provided the maximum account built up by any one producer does not exceed $100,000 in 1991 dollars;".

Motion No. 2

That Bill C-98 be amended in Clause 4 by striking out line 38 at page 2 and substituting the following therefor:

"(b) a gross revenue insurance program provided maximum payments to any one producer do not exceed $100,000 per annum in 1991 dollars;".

Motion No. 3

That Bill C-98 be amended in Clause 4 by striking out line 39 at page 2 and substituting the following therefor:

"(c) a revenue insurance program provided maximum payments to any one producer do not exceed $100,000 per annum in 1991 dollars; and".

He said: Mr. Speaker, the basic reasoning behind these particular amendments is one of permitting Parliament to exert its normal influences. This particular piece of legislation is one of the most wide open chunks of parliamentary business that I have seen in my 11 years in the House. There is no recourse to the normal role of parliamentarians to set limits to the amount of money being expended, to have any control over expenditures, which is one of the basic roles that Parliament plays in our system, or is supposed to play in our system.

Because we are representing taxpayers in this bill, as well as farmers, I felt that it was incumbent upon us in the House to decide what the maximum limits, liabilities if you will, to the public purse should be with some clarity. I have proposed that the maximum limits of liability from the public purse in each of the programs be set at $100,000. The GRIP program, which is motion No. 2, is a gross revenue insurance program. The maximum liability from the public purse, from the GRIP payment fund would be $100,000 per producer.

What does that mean? By my admittedly rough calculations, but all of the calculations I hasten to add having to do with GRIP are rough, this would catch farmers in the open plains with farms where they are seeding above 5,000 acres. In the higher producing areas of the country, it would perhaps catch people over 4,000 acres of seeded crop. When we get into the heavy corn producing part of the country, that acreage might be reduced to 1,500 or 1,800 acres as a rough guess.

At any rate, it cuts out very few people at the present time who would not extract the maximum possible payment on any particular year. The coming year is considered to be a year with a very large payment probability. Even under these expected high pay-outs, it would take a very large seeded acreage before the $100,000 ceiling would reduce the amount of payment under the price support part of this program.

• (1120)

You will notice, Mr. Speaker, being very observant, that I did not propose to put any ceiling on the pay-outs under crop insurance. There is a very good reason for that.

Crop insurance is a more direct insurance program which insures against production at current market prices. There is no perceived rip-off of taxpayers' money, to use the kind of wording I am already hearing in my towns and villages, to maintain very large farms.

However, when taxpayers are putting up 42 and one-third per cent of their tax dollars into this maximum pay-out of $100,000 on an annual basis and an additional 25 per cent of their provincial tax dollars into this pay-out, they are starting to think that that is quite a lot of money to go to one farmer. Therefore, I think we should be putting some ceilings on it at this stage.

The numbers that I have already put on the record sound very high and very scary to most taxpayers who perhaps are not as well inculcated into farm economics and who probably do not realize that this is still unlikely to give a net income to most of those farmers, even so.

Once we get into the sizes of operation where this ceiling will apply, I think there can be a justifiable public policy reason for putting these ceilings in place. I do regret that the three proposals were put under one set of debating points, because the first one is considerably different than Motions Nos. 2 and 3. It would have been easier to debate the concept and the principle, had Motion No. 1 been separated from Motions Nos. 2 or 3. I accept your ruling and your wisdom, Mr. Speaker, and will attempt to present the arguments in a series, even though some of the economic and accounting principles involved in Motion No. 1 are quite different from those in Motions Nos. 2 and 3.

Motion No. 3 places $100,000 a ceiling on the pay-out to be received by any one producer under those commodities now covered by the Agricultural Stabilization Act. That act did have some ceilings as did the old Western Grain Stabilization Act, which to a certain extent GRIP replaces.

The concept or idea of ceilings is certainly not new. The ceilings that are being placed here are very adequate. They will not offend very many people and will only trigger a reduction in a pay-out to a very minor

groups of individuals. I think it is the role of this Parliament and the role of parliamentarians to set some limits, even though they are not particularly stringent limits, on the expenditures of this and future governments and on the ability to sign federal-provincial agreements which have absolutely no upper limit on the public purse.

Therefore I put these forward for consideration in the House. There is very little more to say on this issue. It does not assist in public policy, in economic policy, or in rural development for extended amounts of public money to be put into one particular economic group in rural areas.

It creates some economic problems, some economic disruptions, yes; but it also creates great social and political unrest when ordinary taxpayers, who are perhaps under current conditions sitting on an unemployment insurance cheque as their only source of income which is capped and cannot go above a certain limit, watch their farm neighbours reportedly getting pay-outs to address their particular economic difficulties which go even beyond $100,000 per year.

Mr. Murray Cardiff (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a few comments. I certainly understand the hon. member's well-taken points.

I want to remind this House and all hon. members that this legislation was developed in close collaboration with Canadian farmers. We relied on the grains and oilseeds safety net committee, a majority of whom were producers. That committee, in its report presented to ministers of agriculture last August, did not call for caps on farm size or for payments. In its report, the committee indicated that "GRIP participation is open to all economic units" and "there should be no maximum on payments from GRIP".

This view was echoed by other farm leaders who appeared before the agriculture standing committee. Mr. Terry Daynard, speaking on behalf of the Ontario Corn Producers Association, indicated his group's policy was to oppose caps. Mr. Owen Mcauley of Keystone Agricultural Producers indicated: "I know our organization is opposed to caps".

Farm leaders, quite apart from anything else, know that once caps are put on any program administrative problems are created, as large farmers are virtually forced to split their enterprise into smaller units to avoid the maximum set by the program.

We do not feel that these motions would enhance the legislation. It could create problems, as I have just indicated. Therefore the government is not prepared to accept these three amendments.

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, the amendments put before the House today did not receive a lot of discussion in committee, although some farm groups did recommend that there be no cap. We believe there should be a review of the legislation within two years.

If we look at the government's program for interest assistance, it is providing for a maximum of interest-free support of $50,000. The western grain stabilization fund at the present time has a cap of $50,000 per year. There is a lot of uncertainties in this legislation as to exactly how it is going to work.

We in the House of Commons, and I am sure the provincial legislatures, feel rather outside the deals that are going on between the governments involved. This is part of the new executive federalism which has really replaced the parliamentary system in this country. Our ability actually to spell out what the GRIP program is going to be and what the NISA program is going to be is sharply circumscribed.

I can see problems with sharply circumscribing what those agreements can be. For instance, in the horticultural industry we are dealing with a high value crop per acre. This is all based on gross revenue not on the price of individual commodities, although that is a factor in what the gross revenue would be per acre. At the same time, when we are dealing with the NISA program, it is inconceivable that it will reach the cap until after the review takes place, if that review takes place as we have recommended in 1993.

If we are dealing with a legislation which is going to be reviewed in two years' time, the concept would be acceptable to our side of the House although the government has already indicated that it is not acceptable to it.

• (1130)

If there is any overriding situation in this whole thing, certainly for western farmers it is just not knowing what the limits are or what the premiums are. They received the estimates of premiums several days after the legislation was actually brought in. They really do not know what to do, whether to farm the program in order to maximize revenues or whether to go strictly on the market forces. The market signals of course are very limited as far as the price of commodities.

There was a report this morning by a forecasting group in the United States which projects a very marked increase in the number of acres being planted for grain crops in Canada. It associates this in some way with the implementation of the GRIP.

I think there are arguments on both sides. We certainly do not have any high value horticultural crops coming under NISA and GRIP at this stage because they have not been developed. They may be at a later stage, but we would hope the government would agree at a later stage in discussion of the bill today to accept an earlier review, rather that five years, in which case the cap of $100,000 as proposed probably would not cause any great hardship even to those high value crops such as the grains and oilseeds. In any event, this limit would increase the value, the pay-out or the benefit by 100 per cent from the existing western grain stabilization fund.

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to some of these amendments today to Bill C-98, the legislation that allows the government to enter into agreements on the GRIP and NISA programs.

One matter that concerns me a lot about this process was brought home to me when the parliamentary secretary talked about the consultation process, the producers being involved in the process which led to this program being developed and now this legislation in front of us to enter into these agreements.

The parliamentary secretary said that this consultation process had occurred. What he neglected to say was that the consultation process involved general discussions about the need for safety net and some specifics about how we should go about it.

However, the consultation process with the farm community not only since the program has been developed, but this legislation has been entered into in this Chamber, has been very poor. The consultation process with people who at this point on the farm are still very confused about what the GRIP and NISA programs mean to them is something that should be examined in much greater detail.

I am quite concerned that the confusion out there and the need for an immediate infusion of cash are driving individuals both in this Chamber and in the provincial legislatures to reach agreements more quickly than they should otherwise be prepared to enter into them. That is why I believe this amending process in the Chamber today is so very important.

This legislation simply allows for agreements to be entered into. The bill calls for an April 1 implementation date, April 1 being of course just the end of next week, April 1 being a very close deadline to be working with.

The provincial legislature of Saskatchewan is not in session to pass similar legislation allowing the province of Saskatchewan to enter into an agreement with the federal government on this program. The provincial legislature has said that it will not even begin sitting until the end of the first or the second week of April.

As a result, the mandate from the provincial legislature of the province of Saskatchewan to allow that government to enter into agreement with the federal government cannot even begin to take place until several days after the legislation is supposed to come into force.

The farm community is certainly desperately in need of cash. This is one reason why I stood last week and called for the application of the finance minister's $1.3 million budgeted for farmers in need to be applied immediately for spring seeding. That would bridge the gap and allow for better understanding and the creation of a stronger safety net program so that not only those of us in the House understood completely, but that the farm community, farm producers and individuals operating on farms throughout Saskatchewan, western Canada and elsewhere, would have an understanding of what this program meant to them and could assess it properly.

My biggest concern in all of this is that in the long term we may have a very deficient program. The provincial leader in Saskatchewan, Roy Romanow, has said that this might be the shortest long-term program in the history of agriculture programs. What he meant by that was that

farmers will be in it for the first couple of years to get the pay-outs that are predicted and will then withdraw from the program, leaving the program with a huge deficit and still no solution to the farm income crisis of producers.

The three amendments before us were put forward by my colleague from Mackenzie, a long-time New Democratic agriculture critic. He is someone who is respected throughout the agricultural community, particularly by producers in the province of Saskatchewan. The amendments try to put some reason to the *carte blanche* blank cheque legislation that is in front of us until such time as we can properly assess some of the long-term implications.

We cannot accept a blank cheque for the government simply to enter agreements with the provinces on legislation which may in fact over the long term completely alter the way in which agricultural support programs are delivered in Canada.

When we look at the pieces of that legislation that have to amend, we see that some of these deficiencies can be corrected in the short term. For example, putting a cap on the amounts of funds available in NISA, as this particular amendment proposes, prevents the government from doing in farming what it is already doing in banking, in business, and in running our economy, that is helping to reward those who already have a lot, the wealthy large farmers who are not part of the serious debt and income crisis on the prairies and allowing the government to match dollar for dollar farmers who are capable and able to put large amounts of money into the Net Income Stabilization Account.

By matching those dollars the government gives tremendous benefit to those who have the wealth and prevents those who do not have the wealth from getting into it. As we have heard in committee, in this House, and around the country, NISA does nothing to support the poorer farmers, the marginal farmers, the farmers who are in debt both to the banks and to the government's financial institutions. This bill does nothing to address that long-term debt problem. Therefore, if we can do anything at all to ensure that the discrimination in favour of the wealthy producers in this country can be held in check somewhat until we can address the debt and income problems in the long term, we are accomplishing something. This blank cheque legislation allows for agreements of almost any kind, and is contrary to the development of long-term success of income stabilization on the prairies. I would remind the House that we have not seen those agreements.

• (1140)

I urge the government to accept these few amendments put forward by the hon. member for Mackenzie. I am pleased to hear that members of the opposition are prepared to accept these amendments. If the government can accept these amendments as well, we can achieve some small sense of fairness in a bill which does provide for quite a bit of unfairness if left to stand unchecked.

I will have other things to say on other amendments throughout the day. With that, I will provide the floor to other members.

Mr. John Harvard (Winnipeg St. James): Mr. Speaker, I want to give my support to the position put forward by my good colleague from Algoma. I will restrict my few remarks to the matter of caps.

Farmers are very responsible people. They expect us to be responsible people. While in the eyes of some people, caps may be construed as being discriminatory, we do have to exercise some caution and certainly exercise responsibility.

The safety net programs which we are embarking upon are something very new to us. They are new to the country and new to the producers. We are, in a sense, going through uncharted waters. All the more reason, in my mind, why we have to be super-responsible. That is why I, and the rest of us on this side, favour caps at least for this particular time, and want a thorough review of this legislation two years down the road.

We want to be responsible. We do not want to hurt anyone. We do not want to discriminate against anyone. We are up against something which is new and we do not know exactly how these things are going to develop. For example, arriving on my desk just this morning is a report from a group in the United States called the Wharton Economic Forecasting Association. It claims that wheat acreage in western Canada is going to jump over a

million acres this spring. I do not know whether it is going to be right or wrong.

This is one of the unknowns that we face. It combines two things; first, that we want to be responsible about this, and second, that we want to have a thorough review a couple of years down the road when we have the benefit of some experience and the benefit of some facts that may be not available to us now. I think it would be very, very prudent to go along with these caps, certainly on the NISA program. Prudence also demands that we place a cap on GRIP, at least for the next couple of years.

I simply want to put this on the record.

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister of State (Grains and Oilseeds)): Mr. Speaker, I have two or three very brief comments with respect to the amendments we have in front of the House.

Somebody mentioned the Western Grain Stabilization Act. I should point out that the act provides for coverage of 90 per cent of eligible income in the prairie region. In one sense, it provides a cap, but it is up to 90 per cent of the aggregate income in the prairie region. That has been adjusted, I believe, three times. It started out at 25 per cent, it went to 40 per cent and it is now at 60 per cent.

We came close to raising it to 90 per cent; $1,000 per farmer, $25,000 to $40,000 per farm to $60,000. We came close to raising it to $90,000 when we saw an increase in income as a result of some fairly favourable grain prices about four or five years ago. So in one sense there is a cap and in another sense there is not a cap.

Members should also know that within that legislation it is possible to apply for multiples. If a farmer has more than one or two people in his permit book, he can apply for multiples of up to three of whatever the coverage is. Currently, someone operating as a family farmer or as a limited corporation with more than one shareholder could be eligible for multiples of up to three. There is a case where in fact the cap, if you want to call it that, is certainly higher than $100,000.

I would also suggest it is very difficult in this type of legislation to enforce anything like this. I think the hon. member for Algoma made a very good point when he talked about some of the high value crops in the horticultural industry for instance, where literally with four or five acres of crop, one could be very close to the $100,000 cap because of the value of the crops on that acre. Some horticultural crops not only have very high input costs but returns per acre. It is very difficult when we get into some of these things just to pick a number and say we want to stay with this.

I have one last point I want to make. A pretty strong argument against the cap is that we would find very quickly that producers—to the extent that they would want to participate in this program, and we think the interest is quite high—would very easily find ways of getting around this by simply organizing their affairs in such a way they had operating units that could each qualify for $100,000. They would make those kind of arrangements so that they could very quickly have a cap that is higher.

On a procedural or on a performance basis, I do not think that this type of a cap in legislation works very well. Whether we farm big or small in this country, we have freedom to own property. Whether the farm is 10 acres or 1,000 acres, the cost per acre is the same. I do not think we want to get into the business of telling people, either directly or indirectly, what size of farm they should have. It should be up to their own ability, their own management skills and their own ambition.

I think, for those reasons, that this type of motion is not the right regulation to have in this bill.

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Saskatoon—Humboldt): Mr. Speaker, there is considerable concern, not only in the agricultural committee but right across the country, relative to the actual responsibility of this legislation, because it is open legislation which does not, in any way, restrict the amount of money that can be spent or called on by the government after the agreements are signed.

I suppose these three motions are an attempt to put into the legislation some kind of responsibility to the taxpayers and recognize that certain farmers would benefit from the cap not being in place.

Let us take a look at the three motions. The argument concerning Motion No. 1 has been made often enough and long enough so there is no need to go further on it. Motion No. 3 deals with the ASA tripartite, hogs and cattle and so on. It would limit very large operators such as feedlots controlled by large multinationals from

receiving more than $100,000 per year of payments. If they received $100,000 per year, $67,333 of that would come out of the taxpayers' pockets. In other words, a $100,000 payment to a multinational which had a feedlot would get $67,333 from the taxpayers under the tripartite agreement. Is that what the taxpayers want?

• (1150)

Let us take a look at Motion No. 2. It deals with GRIP. This particular cap would have no effect on 95 per cent of the people who are likely to be in GRIP. I disagree with what the minister and the parliamentary secretary suggest. Large farms are not likely to divide in the short term. They might over a long period of time. To do so they would lower their coverage levels which they had accumulated over the last 10 years or so. That coverage comes from the good experience of crop insurance.

Only large farms operating below the production levels for their areas would divide their operations to take advantage of this sort of a situation. Other sections of the agreement are supposed to work against this kind of low productivity. It is not in the end a major effect even on that. It is unlikely that very many, if any, farms would divide to get more out of the program.

Many organizations which originally looked at this and suggested that there not be limits are now very concerned that there are not limits. They are concerned because they recognize that the danger to this program to a great extent is the fact it is uncapped. The danger to the stability of the program is the possibility that huge sums will be taken out.

We do not want to find ourselves in the situation in which the U.S. finds itself. In some of their programs 85 per cent of the payments go to less than 10 per cent of the farmers. That does not make farming a stable industry. This legislation is intended to bring stability to the farming community, to the industry. It should not have within it seeds for the actual instability which will eventually take place if there is a large extra payment for those of a particular size.

We are moving these motions for two reasons. First of all, the taxpayers deserve to have some responsibility in this legislation. I am sure the finance ministers would agree with that. Second, the seeds of its own instability should not be sown in the legislation so that eventually the legislation will become less effective because of an action that we should have been able to change.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I will recognize the hon. member for Lethbridge and then I will recognize the hon. member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre.

Mr. Blaine A. Thacker (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I really just had some questions. Perhaps my friend from Prince Albert could respond. I was trying to follow his argument—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): There is no time for questions or comments. Is the hon. member going to take his 10 minutes?

Mr. Thacker: Mr. Speaker, my comments are directed to members of the NDP. Maybe they can through another member to respond to these points. The hon. member talked about multinational feed lots.

I am from the Lethbridge area and I am not aware of any multinational feed lots in southern Alberta. I am not aware of any in southern Saskatchewan. I wonder if the hon. member could tell us to whom he was referring. I did not think they were even covered by this statute because they have a tripartite program. We are debating the farm income protection act. How do his comments relate to this?

Second, the hon. member seemed to be saying with this cap that it would apply to a farm, but what about all of the communal farmers and people who operate in partnerships and so on, if we are going to have caps? If there are 20 families living on a communal farm or there is a partnership, would it not be limiting? Surely the hon. member does not intend that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The hon. member for Mackenzie can answer and I will then recognize the member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre.

Mr. Althouse: Mr. Speaker, with the permission of the House I will outline some of this for the member. First, this legislation does include ASA. It is rescinding the Agriculture Stabilization Act under which this tripartite agreement is written. It integrates it into this bill. Section 41(c), dealing with revenue insurance programs deals specifically with it. That is what Motion No. 3 is amending.

It is already in there. It is a tripartite thing, so that two-thirds of the pay-out comes from federal or provincial taxpayers. Bill C-98 rescinds the Agriculture Stabilization Act and integrates it into this bill.

The proposal of a multinational feedlot was simply a proposal. It was an example of what can happen and what has, indeed, happened in the United States.

The $100,000 cap does not apply other than to GRIP or tripartite pay-outs or to the NISA maximum account.

Crop insurance stays as it always has been, covered yield times market price, so that the example previous speakers from that side have horrified themselves with could not happen. The horticultural crops would be covered for most of the $1,000 an acre that was proposed. It would only be the price differential which is in GRIP that would be limited to payments of $100,000 maximum per year.

I think it is important to get that straight so that government members, at least, know what it is they are voting on. I regret that they were not able to follow it closely in committee. That is partly why we have report stage in the House, so that all members can get more acquainted with the bills.

These proposals do not apply to crop insurance coverage. They apply only on those programs that are on top of that which are effectively price insurance programs, such as GRIP, the tripartite programs and the income account under the proposed NISA. A 4,000 or 5,000 acre wheat farm that lost all of its crop would be largely covered by crop insurance. The GRIP portion for most 4,000 and 5,000 seeded acre farms would not be limited in the receipts by the $100,000 cap.

I have done the calculations for the coming year and there is virtually no wheat farm in western Canada that would have its payments reduced if they seeded 5,000 acres of wheat and had a 30 bushel coverage level.

The levels we are talking about reducing payments to are farms that are very large indeed. It is still possible, even if these amendments were put in, from my checking, for a integrated farm or a mixed farm that is in the feedlot business or hog business, as well as in crops, to receive maximum payments to $100,000 under the crop side and $100,000 under the tripartite side. In fact, the real limit is something more than $200,000, because that kind of an operation might be drawing out of its NISA account that year as well. So these are very large sums of money coming from the public purse.

I think the government should reconsider whether to put some caps on this so that the tax paying public has some assurance that we have not all gone completely bonkers, even though it will not limit very many payments.

• (1200)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I do not want to set a precedent here.

We are into report stage. The parliamentary secretary started a question and comment period and the minister wants to reply. I would hope that maybe at the next motion, the hon. minister will have another opportunity. Otherwise, we will never get this done.

Mr. Rod Laporte (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I think the amendments proposed the hon. colleague for Mackenzie are very important, indeed. He has very eloquently outlined the reasons why.

There is a problem in the agricultural community these days with the future it is facing. Rural communities and family farms in this country are disappearing. They have been disappearing at an alarming rate for a long time.

The purpose of this amendment is to begin to change the attitude that this government and past Liberal governments have had to the future of family farms. If we are going to maintain a strong family farming structure, we need to keep that in mind when dealing with legislation.

The $100,000 cap is going to include most farmers who exist today in this country. The concern is that as agriculture becomes bigger and bigger business and corporate enterprises become more and more involved, there is increased vertical integration in the agricultural industry.

Cargill, for example, is a tremendous interest in the U.S. It is expanding every day in Canada. It is important that we place some limits. A $100,000 cap is, for most people, not a limit.

As the hon. member for Mackenzie pointed out, very few farms would be affected. Those would be only the very large farms.

The point that the hon. minister and other members have made in the past is that people will abuse the system, that they will be dividing their farms and so on. There is no program that is perfect. That is for sure. Certainly, this will not be either, but there are ways and means of putting in safeguards to keep that to an absolute minimum.

With respect to the program that is before us, many of the witnesses who appeared before us in committee agreed that there were ways to work the program. That is possible regardless of what type of program we have.

We have an unemployment insurance program and there are certain people who try to take advantage of it. We have a whole list of programs in this country that people attempt to take advantage of, but by and large most Canadians are honest and try and do comply with the rules.

The argument of not being able to put a cap in place simply because people will take advantage of the program is not a valid one. It is one the government should quit throwing out.

The other aspect is that this program is not a cost of production program. The smaller family farm is not getting full advantage of a cost of production program. In fact, it is going to lose out in the end. This program will be a very rich program, but it has been predicted that GRIP will go tremendously in the hole in the next two or three years. We are going to have a program in which we may find ourselves with some very serious problems in a few years.

The difficulty is that as the 15-year average goes down, we are going to find that farmers are paying a higher percentage of their average crop production, of their average income, and receiving less and less for it. That certainly is a problem. One of the fundamental flaws with this program is that it does not recognize that fact.

If we had a cap on this program and geared the program to the family type farm, the more average size farms in this country, we would all be better off. Certainly those farmers would be better off because it would be possible down the road, as this program is reviewed and re-evaluated, and perhaps changed to reflect that, to bring in a true cost of production up to a set level.

That is why these amendments are important. They are important because they set a new direction. As New Democrats, we applaud that type of direction. We cannot understand why the government and the Liberal Party would not support such an amendment. To us, it is an important factor in maintaining viable farming families. I hope the government will reconsider and place that proposal before the House and be willing to support it.

The other point that has to be included in this amendment is to keep in mind that as this program goes into the hole, as it goes further into debt and is reviewed down the road, there may well be changes to it in five years. As the government has said, it is going to enter into a review process so that farmers who have a program for five years may find that, because of the richness of this program, because of the fact that a few very large producers have received the full advantage of this program, all producers will suffer. Surely that is not the objective of this program. Surely the goal of this program is not to reduce the number of farms. It certainly seems to be the effect.

The way this government has manoeuvred agriculture in this country over the last six or seven years bears that out. This government set up an environment which will hurt average farms and rural communities. With the changes to the Wheat Board Act, this government's attitude and actions do not bode well for the future of farming in this country as we know it today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is the House ready for the question?

The question is on motion No. 1. A vote on No. 1 will include the same on motion Nos. 2 and 3.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Pursuant to Standing Order 76(8), the recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

Mr. Rod Laporte (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre) moved:

Motion No. 4

That Bill C-98 be amended in clause 4 by adding immediately after line 21 at page 3 the following:

"(b.1) the program should encourage the long-term social and economic sustainability of farm families and communities;"

He said: Mr. Speaker, since I was elected in 1988, I have had the opportunity to travel across this country. One thing I have noticed is that geographically, Canada is really a rural nation. We have pockets of population in various parts of the country. We have this so-called golden triangle in the Toronto area. We have the lower mainland of British Columbia. We have, I suppose, a population base in the Ottawa area. Outside of that we have largely a rural nation.

• (1210)

Even areas that Statistics Canada would include as urban are in fact rural. In my riding, for example, the riding of Moose Jaw—Lake Centre, half the population lives in the city of Moose Jaw, which is considered urban by Statistics Canada, but in fact, it is a rural city. It depends on the rural infrastructure that exists around it, the economic infrastructure, the farmers and others who do business in Moose Jaw. There is an area which the city of Moose Jaw services.

There are many urban communities in this country which depend on rural Canada. This country was developed on a regional policy. Western Canada was settled because the government of the day desired that people should move to the rural areas of this country. In fact, that is why the west was settled. That is why people moved there. It is important to keep in mind that this country has largely developed on policies of government focused on regional development.

As I mentioned earlier, the problem we have today in this country is that we have a government that seems to have lost sight of that objective; I suggest it has clearly lost sight of that objective and that goal. We have a government now that is considered a bottom-line government, an open-for-business government. Tending to move toward a so-called free enterprise government is really putting us back into the 19th century. We have a situation where rural Canada has suffered.

As I said, I have had the opportunity to travel around this country. I can go out to rural Nova Scotia, a rural community there, sit in a cafe and have coffee with some of the local folks, and I can have virtually the same conversation there that I can have in my home riding in rural Saskatchewan. People talk about VIA Rail being lost; they talk about post office closures; services closing up; seniors who do not want to stay in those communities because they do not have the services; young people who do not want to move there because there are not the amenities or jobs. The only difference that I find between rural Nova Scotia and rural Saskatchewan in many ways is the economic base. In Nova Scotia it is fishing or it may be a different type of agriculture, fruit and so on. In Saskatchewan, in my area at least, it is largely grain farming. The economic base in all those areas is suffering.

We have a situation where the infrastructure of rural Canada is in a very bad state. Rural Canada has been shrinking since the end of World War II. Now it is starting to collapse.

Unless we have a commitment by Canada and by this government to work toward maintaining viable farming families, viable rural communities and a viable rural infrastructure, that trend is going to continue. It is continuing at a disastrous rate that is going to have a devastating impact on this country.

In the province of Saskatchewan we have lost over 60,000 people, a net loss in the last four or five years. People have been predicting that Saskatchewan in the next 15 years is going to lose somewhere between 150,000 and 200,000 people. If anything anywhere near that actually occurs, the province of Saskatchewan will be in real trouble.

What do we have? We have had deregulation in transportation that has affected transportation in Saskatchewan. We have had a loss of railways. We have had rail line abandonment. We now have UNITEL which wants to come forth and change the whole communications system, which is going to have effects on rural Canada.

This amendment that is being proposed here simply requires the government to keep in mind, to take into account the long-term social and economic sustainability of farm families and communities. That is a statement I

would defy anybody in this House to get up and say is not a valid principle. It is a valid principle. Any member who does not support that principle really cannot say that they have the interest of rural Canada at heart. It is a fundamental principle that should have been in the legislation from the very beginning. It is a principle that so far this government has rejected. I do not know why. I find it extraordinary that it has rejected that principle. It should be in the legislation and it should be supported.

If we are going to maintain rural communities, if we are going to maintain farm families, then we have to be taking some direction to allow that situation to exist. I am not saying, to use the Saskatchewan example, that we need towns every eight miles and everybody living on a half section; that is not what I am saying. What I am saying is that we should be able to provide an environment whereby a family which wants to either live in a rural community or on a farm simply has the opportunity to do so. It is becoming more and more difficult all the time.

This legislation is going to be reviewed. This legislation we all agree has many problems with it, and we are going to find many other problems as we begin to work with it. It is important that when this legislation is reviewed, and as we change the legislation over time, and I hope to make some changes here at the report stage, or even if we do not, that this principle is kept in mind. What this does is require the minister and reviewers of this legislation to keep that basic principle in mind.

I simply conclude by saying that I hope the government can find its way clear to vote on this basic, fundamental and, dare I say, motherhood issue that we all deem, I would suggest, important.

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, the amendment before us, put by the hon. member who just spoke, talks about the long-term social and economic sustainability of farm families. Clearly, nobody has ever seen the kind of ravages that have taken place in western Canada since the present government came to power. I believe that this amendment would be useful because it might remind the government of what has happened to small towns.

Last spring I had the opportunity to go back to the community in which I practised as a veterinarian in the late 1950s for several years. I could not believe the kind of displacement which had occurred in that community, which I had not visited for about seven or eight years.

During the last eight or ten years when the Prime Minister talked about being open for business, it certainly has not been open for business to assist those small prairie communities which have been ravaged so drastically in the last four or five years.

Even though this legislation does give some long-term hope to those prairie communities, initially it is not great, because we put down the motion on Monday calling on the government to immediately implement a third line of defence, a deficiency payment, cash to producers this spring for the current crop year 1990–91. The government has given no commitment. All it has talked about is how much deficit there is in each of the three major accounts: the Western Grain Stabilization Program, the Canadian Wheat Board account and the demand for a premium.

To that extent, the provisions in this bill for special circumstances, Committees Special Assistance, at this time, are a failure.

• (1220)

I guess one could say that the NISA program is a failure also, because none of the provinces, with the exception of Saskatchewan, are able to participate in it. The problem with NISA is that most farmers do not have the resources to put money into the account in order to qualify for assistance this year. Clearly the GRIP program does not really provide much benefit this year. There may be an initial payment this fall, but there may not be. It is totally a decision of the Government of Canada and the signatory committees.

As the hon. member has said, to some extent this is a motherhood issue. We feel it would be useful to put it into the bill. We want to support it because perhaps it would make the government more conscious of the fact that we are not just talking about producers of wheat, canola, other grains and oilseeds, but we are talking about stabilizing the whole rural economy so that there are stores, businesses and other people existing in these communities.

We always felt that Canada had that special ability. That is why we have had programs like the western grain stabilization fund. That is why we have a Wheat Board, because we want to bring stability. That is why we have marketing boards.

This government is hell-bent on cloning the whole great American dream. That system has not been great for those states like North Dakota and Montana and the northern tier of the states. I do not think that cloning of the American system is going to be great for Canada and for our western prairie producers. We think this amendment would be useful, because it reminds the government of its responsibility not only to individual producers, but also to the over-all viability of the rural communities and the rural way of life.

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Saskatoon—Humboldt): Mr. Speaker, when Bill C-98 was presented, it made an unusual but maybe a very acceptable difference in its approach to the whole program of safety nets and a considerable amount of legislation in that the bill contained a definition of what the government thinks or what the legislature thinks should be the aims of the programs being discussed today.

In that series of principles which it has placed before the House through this bill, the government has indicated a certain structure at which it feels agriculture should be aimed. Basically we as legislators should be keeping that in mind when we deal with agricultural legislation and when we deal with safety nets.

As I said earlier, this particular legislation provides or allows agreements between the provinces and the federal government to keep the structure of safety nets in place for the foreseeable future. It is very important, under those circumstances, to make sure that in the processes of review and of making decisions relative to this bill and to the agricultural industry we keep in mind the most important people as far as this matter is concerned. Those are the farmers out there who have managed to survive the ravages of the past few years and are hoping to be farmers 10 years from now or 5 years from now when the initial review happens.

In making those kinds of review, it is important that we have in place principles which do exactly what this amendment does. The program should encourage the long-term social and economic sustainability of farm families and communities.

If we were allowed to go back to the previous three amendments, we would say that they in themselves also contribute to the sustainability of long-term and effective farm communities, because they suggest that the massive consolidation of farm production should not be allowed to end up in the hands of multinational corporations.

Anything that encourages larger and larger developments should not be paid for by the taxpayers of Canada. If we allow the taxpayers of Canada to subsidize the large operations, we indirectly empty the rural areas of population. If the population is not there, the services disappear and eventually the communities themselves disappear.

That is why we think we should make sure by this legislation and subsequent legislation and by the agreements that are to be signed between the federal and provincial governments that farm communities and farmers themselves are the central figures in the thinking; not the production, not the export sales, but the life and survival of the farm family and the farm community.

Mr. Murray Cardiff (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, it is very tempting to respond to some of the comments of my hon. friend from Algoma when he talked about the ravages of this government.

We have had to do many things since we formed the government to deal with the shortfalls or the lack of support to agriculture when the Liberals were in government. We know that it is easy to slip down the slippery road to heavy deficits and interim programs which do not have a long-term meaning. It takes years to correct some of the things that have happened, and this is one of them.

With this legislation what we have done is provide a format for farmers or producers, the grassroots people, to formulate their feelings and to extend them beyond to this House of Commons for legislation. We are endeavouring to provide the most adequate legislation to meet and give agricultural communities the long-term security that is so necessary.

That has been lacking for years, but we are addressing it. I believe that the farmers and producers of this country are very satisfied and that we will all benefit from this legislation.

Most of our farm enterprises are family owned farms. It is a given that a family farm is a very important part of the whole agricultural industry in this country. This bill provides for programs that will ensure economic and environmental sustainability of our agricultural sector. If we do not implement these initiatives, we will be threatening the very fabric of our farming industry.

I would like to quote Mr. Geddes of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture who was a witness at the Standing Committee on Agriculture on March 13: He stated: "The safety net program was designed to solve one of the situations in the rural economy for grains and oilseeds at this time, and that is income stability".

When we start to talk about the family farm, I am sure that if we polled everyone in this House of Commons or wherever, we would get a different interpretation of what is a family farm. Sometimes that creates difficulties. When I look at my own farming operations, I say that it is a family farm operation. I am sure that would apply to many of us in this House. It is a view that we can hold and share with others, that it is difficult to determine what is a family farm.

• (1230)

We believe that the motion presented by the hon. member identifies in particular the family farm and the importance of the family farm to the whole fabric of Canada. Because of that, we feel that it does not change the legislation but it identifies the family farm. We feel that is very important and would be prepared to accept this motion.

Before I sit down, I would like to move under Standing Order 26(1):

That we continue the sitting through the lunch hour.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister of State (Grains and Oilseeds)): Mr. Speaker, I will just speak very briefly to this very interesting motion.

Most of us who are connected intimately with agriculture would agree that the family farm is one of the reasons we in this country and in other parts of the world have been as successful as we have in agriculture.

There are three brief reasons why I think this motion has some merit. First, any time somebody else pays 60 per cent of a premium and the farmer pays 40 per cent indicates support for farmers and for family farms. That is the situation here: the farmer himself will pay on average 40 per cent of the premium, the provincial governments will pay 25 per cent, and the federal government will pay 35 per cent. That in itself is support for the motion.

Second, the safety net programs are designed to make the assistance that is available more predictable. We have heard many times in the past that if farmers knew ahead of time how much money they were to receive from various programs, even though they received the same amount of money later on, that knowledge of the exact amount of money they were eligible for would have been of more use to them ahead of time for planning what types of crops to seed and the type of financial arrangements they make with their financial institutions. That provides some support and stability for farmers and for family farms.

The third point I would make very briefly is simply that once this bill is up and running, once the subsequent agreements are signed with the provinces, and farmers begin making use of these programs available under this legislation, the type of coverage and support an individual farmer will receive is going to be very much tailored to his own capacity to produce on that piece of land. If he wants to work harder, use more chemicals or use better weed control, put in some irrigation, intensify his cropping practices so that he can earn more off that piece of land, he will then have that extra income and capacity to produce reflected in the way the program operates.

To summarize very briefly, the very fact that the producer will be paying 40 per cent of the premiums and governments will be looking after 60 per cent, the fact that the program is predictable, more so than anything we have had to date, and the fact that it will be tailored to an individual farmer's capacity to produce on that piece of land indicate some pretty strong support for the individual farmer and for the way family farms operate in this country.

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak on Motion No. 4, coming as it does in the section which sets out the principles the minister shall take into consideration in respect to any program he is

establishing in conjunction with the provinces. We had four principles outlined in the original bill and none of them mentioned anything about farmers. It talked about levels of protection and it talked about being compatible with Canada's international obligations. It talked about not unduly influencing the decisions of producers of agricultural products with respect to production or marketing, and it talked about encouraging long-term environmental and economic sustainability.

However, it did not mention farmers and it did not mention communities. It was a little uncertain as to whether government members when drafting this bill really considered farmers and small communities to be a natural part of the economic environment in the countryside at the moment.

This will help to clarify that. It may not change the kinds of agreements arrived at, we realize that. This bill will simply require that the minister take these principles into consideration. It does not say he has to follow them.

For that reason, I choose to spend a couple of minutes urging the minister to give fairly high priority to this business of making agreements that will be cognizant of the needs of both farmers and the people who live in villages and towns in rural Canada.

I am from Saskatchewan, the more settled part of the prairies which was part of the forest belt at one time. It is more heavily settled than the wide open plains, but we are still fighting the same enemies as rural people elsewhere on the prairies. Our enemy is distance. Distance creates problems for people whether they are living in a small village, in a town or in the countryside on a farm. It creates problems as to our ability to sustain basic services that we all need, whether we live in the countryside or whether we live in metropolitan Toronto.

Turning to health and medical care, when we have to go more than 30 or 40 miles to find a doctor, a nurse or even a drugstore, it creates some problems for raising families. It creates problems when we are old. It is not a situation that leads to people staying where they are. They tend to shift away from that area to where those services are more readily available.

There is the question of educational services. It is the same thing. Younger families look at how long their kids will have to be on the school bus. They have to consider whether the roads the school bus travels over are going to be open year round and make the decision whether to stay in the countryside, in the small village or to move to a larger centre.

For people who are operating farms, distance is our enemy when we seek repairs or marketing services. The last decade has virtually decimated farm equipment suppliers. In order to get parts for our ever aging machines, we have to go farther and farther afield. The suppliers have kept up to date as much as economic conditions will permit. They are hooked into computerized networks and can tell us on the phone whether they have the part, whether it is in Flint, Michigan or wherever it might be in North America or even in Europe, and how long it will take to arrive. When it comes we will probably have to drive 50 or 80 miles to pick up a needed part, taking two and a half or three hours not counting the delay for shipping. Given the current financial situation, most dealers cannot keep in stock every part we might want. It has to be brought in from a central depot or from the factory.

These tough economic times and to some extent policies which are encouraging consolidation of towns and villages are creating double costs for people who live in rural Canada.

We have to pay for the services that we built in the recent past. Most of those hospitals, schools and roads are still in the process of being paid for. Most of the roads are built on a pay as you go basis, but the water and sewer systems are not. As people leave for other provinces or to big cities in search of jobs or better service for their aged parents, or their young children, they abandon those capital investments and force the new communities to invest in new schools, new hospitals, new homes, more water and sewage systems, to accommodate the new populations while the already produced accommodations out in the towns and villages go under-utilized. It is not good economics. It makes for very poor social conditions now and in the future.

• (1240)

We think that the provinces and the federal government should be much more cognizant of these very real issues which are occurring in rural Canada, whether it is in Newfoundland, Vancouver Island, the prairies, rural

Ontario, Quebec, or the maritimes. This has to be part of the consideration in any of these agreements. We are therefore pleased to see that the government members and all parties seem to be willing to include this forgotten element in the final form of this bill.

Mr. Geoff Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say a few words in regard to Motion No. 4 and the theme that has been put forward.

It is important that we on this side respond and indicate that, contrary to the implication from the other side, this government does care about rural Canada and does care about the farm community. I think most people in the farm community are well aware of that, given the long string of initiatives which this government has put forward over the past six years.

Frankly, I find some of the rhetoric I have heard this morning a little bit disconcerting because there is a suggestion that somehow we can wish away reality. We have very difficult international circumstances. Over 80 per cent of the wheat grown on the prairies is destined for export. The world price has been decimated owing to the grain subsidy wars that have been going on between the United States and Europe. They have been mentioned before in this House many times and I am not going to go into the detail again. Suffice it to say that the world price is at a point where there simply is no return. That is why we have this enabling legislation to bring forward a new generation of safety nets which have been largely developed by producers themselves.

I do not think it is good enough to have a long litany of what is wrong from opposition members. What we would like to have is a little bit of co-operation from them in terms of saying what can be done. So far all I have heard is the suggestion of capping potential pay-out under these programs at $100,000 which the opposition already admits is meaningless.

What we need is something concrete. When the Liberal Party was in power in this country between 1968 and 1984, it did not do a whole lot for western agriculture. All I remember was the imposition of the capital gains tax which hung like a cloud over the farm community all through the 1970s and the early part of the 1980s. This government, in living up to its election promise, got rid of that capital gains tax.

I remember the LIFT program that the former government brought forward. Perhaps the greatest legacy of all was a national debt in excess of $200 billion in March 1985. The requirement to pay interest on that debt at the present time would constrain any government in trying to bring forward the necessary programs and to sustain the kind of support that Canadians would want and, indeed, became very much accustomed to under previous administrations.

There is no magic in the movement of people from rural areas toward the urban areas. This is going on in every country in the world. It has gone on in this country since the rural population peaked back in the 1920s.

We are largely talking about the prairies this morning because that is where the dire consequences of this international grain subsidy war are being felt. The prairies were laid out under the Torrens land title system before many people moved west. The land title system was laid out in square miles before people came. It was laid out on the basis of the steam engine and the horse and wagon. Every five or six miles there was a stop for the trains to take on water. It was based on hauling 15 or 20 bushels of wheat a few miles from the farm to the elevator by horse and wagon. We have progressed a long way over the last 60 or 70 years.

As the member for Mackenzie rightly pointed out, we are gravitating towards a system where there are service centres every 30 or 40 miles that have the amenities that people want. That is because the people are already doing that. They are driving past the small towns, the villages—some of which never did amount to much; others which have declined over the years—in large trucks and semi-trailers. They are going to the larger places. The end result is that in a sense they are voting with their feet. They are causing a reality out there.

As the member for Mackenzie indicates, there has been a gravitation from having these communities every five or six miles, based on the horse and wagon, and based on the steam engine to the kind of system that we see evolving today. Indeed, if there were no people on the prairies right now, and we were laying out a grid system with towns and communities based on the technology, the communications, the road systems and all of the things that we know are possible today, these centres

would be laid out every 30 or 40 miles. It is exactly in accordance with the technology and with the wishes and decisions of people.

Having said that, yes, there is a need out there. The best thing that this government, or any government can do in terms of encouraging economic sustainability in rural areas and rural communities, is diversification. When I use that term diversification, it is not just in the sense of agricultural diversification. I am speaking about it in terms of things that are unrelated to agriculture, preferably completely unrelated.

That is where I would like to briefly touch on western economic diversification, because that is a $1.2 billion fund which was established by this government to encourage diversification in western Canada and on the prairies.

It makes loans, repayable loans to enterprises which have ideas, some technology, some innovation, some new products, some new markets which can replace imports. What it does is provide some much needed payroll jobs out there. Many of them are related to agriculture, it is true, but there are plenty of others that are not.

What that does is provide opportunity for people. It provides payroll. It enables them to stay in the smaller towns and in the prairie cities which have been so dependent upon agriculture.

It is important to recognize that significant contribution by this government through western economic diversification. It lends itself very well to the sentiment that has been expressed here and which we are all talking about and supporting. More important, it is not a matter of complaining, not a matter of a long list of problems.

We cannot do much about the world situation. We are at GATT. We are talking with the Cairns Group. I believe our people are doing all they can, but they are up against a couple of superpowers in the United States and the European Economic Community. We cannot wish that away.

What we can do, instead of whining and complaining, is come forward with initiatives like western economic diversification, which provides some much-needed variety in those areas. We can come forward with this enabling legislation, which is the subject of the debate today. The farm income protection act legislation will enable the entering into of agreements for GRIP and NISA for the participating provinces and will provide the kind of long-term permanent safety net which is required out there. This will provide some much needed certainty and predictability for Canadians producers. That is something that is real and concrete. It is not a matter of wishes, it responds to a need and I encourage all members to support it.

• (1250)

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak for a few minutes on Bill C-98, and particularly to Motion No. 4 which stands in the name of my colleague from Moose Jaw—Lake Centre.

I understand the minister and the government side are encouraged enough by the committee hearings and by the debate to accept my colleague's amendment which will at line 23 on page 3 of C-98, the words: "the program should encourage the long-term social and economic sustainability of farm families and communities."

It is obviously the kind of wording that is important in this kind of enabling legislation because enabling legislation is a process that allows for an agreement to be developed and to come afterwards. We do not really know what the final nature of the agreement will be that comes from Bill C-98, and that is one of the chronic problems with this kind of enabling legislation.

The government members keep saying that there is going to be certainty and predictability for those farmers and those farm families who make use of this legislation and these programs in the years to come. However, when one takes a close look at C-98 one does not find that kind of certainty and predictability and accuracy to which farmers are looking with increasing interest and need.

Other members have touched on the problems being faced in the grains and seeds sector particularly. We all recognize that the ongoing subsidy wars between Europe and the United States and others is making it very difficult for the sustainability of the Canadian farm as we know it. But there is another issue we have to address on the floor of the House today, that is adding the kind of wording suggested by my colleague from Moose Jaw—Lake Centre. It gives some direction to this enabling legislation so that those ministers, bureaucrats and others who will be negotiating future instruments and

future amendments have some idea of what the intention of the House was.

As I understand it, members on both sides are going to be supporting this. It is important to have some idea of why this kind of wording is so important because we have seen in recent years, not only what my colleague touched on, but also the galloping nature of our national debt. It was less than $200 billion when the present Prime Minister came to office and, in June of this year it is going to exceed $400 billion. We see the time clock ticking away. The growth rate of the debt is on television regularly.

There are very few farm families in this country who also do not know the nature of debt and what kinds of problems come with it. My colleagues from Saskatchewan have touched on a number of both young and old who are being forced to leave the farms, not just on the prairies but also in areas such as the constituency that I represent, which is about one-quarter of British Columbia. It does not have the huge grains and seed acreages that one finds in the Peace, or in Alberta, Saskatchewan or Manitoba or other areas of the country, but there are farms and there are significant cattle producers and others in the area.

Don Knoerr, president of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture has appeared many times before the committee studying this legislation. I think it it is fair to say that he, like I, is concerned about giving the government *carte blanche* to do what it likes without really knowing what the final plan is going to be like and whether or not it will provide, what all members of this House would like to see, legislation and farm programs with long-term social and economic sustainability.

We have seen in recent years the closing down and the loss of a lot of federal institutions that have long been an important part of both rural and farm communities: the post office, train stations, branch lines and community grain elevators. We have seen a loss of much of the infrastructure which people who live in larger towns and cities take for granted, the butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker disappear. All the different shops that were traditionally part of all of those small, rural communities have disappeared.

To an enormous extent, it has been as a result of uninterest and inactivity by federal governments year after year, government after government. They have not provided that little bit of additional financial and economic input that is required in a rural farm community to keep all those things going.

Once we lose a certain number of local enterprises, whether it is the person who provides seed or farm machinery or who fixes equipment or maybe does all those various things, we lose the critical mass.

Increasingly, on the prairies and in farm communities we are seeing a ghostly veil as more businesses close and more of these small communities wither on the vine.

As we see the problems on the international scale with the value that we are getting for our international commodity sales, we recognize as previous speakers have said that about 80 per cent of our grain sales are to offshore markets.

If we are not getting enough in terms of the costs of production, it means that those farms become less and less competitive and viable. The debt grows. More and more local businesses do not get paid, and it becomes a bit of a self-fulfilling prophesy.

That is why wording such as (b.1) proposed by the hon. member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre is so important as a guiding principle. If there are going to be certain things built into the agreements and amendments made in this five-year period before the Minister of Agriculture has promised that there would be another review, here is a guiding principle.

The bureaucrats, in particular, will be asking: What if we change this for this part of Saskatchewan? What if we changed it for this particular aspect? What would it mean in terms of the long-term social and economic sustainability? It is a very important principle to have in there.

As I said earlier, I am very pleased that it is going to be in the bill because there are many other problems which are threatening the long-term sustainability of the family farm in this country. Even the recent problems emanating from game farming, as you would know, Mr. Speaker, are a very serious threat not only to our existing cattle

operations but also to our wildlife populations in our national parks.

I have seen in recent days, for example, that a bred cow elk which had to be slaughtered because of a positive test for TB can bring a game farmer $7,000 under the federal pay-out scheme. The most one can get in this whole country for a cow, regardless of whether it is a Sementhal, a pure bred Angus or whatever breed that has to be slaughtered because of a positive test, is $1,500.

It does not matter whether the cow is worth $10,000 or $20,000. That is all you can get for a cow. There are special arrangements and agreements being made in relation to the game farming industry that also need to be looked at. They have not been looked at very carefully by this government.

All over the country, there are issues such as this cropping up for either the federal Crown or the provincial Crown. They have not been doing an adequate job of evaluating the impact and the problems of imports.

The hon. member for Mackenzie very recently raised the possible problems that could come from bringing in honey queens from Hawaii. We heard from the Minister of Agriculture that a group of investigators went to Hawaii to check and make sure that there were not mites and other problems with the honey queens coming.

How come you are wiggling your finger like that, Mr. Speaker? You are interested in knowing about Hawaiian honey queens. I recognize in the Peace district near where you live in Edmonton there is a need for additional bees. Many of them come from New Zealand and other areas. We are facing a shortage of bee queens.

As the hon. member for Mackenzie pointed out, the government seems very quick in wanting to bring in bees from Hawaii. We are facing chronic problems with infections in buffalo and elk. All of these things are threatening the traditional and important livelihood of our the farm economies, whether it is beef, grain, seed or dairy.

• (1300)

These are important things that the federal government should be doing to both monitor and evaluate before the problems become too severe.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Motion No. 4 agreed to.

Mr. Lyle Vanclief (Prince Edward—Hastings): moved:

Motion No. 5

That Bill C-98 be amended in clause 5 by striking out line 48 at page 4 and substituting the following therefor:

"be considered appropriate to carry out continuing review of the operation of this act and the agreements and report to the minister periodically and at least once a year on its recommendations on the administration of the agreements this act and any amendments it considers advisable;"

He said: Mr. Speaker, I believe there will be agreement to change this a bit at line 2 on page 5. We do not have the reprinted bill with the amendments that were made at committee. We therefore are referring to the pages on the bill as it was originally printed for the original reading.

It would then change paragraph (b) on page 5 to read:

(b) the powers and duties of the committees, including a continuing review;

The remainder of the amendment would follow on from there.

I would like to make some comments, but I assume you, Sir, have to get agreement first.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is there agreement of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): So carried.

Mr. Vanclief: Mr. Speaker, this is a very important amendment to the bill. From the witnesses who appeared before the committee, there was almost unanimous consent that this type of review committee be put in place a little more clearly than the bill originally had

stated. All parties that have discussed this bill understand that it is very complicated and very important. Since we are dealing with a complicated industry such as agriculture, it will be necessary to continually review this at all times so that it can, when and if necessary, be changed in order to hopefully improve it.

The Prairie Pools and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture were two groups in particular that felt very strongly on this, as did many of us from this side of the House. I stress this to the government today and urge that it accept this amendment to the bill, which I think will strengthen it. It will strengthen the confidence that the producers and the agrifood industry will have in this bill in assuring that there will be a committee appointed and assuring that there will be ongoing continuous review with an opportunity for the committee to make recommendations and recommended amendments to the minister and therefore to the House at any time in order to help make this bill a stronger one than ever.

I will leave my comments at that and hope that the government will approve this amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Motion No. 5 agreed to.

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): moved:

Motion No. 6

That Bill C-98 be amended by adding immediately after line 19 at page 5 the following new clause:

"5.1(1) The minister shall cause to be laid before Parliament every agreement made pursuant to section 4 within thirty days of it being made, or, if Parliament is not then sitting, not later than the thirtieth day thereafter that either House of Parliament is sitting.

(2) An agreement laid before Parliament pursuant to subsection (1) shall be automatically referred to the Standing Committee of the House of Commons on Agriculture."

He said: Mr. Speaker, this amendment has been modified by adding words before that printed on the Order Paper today. Before the paragraph that starts "5.1(1) The Minister shall", we would add the words "with the concurrence of provinces party to the agreement".

I wonder if I could just propose that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Foster: This amendment proposes to amend the subclause 5.1 by making a provision for the Minister of Agriculture to table agreements within 30 days of when they are signed and when there is agreement from the participating parties, that is the provinces that are party to the agreement.

The original amendment was that it would simply be tabled in the House and then stand referred to the parliamentary committee. Well, of course, if there was no agreement from the provinces, there could be legal repercussions in that regard.

Even though everybody in the agricultural community thinks that we are somehow or other approving the GRIP and NISA agreements and setting out what the premiums and benefits will be, in fact all we are doing is passing legislation which allows for these agreements. To that extent, legislators in this whole process are at least one step, and maybe more than that, removed from the actual program that has been offered to producers, certainly corn producers in Ontario and wheat producers in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta, and so on.

At least this places the whole arrangement for GRIP and NISA back in the agreements as they are made with the participating provinces. It allows them back on the floor of the House of Commons, allows them to be referred to the standing committee for their consideration. Otherwise, we would not only be passing legislation which enables these kinds of deals to take place, but there would be no requirement that the government ever table them, ever have anything to do with the Parliament of Canada. I suppose you could always say there is provision, the estimates have to provide for the funding, and so on, but the actual details would not be there.

This amendment really provides for that. The agreements will be tabled within 30 days of the concurrence of the provinces concerned, and will be referred to the Standing Committee on Agriculture for its consideration and advice.

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, this proposed amendment requires the minister to place the federal-provincial agreements that are signed before the House within 30 days of being signed so that Parliament will have a chance to oversee what those agreements contain.

This is a second-best choice in terms of parliamentary overview of what is going on in the country. This body has the responsibility by tradition and by law to be responsible for the expenditures and the final decisions on how we tax ourselves.

• (1310)

Those decisions have gradually been eroded by practice over the last decade or so. Sometimes I fear we are getting almost to the point where responsible parliamentary government started, when parliament in the United Kingdom wrested power from the absolute monarch and began to take power unto itself so the people could decide where their tax dollars were coming from and where the money was to be spent.

We are coming perilously close to going back to those days with the very strong prime minister's offices that have developed over the past two or three administrations. This is definitely a second or third best option. It is only a requirement to have the government of the day report the agreements it has made beyond this Chamber back to the House. It would be much better if Parliament could pass legislation that would provide much clearer guidelines as to how those agreements should be made and what would be required, but that is not the choice of action in this particular era.

I would like to put on the record that I still find this reprehensible in terms of responsible government. It makes the job of all backbenchers and parliamentarians extremely difficult and frustrates the role they have traditionally had to play by having such open-ended kinds of legislation to deal with where, in effect, Parliament says to the executive branch of government: "Here, do whatever you like. Come back and report to us 30 days after you have done it".

I do not like that particular principle, but having the government report is better than not having it report, and that is basically what we are down to with this particular amendment. If this is passed, at least the government today and future governments will have to eventually report what agreements they have signed behind closed doors with the various provinces that will affect producers right across the country and will affect all taxpayers at both the federal and provincial levels. It will force those facts to come out eventually.

As I have said, I deplore the principle we are establishing with these kinds of legislative proposals, but they have been around now for eight or ten years and it is going to be a great struggle on the part of all parliamentarians and the people of Canada to bring those powers back into this Chamber, instead of leaving them in the cabinet room.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The hon. member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley, I believe, wants to say a few words.

Mr. Brian L. Gardiner (Prince George—Bulkley Valley): Mr. Speaker, I will try and keep it to a few words.

I am pleased to make a few brief comments on Bill C-98, legislation that allows the government and, in this particular case the Minister of Agriculture primarily, to enter into agreements between the federal and provincial governments regarding agriculture support programs, in particular GRIP and NISA, which we have heard a great deal about already.

I want to support Motion No. 6. It is a very straight forward amendment and most definitely one that will continue to enable and open up the legislative process and opportunities for parliamentarians and in so doing for all Canadians to participate and learn a great deal more about how we govern ourselves. That is what we are talking about here, an opportunity to learn how the Government of Canada works with the provinces in administering these programs.

I would like to give two examples where we did get support from the government for an initiative like this and in another case where we have had some difficulty and likely there could be more improvement.

Let us do the good news first. The good news was legislation called Bill C-74, fisheries legislation we had before this House prior to Christmas. There was generally support from all parties for that legislation because its job was, among other things, to increase penalties for destruction of our fisheries habitat, east and west coasts and also in fresh water situations.

The argument we put to the government in committee, to which it eventually agreed in this Chamber—although opposed to the proposal in committee it did come to an agreement in this Chamber—was for a very specific section of that legislation that called upon the government to issue an annual report, to table in this House a report on one particular aspect of the legislation. That was with respect to habitat protection, the number of

fines assessed and the progress that those charges have made.

That is not a federal—provincial agreement, but it is a pretty clear example, in this particular case, of the government supporting an initiative that certainly will go some distance toward giving us a clearer indication of where we are with regard to that most important matter of habitat protection.

That is some good news, and I hope that the government would see the logic it accepted in this Chamber for that particular amendment to Bill C-74 and to agree to that logic in this particular case, which is all it is calling for, for any agreements signed to be tabled in this House, and—the second part of the amendment—to be referred to the standing committee.

You know as I do, what that does for us. If we see that particular report, we then have the information in front of us on this particular program. Then it is our obligation and duty, if we have questions and want to pursue that information further, to raise that matter here or in committee.

I think the important thing is that the information is made available. We have had some difficulty with the government in another particular section of legislation. It has to do with forest agreements. The government has been less than co-operative in providing a lot of information on forest agreements between the federal and provincial governments. We have tried to make some efforts in that regard in terms of Bill C-29, now passed.

There has been debate in this Chamber and elsewhere about just how effective this government, and in some cases other governments—particularly provincial governments—have been at trying to negotiate those agreements. It has been difficult at times to get information from governments on just how we have progressed in that area.

I cite those two examples, the latter one being an example of why we need an amendment like this, and the first example being an example of some good news where the government accepted, to a certain degree, the logic of providing more information.

I hope that the members opposite will support this amendment. I think it is a good one. I know that in attempting to have a better Parliament and more open government, they will support this amendment.

Mr. Ken Monteith (Elgin—Norfolk): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the mover of the motion would agree that perhaps there is some concern with the numbering on 5.(1), that perhaps it should be 5.(5).

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The hon. member for Algoma, is it 5.(1) or 5.(5)?

Mr. Foster: Mr. Speaker, when I put the amendment, I stated that it would be the page number referred to in the original printing of the bill for the numbering now, and that should be carried over. It may change because we have moved by consent yesterday afternoon to report stage of the bill before we actually had the reprint of it. I think that covers it.

• (1320)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): It is 5.(1). It will be changed.

Mr. Monteith: Mr. Speaker, it should be the bill reported to the House by the chairman of the standing committee. It would amend that particular version of the bill and perhaps that would change the number. I see the hon. member opposite nodding in agreement. Perhaps that will be checked by the Table.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): All right, the Table will check it to make sure that it is right.

Mr. Rod Laporte (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to Motion No. 6. As it is laid out, it is an important motion because it once again gives Parliament an opportunity to have a review process and to look at this legislation.

I think that this is avery important and very fundamental motion, in that it is a fundamental nature of Parliament. There is a real problem these days—certainly it is a perceived problem—that Parliament is becoming irrelevant due to the fact that we seem to be governed as much by executive as by the legislative body of government. This is particularly true in situations of majority governments. When we have majority governments as we have had for the last two terms, it sometimes becomes quite frustrating for parliamentarians on both sides of the House in that they sometimes feel that they do not have as much input as they might have.

Certainly the perception in the rest of the country is exactly that. It is important that Parliament indeed progresses. It does not always progress in these matters; it sometimes in fact regresses. That is the ongoing debate these days with respect to the Standing Orders. The government wishes to make changes to the Standing

Orders which many members in the House feel is going to detract from the ability of parliamentarians to perform their legislative duties.

Motion No. 6 is in the same line or the same tenor. It would require the minister to place before Parliament any agreement made pursuant to clause 4, and of course clause 4 is one of the key clauses in Bill C-98. It is the clause under which the government is given authority actually to enter into agreements with the provinces. With Bill C-98 being only enabling legislation, it authorizes the government to enter into agreements with the various provinces. That is outlined in clause 4, that is the authority given. It also sets out some of the principles and so on the government must comply with.

Once the agreement is entered into, once the agreement has been signed and so on, then clause 5.(1) or 5.(5) is important because it will require the minister to lay before Parliament every agreement made pursuant to that clause within 30 days of it being made or, if Parliament is not sitting, the thirtieth day thereafter that Parliament is sitting. That is fundamental. Some other motions will be coming up later on dealing with the same idea of making sure that Parliament has a role to play in this agreement.

We must not forget that this bill is dealing with hundreds of millions of dollars. Canadians today are concerned with how Parliament is spending that money. When we only have an executive controlling a majority government and ruling from its executive position, that causes concern. When we are dealing with a bill such as this one—and, as I say, it is about hundreds of millions of dollars—it is very important, and I think most Canadians would agree that it is important, that Parliament should have some role. In fact the historical reason for Parliament in the first place was to deal with the control of money. We seem to have lost that completely.

I think all Canadians would certainly agree with the direction of a motion that causes Parliament to have more input and certainly more knowledge into exactly how the government is spending its money.

The motion, as other members have said on this side of the House, is fundamental. We would certainly hope and be pleased if government members would support it. I am sure some of its members would agree with it. I would hope that the government sees fit to let the motion stand because it is an important, integral part of the bill.

The motion will allow the bill to be more fully developed, will allow fuller input and a more rational, logical review, understanding, and knowledge of this particular piece of legislation and the agreements with the provinces that flow from it.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, I support the motion of my hon. friend, the member for Algoma. The motion before us poses something that is really fundamental to this institution. I think we all recognize that much has to be done and certainly much can be done to improve the public perception and the relevance of the Parliament of Canada and, more specifically, the House of Commons itself.

This motion, which is a very thoughtful motion, simply reads:

> The Minister shall cause to be laid before Parliament every agreement made pursuant to section 4 within thirty days of it being made, or, if Parliament is not sitting, not later than the thirtieth day thereafter that the either the House of Parliament is sitting.

It continues with what I think is a most thoughtful initiative:

> An agreement laid before Parliament pursuant to subsection (1) shall be automatically referred to the Standing Committee of the House of Commons on Agriculture.

We recognize that the bill itself requires almost exclusive decision making when it comes to these agreements in support of agriculture being made by the executive and, in a sense, being made by the minister and not before Parliament.

This motion suggests that members of Parliament, at least after the fact, bring in these agreements when they are in fact signed and lay them before the House. Ideally I suppose we would like it to be before the fact, but it sort of makes a small gain in terms of requiring the minister and the government to be accountable to the people of Canada for their actions. That automatically enables all members of Parliament representing all people of Canada to have access to the details of the agreement.

Not only does it do that, but in a sense it provides an element of accountability. The government is saying that it is quite prepared to recognize that these agreements

are legitimate, that they have been thoughtfully negotiated and prepared by the various provincial governments and that it has confidence that they will withstand this scrutiny of members of Parliament. That in itself would justify this initiative.

• (1330)

The second part of the motion would then automatically have the agreement laid before the House transferred for examination, analysis, and consideration by the Standing Committee on Agriculture. This makes even more sense because we have members of Parliament who are involved personally in the pursuit of agriculture, who are certainly knowledgeable of the agricultural sector, and more often than not who tend to represent agricultural areas. I look across the way at my hon. friend from Swift Current who for years has played an active role in agricultural issues. I look to my hon. friend from Humboldt. We could go around the House. These are people we all appreciate and recognize to be not only interested but on the whole very knowledgeable about the agricultural sector and the various initiatives that the government brings forward. They bring that special expertise.

What this motion says is that these special agreements will simply be tabled in the House and referred on to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture. There they can be examined.

In the event there was a problem that perhaps the negotiators had not considered or perhaps the provincial negotiators had overlooked in terms of an implication for the country as a whole or for the national government, we would expect members of the Standing Committee on Agriculture to identify those problems. While it may be after the fact, it would be at least a chance to rectify a serious error or problem which might be implicit or inherent in the agreement being considered.

I speak not only in support of but quite frankly enthusiastically in favour of this motion. I would simply like to thank the member for initiating this. I look forward to, again a small step, the House of Commons being relevant in terms of examining important negotiated settlements among provincial and federal governments.

This is agriculture. My hon. friend who represents Prince George—Bulkley Valley has made equal observations in other resource sectors, primarily in his particular areas of interest: forestry and fisheries. Whenever possible we have to ask the government, even after the fact, to be accountable, be up-front, not be afraid to reveal all elements of an agreement, and be able to explain in the standing committee the reasons for particular provisions and so on.

Therefore, with enthusiasm, I support Motion No. 6.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Motion No. 6 agreed to.

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma) moved:

Motion No. 7

That Bill C-98 be amended in Clause 7 by adding immediately after line 27 at page 7 the following:

"(1.1) A producer participating in a net income stabilization account program must be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident."

He said: Mr. Speaker, Motion No. 7 makes a provision in the NISA agreements that require that the producer participating in a Net Income Stabilization Account program must be a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident of Canada.

This is a program that would be judged by some people outside agriculture to be a very generous program. It is designed, I believe, to be a rainy day fund for producers who have a reasonable level of income, are able to put money into the Net Income Stabilization Account, and to receive support from the government not only in matching that contribution but in allowing them to put in a certain amount of funds over and above it to the extent of 20 per cent.

If we take the example of a farmer who has $500,000 worth of eligible production and there were two parties to that production, a husband and wife, then they would be eligible under the NISA program as I understand it. We do not actually have the agreements in front of us, but we have seen some of the publicity and the planning for it. Each one of those would be able to put into that account some $5,000, which would be matched by the government. Then the government would pay prime of

commercial rates on the portion that the government puts in and would provide prime or a commercial rate of interest plus 3 per cent on the $5,000 that each spouse put into NISA. This is assuming that they have eligible production costs of $500,000.

On top of that, producers can put in an additional 20 per cent. That means if they had the money—and not many farmers today would have it—they would be eligible. As the hon. member from south western Ontario said, they could borrow the money. They could put in an additional $100,000 and invest it in NISA at prime.

Let us assume that prime right now is 12 per cent. They would be paid 15 per cent by the government. On a $100,000 NISA, over and above the regular 2 per cent that they can contribute, they would be able to contribute another 20 per cent. If commercial or prime rates were 12 per cent or 15 per cent, they would be earning $15,000.

This is designed to provide stability over the long haul combined with the Gross Revenue Insurance Program. For many of the horticultural crops it will probably be extremely difficult or perhaps impossible to develop a plan that will qualify for GRIP. NISA has that advantage.

The other advantage is that even though the government says in its preamble to the objectives of the legislation that it is going to be acceptable in international fora, I do not know of anybody who really believes that the revenue guarantee part of GRIP will not be subject to attack by the Americans.

We have already seen this morning a report from one group, Wharton Economics Forecasting Associates. It is projecting a 10 per cent increase in cropping. Of course it is always a sore point with the Americans that we have support programs but we do not reduce our acreage.

The revenue guarantee side of GRIP, I believe in the long haul, will be subject to attack by the Americans. They attack everything that we do, whether countervail or some other activity, especially if it threatens their producers. That is one of the advantages of NISA. It probably would not be subject to that because it is neutral with regard to production and so on.

Mr. Speaker, I just walked you through a program that can be very beneficial in stabilizing producers' incomes. Some would say very stable. However, the question is: Do we want to extend that benefit to non-citizens and non-residents of Canada?

If we have a couple farming in North Dakota and farming in Saskatchewan, are they to be given this program which can be very beneficial to Canadian farmers and paid for from the Consolidated Revenue Fund? Do we want to extend that to non-residents and non-citizens of the country?

• (1340)

It seems to me that many Canadians would say this is a program that is very beneficial, it provides prime plus 3 per cent, it provides a fund where a farmer can put 20 per cent, plus 5 per cent if the funds are available, that this kind of program should not be extended beyond permanent residents or citizens of Canada.

I hope that the government sees the wisdom of trying to keep this support and assistance available primarily to permanent residents and/or citizens of Canada, as my motion proposes.

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie): I rise to support the motion proposed by the member for Algoma. It applies to the NISA or Net Income Stabilization Account, and it would add a new subclause to clause 7. With the new numbering system that would become 7.(2).

This particular proposal would require that a producer participating in the Net Income Stabilization Account program must be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident.

It seems to me that this makes eminent sense, not only for the reasons spelled out by my hon. friend who just completed speaking, but it would reduce the liability of the taxpayers of Canada for making viable the incomes of farmers who may not even live in Canada but in fact operate south of the border, or perhaps other combinations. We are aware of some of these kinds of situations.

The other thing it does is assure Canadian taxpayers, who are going to be financing this particular program quite substantially, that their dollars are being recycled to Canadian citizens or permanent residents of this country.

The program at issue here sets up two accounts, an A account and a B account. At the end of each tax year a producer has the option of contributing up to 2 per cent of his net revenue for that year into an A account. The government will match those funds in the B account. The producer has an additional option, if he so chooses, to put an additional 20 per cent of his net revenue for that year into his A account; however, the Government of Canada will not match that contribution in the B account.

For purposes of administration, these two accounts are then effectively combined and any interest accruing to that account becomes the property of the participating farmer. That interest is guaranteed by the agreements to be prime plus 3 per cent. So it is a fairly enticing rate of interest that this combined account will bear, and that interest will be paid by the Government of Canada out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund.

In this program, from what we understand of the agreements that are being reached, it would be possible, according to the witnesses we had from the department, for a married couple to set up two NISA accounts for their farm—one for each, husband and wife.

In a multiple ownership operation, either incorporated or organized under a co-op charter or under a communal charter, as some of the Hutterite colonies and church organizations are, there could be up to five participants for GRIP and other stabilization purposes. As I recall, this applied as well to the NISA account. I do not recall if five couples were involved whether they could divide the NISA account twice at the family level for each couple, but I believe that would be possible.

The amount of funds Canada is guaranteeing under this particular part of the program, which is only a third or a quarter of the total bill as the rest of the bill deals with a GRIP account which is the Gross Revenue Insurance Program, whereby farmers purchase insurance subsidized by both provincial and federal taxpayers, to guarantee a 15-year moving average price for products or, we are led to believe, a price guarantee that is based on some formula for cost of production, using a Quebec or British Columbia model. There has been no apparent agreement under that particular part of the proposal, so we have nothing we can talk about under that particular option.

The third option is for those products covered under tripartite, such as beef, pork and, I believe, mutton. A few field crops will eventually be transferred under GRIP, but at the moment that particular group of producers is getting two-thirds of their premiums paid by federal and provincial governments combined.

There is a considerable amount of liability on provincial and federal taxpayers and I think it only makes sense, and the people of Canada would consider that it made sense, to only give that kind of assistance to people who are permanent residents of the country and/or Canadian citizens.

I commend this to the House and hope that we will get passage of this particular motion.

Mr. John Harvard (Winnipeg St. James): Mr. Speaker, previous speakers have already explained in detail how the NISA account works, so I am not going to go into that.

As I understand this motion, it was introduced out of respect to taxpayers, both at the provincial level and at the federal level.

Remember, when it comes to NISA and to GRIP, there are three separate partners. There is the federal taxpayer, the provincial taxpayer and the producer. When it comes to NISA, I think it would be fair to say that it is a fairly generous plan and those producers who can use it will get a reasonable return. But we do have to be responsible. We have to show respect for the other players in this arrangement, the provincial taxpayers and the federal taxpayers. I think they would be saying something like this: "Yes, we want to help farmers. We want to go to the limit in helping farmers, but there is a limit and we would draw the line"—and I am now alluding to these taxpayers—"at Canadian citizens or residents. In other words, if you are not a resident of this country, sorry, but this NISA account will not be available".

As the previous speaker said, this makes a lot of sense and again, I think it shows prudence on this side of the House. That is all I have to say.

• (1350)

Mr. Rod Laporte (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise this afternoon to speak to

this motion. This is a good motion put forward by my colleague from Algoma, which calls upon this House to place some limitations on the possible spending that may occur under this bill.

A number of motions have been put forward dealing with that very issue. It is an issue which is of concern to Canadians, the idea of taxation, the idea of a deficit and the idea of the national debt. We must remind Canadians and we must remind our colleagues on the other side of the House that we are dealing with a very large program which deals with hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars.

The very last thing we would want to do, I would suggest, is to allow a non-Canadian citizen or someone who is not a resident of Canada to somehow take advantage of this program. That would not be useful or serve the purpose of any Canadian anywhere in this country. This motion is an attempt to limit this.

The motion is particularly concerned with the NISA account. As we know, the NISA account is designed as an individual account for the individual producer, so that in years when his or her income drops below a given level, the producer will be able to access the account.

The idea behind this account is that the government will provide matching grants up to a given level. That is encouraging for a producer in itself, but an even more encouraging factor is that producers will receive interest 3 per cent above the going rate. It will give the producer an extra incentive to put money into this account. It will end up being a savings account for the producer and an account that the producer can access at any time.

As the government puts money into the individual producer's account, that is the producer's own money, in essence. He or she is restricted in their access to that fund by a number of factors. As I said, the annual income of the farmer must be below a given level before they can access the account. They also have access if they quit farming or if they retire. They have access to that account which can help with respect to retirement.

It would be most unfortunate if non-residents or non-Canadian citizens were able to acquire that type of fund for their own purposes. In fact, there are ways potentially that this could be taken advantage of in a unfortunate fashion. Under this account, if a farm is incorporated, for example, and the company has shares owned by various individuals, that company will have a NISA account. It is very easy for a company to simply dissolve itself. Of course, if the company dissolved itself, the money in that NISA account would then be divided among the shareholders of the particular company.

If that should happen, then that account is dispersed among the shareholders. Certainly if there are shareholders who are non-Canadians, they will be able to take advantage of that program.

There is also another possibility. Most people are honest people, but there are those who are not.

There are ways to take advantage of it. If there is a way for non-Canadians to take advantage of it that would be especially tragic. An individual producer cannot access that fund unless their income drops below a certain level or, they simply get out of farming. That is the only way they can access that account.

A corporation has a much bigger advantage, which is, as I said, that it can dissolve itself. Therefore, a farming corporation can acquire money into the NISA account, simply dissolve, take the money out, pay it to the shareholders and then turn around and form another company. There is a potential for some unfortunate advantages to take place in this. It is something that the government, I hope, is going to do something about. Certainly if there are non-residents who are involved in that company, this motion would certainly address that concern.

I think this is part of the larger concern of the need to have reasonable taxation and reasonable spending by the government. What we want is a government that is going to deal with the people's money with some care. Certainly the government is always making much of the fact that it is very fiscally responsible and a good financial manager. Well, this is a motion that the government would want to accept and adopt because it formally puts in place legislation that is going to block that particular loophole.

In various provinces throughout this country there have been concerns with foreign residents and non-Canadians involved in agriculture. It is an important principle that we try to keep agriculture for Canadians. In supporting and promoting rural communities and farm families, which the government agrees is important, it is

certainly important it excludes support and promotion of foreign residents or non-residents and non-Canadians.

I would like to say that I support this motion. I do hope that the government can also support it. I think it is commendable that the member for Algoma has brought it forward. It is a good motion and I would certainly urge the government to support it because if we are going to maintain some credibility in this country it is motions like this that must be passed. It is important that we keep that in mind, after all we are the servants of the Canadian public and if we are going to do service to the Canadian public we have to certainly keep account of proper spending and proper policies.

I think my time goes to two o'clock, Mr. Speaker. I am wondering how much time I have before two o'clock. I see Mr. Speaker holding his hand up. I do have more comments to make, but—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): If you would like me to put the motion you have about 30 seconds.

Mr. Laporte: I would just like to conclude by saying that this is an important motion and should not be taken lightly. I have noticed that there have been no government speakers on this motion. I would like to see someone speak on it and indicate the importance of it and the fact that it is a valuable addition to this piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: No.

Some hon. members: Yes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt will have the floor after three o'clock.

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 31

• (1400)

[*English*]

DORVAL INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Hon. Bob Layton (Lachine—Lac-Saint-Louis): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House today to recognize the special efforts of Transport Canada and the Minister of State, my colleague from Anjou—Rivière-Des-Prairies.

On Monday, March 18, 1991, the minister announced a $10 million environmental protection project at Dorval's international airport. The airport has experienced some problems relating to the contamination of run-off water containing glycol. This substance, which is used to de-ice the aircraft before take-off, is necessary for aviation safety.

Unfortunately, it can have an impact on the environment, in this instance involving the Bouchard Creek, which drains into Lac St-Louis. The solution announced by the minister calls for the construction of a catchment basin for the surface water and a pumping station for drainage infrastructure. This project is concrete proof of our government's commitment to improving Canada's environment in Dorval and on the shoreline of Lac St-Louis in Lachine. Bravo, Department of Transport.

* * *

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, today we join with the Canadian Ethnocultural Council to mark United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which commemorates the 1960 Sharpville massacre in South Africa, when peaceful demonstrators against apartheid were wounded and killed.

To promote greater racial harmony, the Canadian Association of Broadcasters has launched a massive national campaign under the slogan "On Air for Racial Harmony." The many faces and voices that are our reality must be seen and heard on the airwaves and behind the scenes if the richness of Canada's true multicultural and multiracial population is to be reflected.

The campaign revolved around a series of dramatic radio and TV spots in both official languages, that asks the question: Racism, if you do not stop it, who will? The British Columbia Association of Broadcasters created this vital project, which has won the Media Human Rights Award from B'Nai Brith Canada and today the government's highest honour for initiatives of excellence to promote race relations.

Canada's diversity is its strength and by respecting and appreciating the expression of many cultures, our vision

for a strong, united Canada, capable of leading the world toward a more human global village, can and shall be achieved.

* * *

RURAL REVITALIZATION DAY

Mr. Rod Laporte (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, today, on the third anniversary of Rural Revitalization Day, a day proclaimed by Rural Dignity of Canada, I rise to reaffirm the commitment of my caucus to the revitalization of our rural communities.

Rural Canadians from across this country, whether in Saskatchewan or Nova Scotia, are losing their communities, their services, their livelihood and their way of life. Rural communities have lost transportation services, education facilities, health care services, post offices and economic opportunities. Successive Liberal and Conservative governments have turned their backs on rural communities and have placed fishing, farming, forestry and single industry towns at great risk.

The gutting of Via Rail, post office closures, cuts to the CBC and removal of support to community newspapers have had a negative impact upon rural communities.

I call upon this government to recognize the negative impact its policies are having on rural Canada, and to reverse those policies before they completely destroy our rural communities. I further call upon this government to treat rural Canadians with the respect and dignity they deserve.

* * *

NATIONAL UNITY

Hon. Alan Redway (Don Valley East): Mr. Speaker, we live in a country that is the envy of most of the world, but today, in spite of that, we are risking it all by telling each other that it has to be our way or the doorway.

Who speaks for Canada in this debate? Mr. Speaker, that is your job, that is my job, that is the job of every Canadian who truly loves this country. I believe that real unity is not going to be found in reason, or in logic, or in a new constitutional arrangement or even, for that matter, in a break-through in understanding. Rather, it is going to be found in the hearts of Canadians themselves, especially in a return to our traditional Canadian attitude, an attitude that some describe as disinterested tolerance and benevolent ignorance, but otherwise known as live and let live.

* * *

CANADIAN COAST GUARD

Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in this House to urge a full public and comprehensive investigation into Monday's tragic collision of a Canadian Coast Guard ice-breaker, the *Griffon* and a local fishing trawler, *The Captain K* near Port Dover in my riding.

Further, I urge that if a criminal investigation is required, it be undertaken by a group outside the purview of the Canadian Coast Guard. People in my riding feel that there is a perceived conflict of interest in this case by having the Canadian Coast Guard undertake a criminal investigation into an accident to which they were a party.

I urge today that the Minister of Transport take this under investigation, come back to this House at his earliest convenience and explain what procedures he is going to take in this investigation.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, March 21 is no longer a day like any other. Here and in other countries, it has become the International Day for the Elimination of Discrimination, to commemorate the tragic incident in which so many people were killed 31 years ago.

Just because this incident is now history and took place thousands of kilometres away does not mean we should not feel concerned, every one of us.

Although Canada enjoys a reputation for openness and tolerance, we are not immune to racism, far from it.

We must look at the facts. There are Canadians who do not enjoy the same opportunities as everyone else for the simple reason that their skin is not white. This is nothing new.

We cannot undo mistakes made in the past, but we can do something about the future. It is up to each and everyone of us to do what is necessary to banish racism from our society. We must learn to know and understand each other, and we must deal with this problem together.

* * *

[*English*]

NATIONAL SUMMIT CONFERENCE ON TRANSLATION

Mr. Eugène Bellemare (Carleton—Gloucester): Mr. Speaker, a National Summit Conference on Translation in Canada which was to have been held in Ottawa in May has been abruptly scrapped by the Secretary of State.

Budgetary restraint has been given as the excuse. However, tens of thousands of tax dollars have been wasted in cancellation costs. A rescheduled date for the conference remains in limbo.

This conference was to have brought together the leading figures in the field of translation in order to help the profession prepare to address the problems of fiscal restraint and to plan for a future where spending cuts, lack of graduates and increased demand are the reality.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, I therefore join the Canadian Union of Professional and Technical Employees in asking the minister to reconsider his decision and defend official bilingualism. I ask him to allow the summit to proceed as scheduled.

* * *

[*English*]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. John Reimer (Kitchener): Mr. Speaker, it has been said that in politics, perception is reality. That being said, the words from the CBC *Journal* of March 19 are inexcusable.

The CBC created the impression that the United States is pressuring Saddam Hussein into humiliating ceasefire conditions.

It is time to clear the air.

First, it was the United Nations Security Council that drew up the conditions of the ceasefire, and not the United States. It was the United Nations resolution 686 of March 2 that called on Iraq to comply with the terms of the ceasefire.

Second, surely the terms are not humiliating nor are they inappropriate considering the actions of Hussein. It was Saddam Hussein's aggression that caused the loss of innocent life and destruction of property in Kuwait and Israel. It was Saddam Hussein who senselessly set aflame over 500 oil wells and poured millions of barrels of crude into the gulf.

Therefore, the CBC should be ashamed of its careless journalism and misleading statements.

* * *

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Mrs. Edna Anderson (Simcoe Centre): Mr. Speaker, the House has already been informed that today, March 21, is a special day. It is the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and an occasion to recognize positive accomplishments in the campaign against racism.

Last year, the minister's awards for excellence in race relations were established to pay tribute to individuals, organizations and corporations which have demonstrated innovative and exceptional achievements in combating racism. On behalf of the Government of Canada and indeed the people of Canada, I want to say how proud I am to recognize this year's award recipients: The British Columbia Association of Broadcasters; The Canadore College of Applied Arts and Technology; The Halton Regional Police Service; Dr. Frances Henry; The Vancouver Youth Theatre; Mrs. Dorothy Abike Wills; Dr. Fred Wien; and La Commission Scolaire Sainte-Croix.

• (1410)

I want to express my thanks to these individuals and organizations and to the many hundreds of others whose achievements all too often go without recognition. Their efforts represent a profound commitment to the values of our society. Together we can stop racism.

* * *

CORPORATE TAXATION

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, I have been in this House for along time and I never thought I would live to see this: Canadian children giving their piggy bank savings to the finance minister to reduce the deficit while Canada's biggest and richest corporations looked on. Bay Street speculators, corporate free

loaders and their sponsors in Ottawa have transformed Canada into a corporate welfare state by not paying their fair share of taxes.

Yesterday on the same platform as the children was Tom D'Aquino, chairman of the organization representing Canada's largest and richest corporations. His membership includes those who are paid up to $60 million in government commissions to sell government bonds. Also on the platform was the president of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, and this is what he said yesterday: "Ever thought why a new born baby cries? They're cold, they're wet, they're hungry", and I might add they cry because they are born in Brian Mulroney's Canada.

* * *

KELOWNA, BRITISH COLUMBIA

Mr. Al Horning (Okanagan Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank *Chatelaine* magazine which in this month's issue has proclaimed what constituents in Okanagan Centre have known for many years. It has declared Kelowna, British Columbia, as the best city in Canada to live in. It cited the balmy weather, great recreational activities and community festivals as the main attractions and there is certainly much more.

It is also interesting to note that the top six most desired cities to live in are all represented by government members.

I would like to take this opportunity to invite all Canadians, and especially all hon. members, to come and visit us in Kelowna and find out why *Chatelaine* has declared us number one.

* * *

POLAND

Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, Poland is grateful to the United States and the Paris Club of Nations to forgive large portions of her international debt.

Yesterday, Lech Walesa was told by the U.S. President that 70 per cent of the Polish debt owed to the United States would be forgiven. Canada, on the other hand, stands firm on its own Polish debt plan. The federal government will not write off any of the Polish debt owed to Canada outright, but will window dress by adjusting interest rates.

Since the Nazi occupation of Poland, followed by the oppressive occupation of the country by the communist regime, Polish citizens and their economy continue to suffer. As other defeated nations received aid after the Second World War through reconstruction funding under the Marshall Plan, Poland was left out in the cold.

Surely, Poland, our faithful ally and the first country to overthrow the communist regime in eastern Europe, is owed a debt for its long and hard struggle for democracy.

I say Canada should be doing a better job in helping Poland adjust to its new-found freedom. Poland does not want a hand-out. Poland needs a helping hand.

* * *

EDUCATION

Mr. J.W. Bud Bird (Fredericton—York—Sunbury): Mr. Speaker, very few Canadians would disagree that education is the foundation for a civilized and prosperous society. In our search for national strategies to address social and economic goals, it seems compelling that we should also have a national strategy on education to help us reach those goals.

There can be no doubt that education is a provincial responsibility. Yet there is a national strategic interest. Already the federal government makes large contributions to Canada's educational system in a number of ways. More recently, in fact, the federal government has received increasing criticism that its contributions are insufficient.

In the context of these considerations, I intend to encourage our federal government to seriously examine the prospect of consolidating its present educational activities and budgets into a new department, one that will also develop and nurture a national strategy for education.

Existing commitments in areas such as science, technology, manpower training and minority languages would hopefully be enhanced in such a specialized milieu and more important, there would be a new national dimension to Canada's quest for education.

Oral Questions

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, two years ago 44,000 tonnes of crude oil spewed into the environment from the *Exxon Valdez*, creating North America's worst oil spill.

There was never any accounting of the death and devastation this caused to animal and plant life. No amount of money will ever bring them back.

Today in Vancouver, a citizens' group, "Call for Inquiry" is demanding the Prime Minister implement the recommendations of the government's own Public Review Panel on Tanker Safety.

The report calls for the double-hulling of oil tankers, upgrading Coast Guard operations, including tanker inspection and policing waters to enforce compliance.

The price tag for implementing all 107 recommendations in the report, after a levy on marine oil product transport is $600 million, less than half of what Exxon just said it would pay to avoid a criminal trial for just one spill.

The government said no to studying our coastal environment to understand the impact of spills, but is paying an American company to do exactly that off the Persian Gulf.

I call on the government to protect our future and bring forward a plan to implement the recommendations of the report.

* * *

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. Bob Wood (Nipissing): Mr. Speaker, last year the Prime Minister said that the CBC would reach "new heights of accomplishments" under the guidance of Gerard Veilleux and Patrick Watson. Here is a comprehensive list of those so-called accomplishments.

Accomplishment No. 1—The elimination of the national unity clause from CBC's mandate during Canada's worst constitutional crisis.

Accomplishment No. 2—The closing of two television stations in Matane, Quebec, and in Goose Bay, Newfoundland.

Accomplishment No. 3—The elimination of eight local television broadcasts which include Sept Iles, Rimouski, Toronto, Windsor, Calgary, Saskatoon, Sydney and Corner Brook, Newfoundland.

Accomplishment No. 4—Putting 1,100 employees of CBC out of work.

Accomplishment No. 5—Cutting the CBC budget by $108 million with the possibility of a further $50 million cut.

Accomplishment No. 6—The elimination of French local newscasts and programming for francophones in southern and northern Ontario.

It is indeed quite a list of accomplishments and the only that is left to complete is the resignation of Veilleux and Watson and the Prime Minister. But even if that was to happen, I am afraid there would be no media to broadcast it.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*Translation*]

THE CONSTITUTION

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister.

Whatever the details of the Bélanger-Campeau Commission's final report may be, the constitutional agenda will be a real challenge for Canada. The Allaire report has already been released, and the formula involving first ministers meeting behind closed doors has been discredited. From day to day, the Prime Minister seems to be improvising on issues as basic as a national referendum. Furthermore, the Special Joint Committee, the Beaudoin-Edwards Committee, does not have the right to examine anything beyond the amending formula. Throughout the country, people are beginning to despair of our ability to stay together.

When will the Prime Minister give Parliament a chance to examine thoroughly all our constitutional alternatives?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the government has appointed the Spicer Commission, and we also appointed Beaudoin-Edwards, the joint committee which is doing important work on a vital issue, namely the amending formula. It was also

agreed that we would wait for the Allaire report and the Bélanger–Campeau Commission's report which will be released very shortly.

Meanwhile, the Liberal caucus is doing its homework. The Leader of the NDP has made some important speeches, I have made several myself, and we are getting ready for a broad debate on this question. We would greatly appreciate any specific ideas the hon. member might have.

[*English*]

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, this is not an issue for political partisanship. This is an issue for Parliament.

• (1420)

Whatever their political stripe, Canadians could not help but to cry out last night and this morning when they heard the tones of desperation emanating from the Spicer commission. Canadians are losing hope in our ability to survive as a country. What they desperately want now is democratic elected national leadership. Canadians do not want a closed door process to replace the work of Parliament.

I ask the Prime Minister once again, cognizant of the limited mandate of Beaudoin–Edwards, which is only allowed to look at the amending formula, will he give the Parliament of Canada the right, the chance, and the responsibility to examine all constitutional avenues in a manner similar to that which has been adopted by many provincial legislatures?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, obviously there is concern and dismay in Canada as there often is in all industrialized democracies. No government ever gets it perfect. There are hills and valleys in the evolution of the life of a nation, and there are moments of great challenge and moments of great opportunity.

For not the first time Canada is facing an important constitutional crisis, which is why we began the process by trying to improve on the situation that governments had used in the past, namely quite intimate consultations with provincial premiers. To open up the process with the Spicer commission, that was point number one.

Point number two was to deal with a fundamental flaw in the Constitution that we inherited, namely the amending process, which is why that important part of the work had to be done by Beaudoin–Edwards.

We indicated that we would be waiting for Belanger–Campeau and for the Allaire report. That period of time has not precluded the leader of the NDP or myself or a number of others from making what we believe are perhaps constructive contributions to the national debate.

I have already indicated, in response to the member on previous occasions, that when this is in we would look forward to an opportunity of providing Parliament with a greater and perhaps more structured opportunity to participate directly in this kind of a debate, which is a nation building exercise of the highest importance.

There were nine opposition days available to the opposition leading up to this where members of the Official Opposition could give us the benefit of their views on this, using some of these opposition days. I think that would be a major contribution to the process regarding the unity of Canada.

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, with respect, we are not talking about the hills and valleys of the government; we are talking about the survival of the country. I think this is one area where all political parties can set aside their political labels and work for the survival of Canada.

[*Translation*]

The Prime Minister must realize that we do not have much time. The constitutional time bomb is already ticking. I would like to know when he intends to announce a specific policy here in Parliament that will give all elected representatives in the Parliament of Canada a chance to set a constitutional agenda for saving Canada. When will he table his plan for the Parliament of this country?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I have already asked the hon. member to provide her own ideas and suggestions, and I already said that following the Bélanger–Campeau Commission's report, the Allaire report and other commissions' reports, we would find a parliamentary formula that would—

Some hon. members: Answer the question!

Mr. Mulroney: The Liberals want an answer. I am trying to answer, Mr. Speaker, but they keep interrupting me. I am trying to answer an important question that was put by the Leader of the Opposition.

The hon. member should not let herself be traumatized by deadlines and agendas set by others. We have a country. That country is Canada. We are all Canadians, whether we are francophones or anglophones, and no legislature or national assembly, and certainly no political party of any stripe, is going to say that after such and such a date, Canada is finished. That is not true. Canada will survive because we are going to work together to make it survive.

* * *

[*English*]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Etobicoke North): My question is for the Minister of Finance.

Yesterday the minister of trade said that the inflated level of the Canadian dollar was largely the result of foreign investment in Canada. However, the Minister of Finance knows that four-fifths of the foreign capital flowing into Canada is simply seeking higher interest rates. Only one-fifth is direct investment.

Will the minister now recognize that the inflated level of the Canadian dollar, which is so damaging to Canadian exports, is a result of the government's own monetary policies, and that those policies, contrary to yesterday's claim by the minister of trade, have actually undermined real investment in Canada?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I am not going to deny that the monetary policy of the country has an effect on the Canadian dollar, the level of the Canadian dollar.

However, I would point out to the member that in the last eight months there have been a number of changes in monetary policy which have resulted in a 4 per cent drop in interest rates, as well as a narrowing in the interest rate spread between the United States and Canada from a peak of 5.5 per cent to the current level of about 3.75 per cent on the 90-day commercial paper rate.

There have been significant changes in monetary conditions. These have been translated by the market into a drop in interest rates.

My hon. friend says that he would like to see a lower level of the Canadian dollar, but the market is operating in a way that is contrary to his wishes. Unfortunately his wishes cannot always be reflected in what the market does.

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Etobicoke North): I have to assume, Mr. Speaker, from the minister's answer that the market is not responding in the way that he would wish either.

It is really the government's high interest rate policy that has resulted in the situation Canada faces today. That is the real reason for the gap between U.S. and Canada interest rates which has led to the situation where a growing portion of our national debt is now held by foreigners. Canada, as a result, loses a degree of freedom in its interest rate policy.

How does the minister propose to close the interest rate gap with the United States and to achieve that export led growth that he spoke of in the budget when an increasing amount of our debt is held by foreigners?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take issue with the conclusion that my hon. friend just drew about what I said in my first response.

The point I was making is that there are many other factors affecting the level of the Canadian dollar than simply the interest rate spread between the United States and Canada or a certain level of in-flow of capital. Many other factors are taken into account here, and that is what sets the level of the Canadian dollar.

My hon. friend says that we have an increasing amount of foreign debt or debt to foreigners. The level of the federal government debt to foreigners is in around the 17 per cent to 18 per cent level. In fact, as the exchange reserves have built up in recent months, we have been paying down the level of foreign debt, debt to non-residents that is denominated in currencies other than the Canadian dollar.

* * *

[*Translation*]

THE CONSTITUTION

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister.

Because of a lack of leadership on the part of the Prime Minister and this government, the Bélanger–Campeau Commission, the Parti Quebecois and the Quebec Liberals are setting the whole country's constitutional agenda with their deadline. This round of constitutional talks must succeed.

Could the Prime Minister tell the House today what he will do to reach a consensus that would include Quebec, the West, the Maritimes and all other regions of this country, before this deadline?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I already told my hon. friend that she should not make any hasty assumptions. On my way here, I was told that the "consensus" in the Quebec National Assembly remained fragile and uncertain.

So I don't know whether what we read in the newspapers yesterday and today will turn out to be a correct estimate. I have no idea. This is one commission of inquiry among several that are going to report. It is an important commission, I agree, but there are commissions sitting in other provinces, for the same purpose.

So, how are we going to maintain the unity of this country? Well, we intend to involve parliamentarians and other Canadians in a vast dialogue and debate, while of course emphasizing the benefits that all francophone and anglophone Canadians have enjoyed by being part of Canada this wonderful country, as Mr. Bourassa said for 123 years. Canadians want to stay together. They also want changes, some of them sweeping, some less so. However, if you give Quebecers a real choice, a choice between independence and Canada, they will choose Canada, ten times out of ten!

• (1430)

[*English*]

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question.

I agree with the Prime Minister that what we want to do is to see the results of the many commissions that are going on across Canada. At the same time, it is the responsibility of the Prime Minister and of this government to create a Canada that people want to belong to, that people want to participate in. Clearly there has been a feeling of exclusion for many Canadians in various regions of this country.

We know what the position of the Government of Quebec is. It has made it very clear. I ask the Prime Minister today to give us the position of the Government of Canada. Canadians have a right to know what the Prime Minister's thinking is on this issue and where the Prime Minister stands for bringing about national unity, given that the Government of Quebec seems to be supporting a date of 1992 for a referendum in Quebec.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, if I had a position that would satisfy all Canadians and guarantee the unity of the country, I would give it to my hon. friend and that hopefully would end the debate that has been going on for 123 years.

A hundred years ago, Sir Wilfrid Laurier stood in this House and predicted at that time that he feared that Canada would not last another month because of regional problems, linguistic tensions, and challenges to minorities of various kinds. Sir Wilfrid anticipated the early demise of Canada. It did not happen because of the will of Canadians to live together.

There are all kinds of Canadians—a couple in this House—predicting the end of Canada, and they are going to be as wrong as they were a hundred years ago.

There but for the grace of an indexed pension we would have a unanimous House.

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker.

I think many of us in this House and all of us in this party are in agreement with the Prime Minister that we want to see this country stay together, that we want to make this country a home for everyone—anglophones, francophones, aboriginal people. Surely Canadian unity is more than just the Constitution. It is the kind of equality that people feel in the economy, in the social agenda, in the environmental agenda.

Yesterday the Prime Minister was talking about a possible referendum, but surely a vote on the future of this country is more than just a vote on the Constitution.

Can the Prime Minister commit today that Canadians will have a chance to vote in a national election before the Quebec deadline, because that is determining the future of the country?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP is urging me for an election. Could it possibly be because she is declining swiftly in the polls and would like me to get it over with before the decline is total?

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Mulroney: Now I have to wait for a while before they change.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Mulroney: Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend has made some very eloquent speeches in asking for a strong central government. Surely she would not want a strong central government and yet ask me to concede to the provincial legislature of Quebec the right of setting our next election date.

* * *

BANKRUPTCIES

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. Yesterday the government released devastating figures concerning business and personal bankruptcies for the month of February. As a direct result of this government's economic mismanagement, bankruptcies are up a record 68 per cent: in Ontario, Canada's economic heartland, 2,383 bankruptcies; in Quebec, a province already devastated by this recession, 2,061 bankruptcies.

Since the Minister of Finance continues to accept no sense of responsibility for these economic casualties, will the Prime Minister recognize the human tragedy behind these figures? What measures will he introduce to stop this tidal wave of bankruptcies, and stop it now?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, that is precisely what the recent budget is designed to do. We have put in place a number of policies designed to get interest rates down, and down on an ongoing basis, whether it is the legislated spending caps, the wage policies that we are following, the policies to get the deficit down and to take pressure off interest rates, or the inflation targets which will lower the rate of inflation and, as the rate of inflation comes down, so will the rate of interest.

These are policies that all work in a very integrated fashion to address the precise problem my friend is raising in the House today, and that is to get interest rates down because that is the best way we can help people avoid a bankruptcy.

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Mr. Speaker, those comments are cold comfort to the seven individuals or companies that will go bankrupt today during the hour in which we have Question Period.

My supplementary question is for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. In the 392 days since this minister was appointed over 64,000 companies and individuals have gone bankrupt. That is more than 165 bankruptcies per day. All of this is happening under an antiquated Bankruptcy Act that offers little or no protection for workers' wages, pensions, and benefits.

When will the minister stop paying lip service to this very, very, very serious problem and introduce in this House the much awaited, much heralded new bankruptcy legislation?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, I will ascribe this error to the hon. member's youth, but in fact his party tried three times to introduce a new Bankruptcy Act, and it failed every time. I may add that the last few months I was busy consulting with all—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, I spent enough time during the past few months, trying to obtain the broadest possible consensus—

Mr. Plamondon: How much did it cost?

Mr. Blais: —in the business community and in labour circles. We met just about everyone in this country to ensure that the amendments we introduced would be in direct response to the needs of Canadians as they relate to the Bankruptcy Act. I hope that when I table a bill in the weeks to come, you will be the first to make a commitment, on behalf of your government, to support it, on behalf of—

[*English*]

TRUCKING INDUSTRY

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. It too concerns record bankruptcies, this time in the trucking industry.

The minister is well aware that the industry which employs over 600,000 Canadians is fighting for its very survival. Over 1,400 Canadian trucking companies have gone into bankruptcy since 1988, the year this government introduced deregulation of the trucking industry.

• (1440)

Will the minister now protect the remaining trucking companies and trucking jobs in Canada by completely rejecting American cabotage, thus allowing American trucks to operate freely and fully in Canada, something which would drive our Canadian trucks right off the road for good?

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the issue of cabotage by American truckers came up last spring. We conducted, along with Canada Employment and the province of Ontario, extensive blitzes on cabotage to see if it was in fact taking place. There were perhaps one dozen charges laid, but there was no evidence that cabotage was taking place in Ontario and Manitoba to any great extent.

I appreciate what my hon. friend says. There are difficulties in the trucking industry. We have a series of some eight or nine studies presently under way in conjunction with the trucking industry and the major stakeholders. They are all on the striking committee. I think it is well in hand and we are making every effort to address the problem.

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is for the same minister. He is considering the introduction of cabotage not only on the air side but also in the trucking industry. I return to the same minister. He will know that both the Canadian Trucking Association and Freight Carriers Association of Canada have stated to him very clearly and emphatically that Canadian trucks are unable to compete head on with American truck carriers.

Given that Canadian trucking companies face higher labour, operating and tax costs compared to their American counterparts, why does the minister persist in putting our Canadian trucking industry on a fatal collision course? Have we not lost enough companies and enough Canadian jobs as it is?

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend will know that trucking regulation is basically a provincial matter. We stepped into it last spring in an effort to assist the trucking industry. We are working in co–operation with the stakeholders in the industry to take a hard look at the issues facing the industry.

I have told my hon. friend that the studies are under way. When they are available in May, we will make them public. We will know what the issues are and how to address them.

My hon. friend hasn't any more better ways of fixing the trucking industry than he did in 1983 when he helped Maislin Transport.

* * *

VISIBLE MINORITIES

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

This government has no mandate to speak for ethnocultural groups who were completely excluded from past constitutional negotiations, so the Prime Minister perhaps should start thinking about an election.

On this International Day for the Elimination of Racism, in view of the inadequate representation and the inadequate promotion of visible minorities and native persons in government departments, including in the Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship where there are no managers and few permanent staff who are people of colour, I want to ask the Prime Minister if his government will now introduce mandatory employment equity legislation to end this systemic discrimination against persons of colour?

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member is aware that the government has had in place since 1983 a very full program. It is in operation and has been improved by us. We have set aside $90

million and 2,115 person-years have been authorized to bolster employment equity for each of the four groups.

There are difficult problems, of course, but one decision we have taken within the administration, which I believe will have some impact, is to tell managers that their evaluations in the future will take this into account in a much greater way.

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JAMES BAY AGREEMENT

Mr. Robert E. Skelly (Comox—Alberni): Mr. Speaker, in committee this morning Chief Billy Diamond served notice that the James Bay Cree Nation intends to separate from Quebec in the event that Quebec separates from Canada. It was a virtual declaration of independence.

Chief Diamond also gave notice that beginning this spring the Crees will dismantle Hydro Quebec's power poles and transmission lines if Canada and Quebec continue to refuse to respect their obligations to his people as spelled out in the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement.

Will the Prime Minister now recognize the urgency and the seriousness of the aboriginal rights issue and take steps immediately to involve Canada's aboriginal peoples at the highest levels in Canada's constitutional discussions?

Hon. Shirley Martin (Minister of State (Indian Affairs and Northern Development)): Mr. Speaker, we are quite aware of the concerns of the Cree and Quebec. I am proud that the Cree people want to stay within Canada, and believe in the future of Canada. We will continue to take their concerns into consideration.

* * *

[*Translation*]

ENVIRONMENT CANADA

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. Twenty-eight of the thirty scientists now in training at Environment Canada will be declared redundant, just four weeks before they finish their nine-month course in meteorology.

When the government does not have enough money for health programs, education, research and development and social programs, how can it justify wasting hundreds of thousands of dollars and the precious time of these 30 young Canadians, when we don't even have the jobs for which they were trained?

[*English*]

Mr. Lee Clark (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, as all members of this House know, Canada today faces a national debt of nearly $400 billion and an annual deficit of some $30 billion. Unlike the member opposite, everyone in this country knows that the origin of this debt lies very clearly in the foolish and unnecessary spending of that party when they were in government in the 1970s.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Clark (Brandon Souris): I would also like to indicate to the hon. member that the meteorologists in training to whom she has referred will not in fact be without employment when they graduate this spring. They will be given other employment opportunities within the Atmospheric Environment Services and they will be given opportunities as meteorologists as soon as vacancies occur.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is directed to the President of the Treasury Board. These 28 meteoroligists are only a few of thousands of employees for whom the only protection available against immediate termination is the personnel restructuring policy. Since this policy expires ten days from now, does the minister intend to extend the policy until a new policy is negotiated? Or does he intend to have no policy at all for employees whose employment will be terminated?

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member will be glad to hear that we are involved in intensive negotiations and that in a few days I will probably have some very good news for her.

* * *

[*English*]

ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

Mr. David Walker (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Earlier this week, the Canadian Human Rights Commission declared that our most pressing human rights problem was the plight of Canadian aboriginal people. Ironically, this week the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development cut $20 million of social services money destined for aboriginal people in Manitoba.

Will the Prime Minister stand up and stop this nonsense and show a commitment to the aboriginal people by reinstating that $20 million destined for Winnipeg's poorest people?

Hon. Shirley Martin (Minister of State (Indian Affairs and Northern Development)): Mr. Speaker, the changes in the funding to Manitoba for Indian people off-reserve is something that has been under discussion now for some 18 months with the province of Manitoba. There is no intention to immediately cut the funding off. We are in negotiations with the province. The funding that will be taken from those dollars will go to aboriginal people on reserve, which is our responsibility and we intend to make sure that the money goes there for their welfare.

• (1450)

Mr. David Walker (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Prime Minister.

That answer cuts corners in the most amazing way. First of all, the minister from the provincial government describes the so-called negotiations as "a heavy-handed approach to this issue", and finds it to be "totally inexcusable".

Second, the money is not to stay in Manitoba; the money can be spent anywhere across the country.

Manitoba has been under attack from this government for the last six years. It has lost money in the core area initiative, it has lost money in the northern development agreement. When is this government going to stop attacking native people in Manitoba and give them a chance to independence and dignity?

Hon. Shirley Martin (Minister of State (Indian Affairs and Northern Development)): Mr. Speaker, we are not attacking the Indian people in Manitoba or anywhere else in this country. We are working very hard to ensure that there is an improvement in their living conditions. Moneys will go to the Indian people of Manitoba who live on reserve. It is not a heavy-handed approach. For 18 months the people in Manitoba knew this was going to happen. We have been asking them to discuss it further with us. We are still willing to sit down and talk with them about their concerns.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): My question, Mr. Speaker, is for the Prime Minister.

The Spicer commission reports that Canadians "have lost faith in the political system and its leadership". We can see why when economic equality has decreased under this government, 430,000 people have lost permanent jobs in the last year, and in Toronto the number of people needing to use food banks is up by 60 per cent.

Will the Prime Minister admit that the leadership crisis in Canada is in large part a result of his failed economic policies?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the federal government, I will certainly accept my share of responsibility. I know my hon. friend in fairness will want to impute the rest of the responsibility to the government of Ontario, because these are all shared joint approaches to these various problems. That is the way it works.

We have come through a recession. We are on our way out. Interest rates are down by 4 percentage points. In our first five and half years Canadians created in the environment created by this government 1.6 million new jobs. Of the new jobs—

Mr. Harvey (Edmonton East): Now gone.

Mr. Mulroney: My hon. subsidized friend from the NDP from Edmonton says—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Mulroney: This, Mr. Speaker, is perfect sanctimony.

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, it is somehow typical that the Prime Minister should start out trying to give us an answer in which he suggests the need for co-operation and then turns it into a partisan attack.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the hon. member could put his question.

Mr. Langdon: A partisan attack, I might say, Mr. Speaker, from somebody who is getting his housing for nothing.

Let me put my question for the Prime Minister. He suggested that interest rates are coming down. In fact, we see that the bank rate today has stayed virtually the same, moving one-tenth of a percentage point. No change is significant.

I ask this Prime Minister if he is prepared to stand up and say to the country that there will be a significant drop in interest rates in this country to get people back to work, to stop the bankruptcies across this country and to see to it that our economic problems start to reap some solution.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I cannot give the guarantee my hon. friend seeks.

The NDP campaign, for example, in another jurisdiction in Ontario with a whole fleet of promises, guaranteed they would be implemented in a matter of months. Now it says that cannot be done. Why would my hon. friend hold us to a standard of perfection when he lets NDP governments get off with something less?

Can I guarantee it? Of course, I cannot guarantee it. Interest rates have come down 4 percentage points. If the federal government contains its expenses, drives its deficit down and keeps it down, and if all provincial governments, particularly the large provincial governments, resist the urge to spend money and start to cut down on their deficits, they will contribute to low interest rates and my hon. friend will have the jobs he wants.

* * *

CITIZENS' FORUM ON CANADA'S FUTURE

Mr. J.W. Bud Bird (Fredericton—York—Sunbury): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister.

In the interim report of the Spicer Commission today, despite the fact that everything in it is not good news, there are two statements that shine through to me and give me great encouragement.

The report says that there is very clear consensus in all parts of the country about the individual and social values which define Canadian society. The report also says that there is a widespread consensus inside Quebec and elsewhere on national values.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister if he expects the Spicer Report to be delivered on time so that its recommendations and observations can be incorporated into the draft of our constitutional proposals.

An hon. member: There is a tough one.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): That is a good question.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

An hon. member: Is the answer written out?

Mr. Mulroney: In fact, I just happen to have—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the right hon. Prime Minister can tell us what he has and then send it over to his colleagues.

Mr. Mulroney: Mr. Speaker, I could go either way. I could quote them from here or they are etched in my memory.

In point of fact, my hon. friend makes an extremely valuable point that is shared by almost all members of this House. Canadians generally are bound together by some fundamental values and common principles, chief among which is the fact that most Canadians understand and fully appreciate the magnificence of what we have accomplished together over 123 years as a civilized, democratic and prosperous nation.

Most Canadians, understanding that, want to work together to build, not to destroy. Because in doing that, we can pass on the magnificence of our heritage to our children and grandchildren.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

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RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

On this International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, this government says it is committed to cultural and ethnic diversity in Canada. At the same time that one government department increases

immigration targets, the Department of the Minister of State continues to underfund groups and programs which promote understanding among races.

Would the Prime Minister please explain this dichotomy in government policy?

• (1500)

Would he tell this House when his department will really begin to address the issue of racism in Canada?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): I am surprised at my hon. friend: when will the government begin to address the problem of racism in Canada? Racism in Canada is not a problem that can be solved only by governments. It is a problem that ought to preoccupy all citizens. Racism is an illness that must be driven from our society. It requires vigilance and constant attention, not only by governments, but also by all members of Parliament.

My friend, the Liberal member from Halifax, says pretty words. She was not here when this government rose in the House of Commons to propose to correct one of the ugliest incidents of racism in the history of Canada, namely, the blot against the citizenship of Japanese Canadians.

We rose, we received the unanimous support of the House of Commons, to correct something that had been neglected for over 40 years. This was done by this government and a prior House. We have begun to address another blot against society, namely, the treatment of Italian Canadians that went uncorrected for 40 years. This government is in the process of dealing with it.

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean): My supplementary question is to the Minister of Justice. Yesterday the hon. minister told the House that work is proceeding on many changes to the Human Rights Act. Can the minister please tell us what her priority amendments are, and if the recommendations dealing with aboriginal peoples are on her short list.

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, the review of the Human Rights Act to bring forward a comprehensive proposal of amendments, does not involve a set of priorities. It is a comprehensive approach that I hope will bring forward a very broad range of amendments to that act.

I cannot say I have set priorities in my amendments. I think they are all important. Each one goes in as a small tile in the mosaic of a Canadian structure for a free and accessible society. Therefore, I would not wish to draw any priorities among the amendments that I will be proposing to the act.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

WEEKLY STATEMENT

Mr. David Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, before I proceed with my point of privilege, I wonder if I might ask the question of the Government House leader with regard to House business for tomorrow and next week.

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, as soon as we get to Government Orders this afternoon, we will proceed with report stage on—it seems a lot of Liberals need to clear their throats. Go ahead, I will wait for you.

As I was trying to say, we will proceed this afternoon with report stage of Bill C-98, the farm income bill, and hopefully get third reading so that that can be in place for the farmers of Canada by the start of the fiscal year, April 1.

I would like to declare tomorrow an allotted day, a supply day, and engage in discussions with my colleague as well as other colleagues in terms of other business.

If we were to proceed with Bill C-98 today, it would be my intention to have the last allotted day on Monday, followed by two days of discussion on the rule changes on which we have all been working co-operatively, I might add, for some time, which will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of this House. Then I propose to have an adjournment, after which the government would return with a Throne Speech in the early part of May. That, of course, requires certain consents and agreements. I look forward to our productive discussions in that regard. Should these not come about, of course, we will be back on April 8.

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, I was going to give leeway to my House leader, but I am sure he will get up in a few minutes.

The government House leader indicated his plan to seek the adjournment of the House toward the end of next week and not have the House sit in April and for the early part of May.

I wonder if he can give some guarantee to those thousands of Canadian families who are waiting for legislation on the northern tax. I wonder if the government has any intention of introducing that legislation in the next three days.

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, I have just been talking to my seatmate who has informed me that the drafters of this legislation have several significant welts on their backs and will have the legislation in a position where through agreement we could take care of it within the time frame I have just mentioned.

Of course, this would require the approval of the opposition parties to do that, but I know the hon. member will have no difficulty at all convincing his very co-operative caucus to agree to quick passage of those.

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, perhaps while the government House leader is speaking to his seatmate, he could also ask that same seatmate if the legislation that the minister tabled and distributed before the House came back is ready to be presented to the House. He has distributed that legislation to thousands of Canadians. Presumably he could also distribute it to the House of Commons.

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, on this point of the northern benefit legislation, the draft legislation is out. The Department of Revenue is administering the legislation on the basis of the draft legislation. There will be forms available for taxpayers in early April so that they will be able to take advantage of the changes that are proposed in the northern benefits legislation.

The point that my colleague has just made about passing the legislation is that we will be including this as part of another bill so that if we are going to have this available for the House to deal with at a time before we rise, then we need to have an indication from the opposition parties that that is the way we are going to deal with it. We cannot do this at the last minute.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

Mr. Jim Edwards (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, I am sure you would want me to draw your attention and that of the House to the presence in the gallery of the distinguished theologian, Dr. Henri J. Nouwen, who was the speaker at this year's annual parliamentary prayer breakfast.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: I should advise the House of the list I am looking at so that we can see the best way to go through it.

The hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond has a question of privilege, and his ranks ahead of others.

The hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell has a question of privilege.

The hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona has a point of order.

The hon. member for Churchill has a point of order.

The hon. member for Kamloops is rising. I will hear the hon. member for a moment.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

WEEKLY STATEMENT

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): I have two quick points before we get to hearing the points of order.

I think it is appropriate to indicate clearly that if the Minister of Finance brings forward a bill regarding northern benefits, he can certainly count on the expeditious movement of that legislation on behalf of this party.

Also, my hon. friend the government House leader indicated a certain sequence of events and that if those events occurred in that order, we would possibly rise next Wednesday until some time in May. The order of events that he laid out is something that at this point we cannot accept. Therefore, I think we will have to say that we will be back on April 8 to continue working.

Mr. Speaker: Keeping in mind the way these matters have come to my attention, I will now hear the hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond.

PRIVILEGE

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. David Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the question of privilege of which I have given you notice, given my colleague the Minister of Finance notice, as well as the opposition House leader for the New Democratic Party.

• (1510)

I wish to deal with a serious matter, contempt of this House, a matter which under our proceedings as described in Maingot's *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, Chapter 12, is properly brought before the House as a question of privilege.

On October 10, 1989, you, Sir, stated in *Hansard* at page 4461:

> I want the House to understand very clearly that if your Speaker ever has to consider a situation like this again, the Chair will not be as generous. This is a case which, in my opinion should never reoccur.

Well, I am saddened to say that this situation has recurred. On March 16, 1991, in newspapers across this country there appeared a government ad for "Canada's Plan For Economic Recovery". I have this ad here which I wish to table with the House and undoubtedly, Mr. Speaker, you will want to review it prior to making your adjudication.

I ask for the indulgence of the House as I outline some important historical points which I believe, and hopefully you too, Sir, are vital to the question I raise today.

On September 25, 1989, the then Leader of the Opposition, the right hon. member for Vancouver Quadra, rose on a point of privilege to protest the use of objectionable ads placed in newspapers across this country in late August 1989. In his able presentation, the then Leader of the Opposition made two substantive points. The first was that the ad prejudiced the proceedings of this House because the issue of the GST was still under debate in committee and the ad presumed the outcome of all parliamentary deliberations.

The second important issue raised was that of contempt of Parliament based on the point that these ads diminished the authority and yes, Sir, the dignity of Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, you ruled that the arguments on prejudicing the proceedings of this House did not constitute a breach of privilege based on a thorough analysis and a definition of privilege found in Erskine May and other procedural authorities. However, Sir, on the question of contempt, the Chair stated on page 4460 that it was "in a quandary".

The claim that put the Chair in a quandary was, and I quote from *Hansard* again at page 4458:

> —the advertisement is a contempt of Parliament because it infers that the House does not have any role to play in the passage of the tax and that it misrepresents to the Canadian public the procedures employed by Parliament in adopting legislation.

You, Sir, succinctly and precisely identified two items in the claim of contempt: namely, intent and content. As regards intent, your doubt was dispelled by the Minister of Justice at the time who at page 3821 of *Hansard* said that the ads were for informational purposes. This follows the tradition in this House that we accept the words of hon. members' explanations.

However, the Chair found that, with respect to content, and I quote from page 4461 of *Hansard*:

> —the content was obviously drafted in a cavalier manner; there is an element of confidence, if not boldness—

The Chair concluded its remarks by sending a strong message to the Public Service and in particular, the Department of Finance. The message was that this country is a parliamentary democracy with the House of Commons at the centre of its deliberations. The ad was indeed ill-conceived and did a disservice to the "great traditions of this place".

With those five words "great traditions of this place", we on this side of the House certainly concur.

The responsibility of the Crown's ministers to inform the public, a long-standing convention of parliamentary democracy, ought to be practised on the floor of the House of Commons and not on the pages of national newspapers.

Today, I wish to raise several points as regards the latest ad campaign to sell the budget and, of course, to sell the Minister of Finance.

I wish to present the arguments of the Minister of Justice in September 1989, which might be used today with the present application of contempt of the House. I do this because the situation is more serious procedurally today than it was in September 1989. The Minister of Justice argued in 1989:

> The Finance Committee unanimously recommended to publicize details of the tax if the government were to proceed.
>
> The budget had already been approved stating the government's intent to implement the GST by January 1, 1991.
>
> That the Finance Committee was studying the issue and no case could be brought forward to show that it was being impeded.

That was in 1989. Those arguments cannot and ought not to be made in this particular case here today.

First, the finance committee has not unanimously agreed on the contents of the budget. Second, the budget has not been approved by the House and in point of fact, it is still under debate and we are not certain whether or not there will be a vote on the budget before we prorogue in May. Third, the finance committee is not dealing with any of the substance of the budget in this particular case.

The Department of Finance, in placing this advertisement in newspapers across the country, acted as if the House had already passed the budget. It is again a cavalier, deliberate approach contravening the proceedings of this House. Some would call it absolute arrogance in light of your ruling, Mr. Speaker. And not only did the ad presume that this House had passed the budget of February 26, it misrepresented the budget document tabled in the House of Commons by the Minister of Finance.

In September 1989, the then Leader of the Opposition, the right hon. member for Vancouver Quadra said, and I quote:

> A government that wastes millions and millions of dollars on newspaper ads not even a canary would want to see on the floor of its cage, and keeps saying that it is trying to cut spending in order to reduce the deficit—that government is both hypocritical and utterly ridiculous.

Those words ring clearly today as we discuss this particular issue.

I refer the House to the 19th Edition of Erskine May's Parliamentary Practice, page 145 under the section of Constructive Contempts, subsection of the Publication of False or Perverted Reports of Debates, and I quote:

> Analogous to the publication of libels under either House is the publication of false or perverted, or of partial and injurious reports of debates or proceedings of either House of committees of either House or misrepresentations of the speeches of particular members.

In the ad, under bullet point no. 2, the government states that it will, and I quote: "channel all GST and privatization revenues to a Debt Servicing and Reduction Fund". I wish to refer you, Mr. Speaker, to the budget document itself tabled by the Minister of Finance, page 78 in the English version, the last two paragraphs, to show this House and Canadians how the Department of Finance and the Minister of Finance have misrepresented his own words in this particular ad, and I quote for you, Mr. Speaker, from page 78 of the budget document, the English translation:

> The Prime Minister has given a commitment that any above-projected revenues from the GST will make a contribution to deficit reduction rather than provide the leeway for an expansion in discretionary government spending. To implement this commitment, the government will introduce legislation to establish a specified purpose account, to which will be credited net GST revenues and from which will be debited public debt charges.

• (1520)

Again, Mr. Speaker, I table that for your subsequent reflection in making your adjudication.

In the minister's speech on page 13 he did suggest that all the revenues from the GST would go to the new debt servicing and reduction fund, but it is on page 78 in the details of the budget that the minister says what he really plans to do. That is where we learn that only above projected GST revenues would go to the proposed fund.

At page 78 the Minister of Finance even cites the Prime Minister of Canada, his own words on the subject matter. The ad's assertion that all GST revenues will be committed to the proposed debit servicing and reduction fund is completely inconsistent with the details of the budget document. Further, this assertion leaves the distinct impression with the reader that this fund, whatever its precise nature, already exists.

This is simply not true. In fact the legislation that the Minister of Finance proposes in his budget has not only not been adopted by this House, not only not been debated, but it has not even been introduced by the government. In addition, the advertisements claim that

direct program spending increases to the unemployed will result from the budget is also not supported by the document tabled before this House. Not only is there no new program for the unemployed, there is in fact a cut in the Canadian Jobs Strategy, a program which supposedly benefits the unemployed.

Any increase in the federal government's spending on the unemployed this year will not be a result of the 1991 budget, but rather a requirement on the part of the Government of Canada under the Unemployment Insurance Act passed by this House some decades ago.

It is obvious, sir, the intent and content of the framers of this ad. The government did not take seriously, Mr. Speaker, your words, the protector of minority rights in this Chamber, on October 10, 1989. Perhaps they thought you would forget over time, Mr. Speaker, but the chair specifically asked the Department of Finance and other departments to study its ruling.

No member of the Crown can be taken seriously this time if he or she tries to sell the information argument. I can hear the Minister of Finance shaking his head over there. He of all people knows that this government is in big trouble. This government is responsible for eroding the dignity of the House of Commons.

You concluded your ruling, Mr. Speaker, on October 10, 1989 by saying the following: "This ad is objectionable and should never be repeated". Those, Sir, were your words on October 10, 1989. Unfortunately for all Canadians it has been repeated.

I am prepared to move a motion that the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections be empowered to examine the question of government advertising concerning budget and other legislative proposals prior to their enactment. This would give members a needed avenue to study in depth this recurring issue.

Although a precedent is not needed on the issue of contempt, you made an historic one on October 10, 1989, Mr. Speaker. That is the reason why I rise today to defend the fundamental principles of this, the highest court in the country, over which you, Sir, preside.

Parliament is the heart of our democracy, but its very authority stems from the esteem in which it is held by the government, by the ministers of the Crown and, more important, by the people of Canada.

This government and this Minister of Finance are not only in contempt of this House, but they are in contempt of you and your ruling of October 1989, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I want to respond directly to the statements that the hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond has made.

I might say, as an opening comment, that I fundamentally reject what he has said both in terms of the attitude of the government, as well as the specifics that he has set out in his far-fetched approach to trying to deal with this issue.

First of all, let me comment briefly on the purpose of the advertisement and the tabloid that is the subject of this question of privilege.

The purpose of the tabloid is to ensure that people right across this country have an opportunity to read and understand the directions that the budget has taken and get a better understanding of how this fits with the government's economic policy.

We know that budget documents are complex. They are lengthy and difficult to read. Canadians are not always going to take the time to read these documents. We felt that something that is condensed into eight pages of fairly direct language will help people gain that understanding. I might say that there is a very great demand for this information.

As an example, in the goods and services tax, the Consumer Information Office has sent out five million documents related to the goods and services tax. That gives us some sense as to the demand on the part of our voters for this type of information.

The advertisement that my hon. colleague refers to does make reference to this tabloid but it do so in a way, as it says, federal budget highlights. It is not intended to carry the entire content of the tabloid document.

Let me first cover the specifics that my colleague has raised. First, he points to page 78 where it says the following about the commitment of the Prime Minister:

To implement this commitment, the government will introduce legislation to establish a specified purpose account, to which will be credited net GST revenues and from which will be debited public debt charges.

Mr. Speaker, if you refer to page 94, you will see the calculations of this. It shows that the GST revenues, privatization proceeds, et cetera, are in their entirety credited to this fund. The word "net" is used because the proceeds are net of the GST credit. But because the GST credit is an integral part of the GST system itself, it is those net revenues that are credited to the fund.

As my hon. friend has pointed out, in the budget speech on page 13 of this document I said that we will ensure that all GST revenues are allocated solely to this fund. I think it is quite clear revenues that will be directed to the fund are all of the GST revenues net of the GST credit, which is an integral part of the tax.

The accounting is clear. The words are there to state exactly what we are intending to do, and I believe there is no uncertainty about that.

Let me comment on the advertisement. As I indicated, the advertisement itself is a very succinct document. It refers to federal budget highlights, and those highlights are identical to the highlights that are on the second page of the tabloid document itself. Immediately next to the highlights is a short note from me as Minister of Finance, outlining what is in this document. I quote here, and this is a very important quote: "The budget proposes far-reaching initiatives."

• (1530)

The tabloid goes on to say on page 7, relating to the GST debt servicing reduction fund: "Legislation will be introduced to establish the debt servicing and reduction fund into which all GST revenues will go".

Mr. Speaker, I think we have followed very closely the directions that you gave us. I indicated that "the budget proposes" and that legislation in relation to this particular matter will be proposed. I believe that is quite clear and consistent with the ruling that you made some months back.

The final point that my colleague has referred to is on page 6 of this document. "The advertisement", he said, "directed program spending increases to the unemployed, the elderly and farmers in difficulty". This refers specifically to an item in the tabloid which says: "Who will get extra help this year?" I will not give you all the words here, but it says: "That is why program spending will increase by 6.9 per cent this year. Nearly 80 per cent of the $7.5 billion increase will go to assist the elderly, the unemployed and farmers in difficulty". The point here is that this is a specific factual statement, not as my colleague tried to interpret it.

If you refer, Mr. Speaker, to that item on page 6, I think you will see that it is precisely that and not as the interpretation would suggest.

In conclusion, I do believe that what we have set out here in the advertising is highlights or headlines, if you will, to the specific items that are in the tabloid. The tabloid clearly says that 'the budget proposes" and "legislation will be introduced". These and all the aspects of the ruling that you made previously on the GST advertisement a year and a half ago do respect fully the directions that you wished us to take.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I must say I am grateful to my colleague, the House leader of the Official Opposition, for having brought to the attention of the House the contemptuous nature of the expensive and misleading advertising campaign which promotes the economic policy of the government, which misrepresents the budget that is before this House, which prejudices the decision of this House on the budget and which prejudices debate on this issue. Once again I compliment my hon. friend on his very thoughtful presentation to you, Mr. Speaker, on this very critical matter.

Before I begin, I want to say simply to my friend, the Minister of Finance, that I recall the GST mailings in terms of the evaluation that followed that, how effective that campaign was, and informing Canadians on the importance and the intricate nature of the GST. As to whether they understood it better as a result of receiving this documentation, I think the overwhelming evidence was that that was not the case. I suggest that the need to have sent out five million documents in response to inquiries simply points out the confusion that surrounds the implementation of this new form of taxation.

In light of the comments and arguments made by my hon. friend, the House leader of the Official Opposition, I have really only a few comments to make. With your

indulgence, I will focus on only two brief points: first, the wilful intent behind this advertising campaign and the fact that it exacerbates the contempt that we are presently discussing and, second, the attempt to deny this House its conventional and historic rights to pronounce itself on the budget.

I must say that this advertising campaign is not only part of a carefully designed media strategy but is part of a deliberate flaunting of the dignity of this House and its role and authority to permit the implementation of budgetary policy. I am afraid we have been reminded that this is not the first time members of this House have had to voice their concerns about zealous government administrations eager to put their spin on the matters before the House.

Fundamental to this whole issue is the question of why we are here. We are here because hundreds of years ago someone had the good sense to say no, to say that kings and other despots did not have the right to spend our money, to raise our taxes, unless and until we gave them that right. It does not matter whether it is a king or a prime minister or a deputy minister of finance who tries to usurp that right; this House and each of us in it must fight to defend that principle. You, Mr. Speaker, are of course the standard-bearer in that fight.

My colleagues have argued that the information distributed to every Canadian doorstep misrepresents the budget laid before this House. I support your arguments, Mr. Speaker, and the arguments we have heard earlier today. My concern is equally focused on the purpose behind this media campaign. Why did officials of the Department of Finance choose to give each Canadian household a copy of this flyer? Why did they choose to send it before the House had pronounced itself on the budget? Were they, as my hon. colleague has pointed out, not listening to you when you told them on October 10, 1989, and I quote:

> I expect the Department of Finance and other departments to study this ruling carefully and remind everyone within the Public Service that we are a parliamentary democracy, not a so-called executive democracy, nor a so-called administrative democracy.

Let us look at this recent history to which your comment refers. In the summer of 1989 the government launched an advertising campaign in support of the goods and services tax. When the House returned that fall, the former Leader of the Official Opposition raised with the Speaker the contemptuous nature of those advertisements. While you, Mr. Speaker, did not find that there was a *prima facie* case, you offered some very stern warning to those who implemented the campaign to which the opposition took offence. You said you had to ponder the intent of the offending advertisement as compared to its contents.

In light of the Minister of Finance's assurances that the intent was to inform Canadians and not to diminish the dignity of the House, you found that there was no contempt.

However, Mr. Speaker, you concluded with the comments:

> I expect the Department of Finance and other departments to study this ruling carefully and remind everyone within the Public Service that we are a parliamentary democracy, not a so-called executive democracy, nor a so-called administrative democracy.

I emphasize that particular comment of yours, because it should be remembered that today's offensive advertisement was drafted by that same department that you had specifically warned in December 1989.

I submit that the publication of which we speak contains a number of errors. In terms of the goods and services tax it says:

> All revenues from the goods and services tax will flow into a debt servicing and reduction fund.

I give creativity marks to my hon. friend, the Minister of Finance, who has tried to explain that. While the budget proposes to channel only net revenues, this certainly implies something contrary to that notion.

Also, the statements in this document say that the budget will cut the cost of government including salaries, and yet the government's own estimates show that it will actually spend more money this year than last.

It says that the budget will direct program spending increases to the unemployed. We all know that the unemployed can rely on the self-financing employment

plan. Of course we see no new programs and have actually had the announcement that the Canadian Jobs Strategy will see $100 million cut from it.

In closing, I want to say that the Minister of Finance and his officials knew the rules, and they understood your ruling. They could only have been deliberately disregarding this House and the role that I, members opposite, members beside me and you, Mr. Speaker, play.

I might add that the Minister of Finance and his officials also knew that there is no obligation to bring a budget before the House at this time but, having done so, the House has many rights over that budget. This is my final point. These include the right to debate the budget, to decide on the budget, to defeat governments on the basis of the budget, and to withhold passage of legislation based on the budget until a decision has been made.

Why, then, did the Department of Finance not wait until the budget debate had been concluded and the final budget voted upon?

• (1540)

Why did they not correctly reflect the material in the budget? I say that this is a wilful contempt of the House, a wilful contempt of your ruling of October 10, and deliberate disregard for the dignity and authority of this House.

On examination of this issue a number of questions are raised. I submit that the officials in finance did not wait for the budget debate to be concluded because they knew it would not be concluded. They knew that this House would never have the opportunity to vote on the budget. What greater prejudice to the proceedings of this House can there be than to do away with these proceedings?

It would appear, even by comments made earlier today, that the government does not plan further debate on the budget motion.

I have not been able to find a single previous incident where the House has been denied the right to pronounce itself on budgetary policy once it had been introduced. Last week I asked the government House leader when he would be introducing a bill to legitimize the collection of the increased taxes on cigarettes and tobacco. He ignored the fact that the tax is currently paid basically on a voluntary basis by Canadians and will be until the budget is approved, the ways and means motion approved, and the tax bill passed.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion I ask you to review our arguments and the facts before you. I suggest you will find that there is a prima facie case of contempt based on the following: the clear and deliberate ignoring of your ruling of October 10, 1989; the clear intent to incorporate incorrect and misleading material contained in the advertisement; the clear intent to promote the budget policy before the policy had been approved by this House; the clear intent to deny the House the right to decide on the budget; the clear intent to degrade the rights of all members of this House by denying them the right to debate and to presume support where no vote had actually taken place.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond, a very short reply. I have the points I think pretty well digested and I am very grateful to the hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond in putting his points so succinctly. I will hear him shortly.

Mr. Dingwall: Mr. Speaker, just so there is no misunderstanding in my remarks I did not make reference to the tabloid. I made reference to the particular ad which I filed with the Clerk so that there would be no misunderstanding by yourself or by my colleagues across the way or to the left. It is not the tabloid I made reference to. It was the particular ad which has appeared in the newspapers across the country.

Mr. Speaker: I am going to consider carefully the arguments that have been put forward both by the hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond, the hon. Minister of Finance, and the hon. member for Kamloops. I will, of course, keep in mind the comments that I had to make some time ago. I know the hon. member will be sure that I get a copy of the ad. The hon. Minister of Finance made reference to the tabloid and I would appreciate a copy of that too. I will try to report back to the House as quickly as possible.

We have, as I indicated, a number of matters and I would like to move on as fast as I can and I know that hon. members want to assist the Chair. The hon.

member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell has a question of privilege and I ask him to address the Chair.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege arising from the business of a committee. This occurred earlier this morning.

Of course, Mr. Speaker would be tempted perhaps to remind me that under our traditions committees are masters of their own business. While that is generally true I want to remind you of citation No. 569.(1) of Beauchesne's, fifth edition, which says:

> Committees are regarded as creatures of the House and are governed for the most part in their proceedings by the same rules which prevail in the House with exception as to seconding of motions, limiting the number of times of speaking and the length of speeches.

It further says under 569.(2):

> Committees receive their authority from the House itself and that authority of the House overrides that of any committee.

Mr. Speaker, I am bringing this issue to your attention for the following reason. The committee this morning was meeting under Standing Order 108(2). I bring to the attention of the House, and perhaps I could table the following, although it is available to officers of the House, the convocation asking members to attend the committee which states as follows: "Standing Committee on Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Government Operations, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) consideration of the Citizens' Forum on Canada's Future." Very clearly, the committee was meeting under Standing Order 108(2) this morning to consider the Citizens' Forum on Canada's Future as the notice published for us by the clerk indicated.

When the committee met this morning, it became aware of a certain report of the Citizen's Forum on Canada's Future. That report, which was made public last night, was later upon the motion of a member of the committee, duly moved and seconded. The report in question was tabled with the committee.

When hon. members immediately afterwards attempted to question the witness on the report itself, the chairman of the committee ruled that members could not ask a question about a public report, and at that a report which had already been tabled before the committee in question.

Mr. Speaker, the point I am making to you is that if that authority does not exist within the House itself, and I remind Mr. Speaker of what he has told us on several occasions in the past, that members in this House should be permitted to ask questions in a manner which is unhindered, providing of course that the Standing Orders and our rules and forms are adhered to. If that is the principle which guides us in this House, I fail to see how that principle can be overridden in one of our committees by a committee chairman.

Recognizing the authority the committee has to be master of its own business, nevertheless a committee or a member of a committee, in particular a chairman, cannot exceed an authority in the committee which Mr. Speaker cannot exercise in this House here, or does not exercise in this House here.

I am not expecting an immediate ruling on the issue. I conclude my remarks by asking Mr. Speaker to review the transcript of the committee in question and to rule on the issue in question.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, I think that after reviewing the information I just brought to your attention, you will agree that the customary procedure of this House, as indicated in *Beauchesne's* and in the Standing Orders of the House of Commons, was not followed this morning. I think parliamentarians have a right to ask questions about a public report, a report that was tabled before our committee and that was under consideration by the committee, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2).

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Sherbrooke): Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order. In my capacity as chairman of this committee since last Monday, I am directly concerned by the question raised by the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

Perhaps the following information will help clarify the situation. The committee met for the first time last Monday. It had not met for some time. That is when I was chosen to be chairman of the committee. The committee then went on to consider the Supplementary Estimates tabled by the government which we were to examine, preferably before Thursday this week, with

emphasis on the item concerning the Citizens Forum, also known as the Spicer Commission.

From the outset, Mr. Speaker, we realized in committee that we were faced with a situation that was truly unique. The committee was asked to consider the votes allocated to a royal commission or a commission of inquiry via the Privy Council, a commission mandated by law or established by a constituent act, and a commission or forum, all of which basically have an arm's length relationship with the government.

Furthermore, by the very nature of this mandate, the commission or forum must enjoy a certain degree of independence vis-à-vis the government and thus Parliament and the committees of Parliament that bestow this mandate. This was and stil is an absolutely unique situation.

At our organization meeting on Monday, it became clear to members and the committee chairman that in our examination we had to make a distinction between substantive questions relating to the commission's mandate and questions arising from the commission's administration. That was the gist of the debate we had last Monday. In subsequent meetings, Mr. Speaker, which took place Tuesday, Wednesday and this morning, the Chair always stressed the fact that a distinction had to be made between these two issues. Although it may not always be apparent, Mr. Speaker, there is a distinction between the subject matter dealt with by a commission of inquiry and issues relating to the expenditure of public funds. That was more or less the situation.

• (1550)

This morning, the hon. member and his colleagues raised the following question: They said or claimed that since the Spicer Forum had produced an interim report, that altered the decision we made on Monday. This morning's decision, Mr. Speaker, was a matter of common sense. It was based on the fact that the forum as such had not interrupted its task since our committee had been considering their votes. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the forum continued its work on Monday and Tuesday and produced an interim report.

Perhaps I may add, Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of this House and of all Canadians, that I too regretted the fact that the Spicer Forum decided to produce an interim report the day before our meeting with Mr. Spicer. I don't think it did so on purpose—Mr. Spicer gave us an explanation—but to be perfectly frank, as chairman I too felt that this was perhaps not the wisest thing to do in the circumstances.

In concluding, Mr. Speaker, I would appreciate it if the Chair would examine the committee's proceedings, not only today's but also Tuesday's, Monday's and Wednesday's, to get a clear picture of a question that I believe, creates a precedent for this Parliament, so that in future, you could provide some guidance for hon. members when we are faced with a similar situation. I am sure this kind of situation will recur.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, I believe that this morning, the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell could have done what is often done by members, which is to appeal the decision of the committee chairman. All he had to do was move a motion to reverse the decision made by the chairman of the committee.

However, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member did not move a motion to that effect this morning. He preferred to raise a question of privilege in the House. My point is that in any case, and further to my other arguments, the recourse available to the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell was available to him this morning, but he chose not to use it, and therefore, his recourse has expired with respect to—

Mr. Boudria: Careful, Jean, that might backfire!

Mr. Charest: —the proceedings of the committee.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker: I have extended a great deal of patience to members on this matter. I do so reluctantly, but I wanted to listen carefully to the point. I have never said that there might not be an occasion when a Speaker might, depending on circumstances, have to intervene in a committee.

Whatever circumstances may eventually be, I have to accept for the argument that has been brought in front of me, the hon. member for Sherbrooke's position, which is that there are other things that can still be done in the committee with respect to the complaint that the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell brings. Certainly until all avenues within the committee are exhausted I do not think it is appropriate for me to intervene.

However, I thank hon. members for the careful way in which they brought the matter to the Chair. I think that at the moment my position is the right one. If circumstances change, of course, members may want to rise again.

The hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona on a point of order.

* * *

POINT OF ORDER

ALLOTTED DAY

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to seek a clarification from you of a matter which was raised in the House on Tuesday of this week and on which you ruled on March 19. At page 18684 of *Hansard* with respect to the point of order I brought up at that time having to do with the question of confidence as it pertained to opposition day motions, you said:

> The question of confidence, of course, lies with the government. The hon. House leader has made the position of the government very clear.

The problem with the position of the government was that the matter of confidence did not lie with the government. The position of the government was that the matter of confidence resided in the Standing Orders. This was the argument made very clearly and repeatedly on that day by the government, not only by the Government House Leader in response to my point of order, but also by the hon. Minister of National Health and Welfare in his own speech to the House that day, in questions he put to the member for Winnipeg North and again in Question Period.

What I want to do is take the House through the two Standing Orders, the relevant ones prior to the McGrath reforms and the ones after. Those reforms came about as a result of the government, the same government which exists today, endorsing the recommendations of the McGrath report with respect to changing the rules of confidence in the Standing Orders. The government said on October 19, 1985, with respect to the confidence convention:

> The government endorses the recommendations in principle. The government will seek to have a definition of confidence written into the Standing Orders to make it clear which votes are critical tests of a government's ability to maintain the confidence of the House: e.g., Speech from the Throne and Budget. The government will determine what legislation it will consider a matter of confidence. The government will also seek to have confirmed in the Standing Orders, the practice of votes independent of party position.

The Standing Orders as they existed prior to the government accepting that recommendation and prior to the implementations of the reforms, read as follows, and I am referring here to Standing Order 58(9):

> In each of the periods described in section (5) of this Standing Order, not more than two opposition motions shall be—

And here is the key wording, Mr. Speaker,

> —no-confidence motions against the government.

There, Mr. Speaker, is clearly the language of confidence in the Standing Orders with respect to opposition day motions. That was a problem that was identified by the committee as creating the context in which both opposition and government could hide behind the substance of motions.

After the McGrath reform, the Standing Order then read, and I read from that same Standing Order, section 9:

> In each of the periods described in section (8) of this Standing Order, not more than four opposition motions shall be motions that shall come to a vote, provided that not more than eight opposition motions in total shall be motions that shall come to a vote during the three supply periods—

The difference is that in the Standing Orders after the 1985 reform, there was no longer the language of confidence with respect to opposition day motions. They were simply referred to as matters which would come to a vote, a vote which would be freer than the votes which used to take place in the context of opposition day motions, because the language of confidence was deliberately and self-consciously removed from those Standing Orders as a result of the reforms advocated by the McGrath committee, accepted by the government and incorporated into the new Standing Orders.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I take you back to your own ruling in which you said: "The question of confidence, of course, lies with the government." Exactly, because the question of confidence no longer lies in the Standing Orders. It lies with the government. Yet the argument that was being made the other day was directly contrary to your ruling and an argument which I suspect will continue to be made. The argument is that somehow or other the government is not permitted to vote for opposition day motions with which it happens to agree, such as the one the other day in which the government said it agreed that this House ought to reaffirm medicare, but it could not vote for the motion.

One more minute and I will wrap up. The fact of the matter is that we have not only the facts as I have outlined them with respect to the language of confidence in the Standing Orders, but also precedent, one of which I cited the other day. I ask that you make it clear that the ruling that you made the other day with respect to the question of confidence lying with the government is clearly different than the position that the government itself took with respect to confidence, which of course was that confidence resided in the Standing Orders and not with the government.

• (1600)

Mr. Speaker: I am very mindful of the debate that took place a few days ago. I understand the hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona on this issue. I will consider it. It may well be that I will want to discuss the matter further with members. This perhaps should go to, and I am sure it could be arranged, it could be looked at by the privileges committee.

However, I am not, by saying that, changing what I said the other day. Notwithstanding the interesting argument put forward by the hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona, I would have to be persuaded mightily to change what I said the other day, which was that it is the prerogative of the government to deal with any matter as a question of confidence, unless the rule very clearly states otherwise.

In any event, I will consider the matter, and I will discuss it with the hon. member.

COMMITTEE QUORUM

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, I rise briefly on a somewhat different point.

Rule 118 of our Chamber requires a quorum at committees and indicates that a special resolution can be passed to authorize printing when a quorum is not present. That is rule 118(2).

This morning in consumer and corporate affairs we did indeed have a very lively quorum and quite a few members beyond quorum through to the conclusion of Mr. Spicer's testimony at which point he was dismissed from the committee. Very soon thereafter I think the record will show that I called to the attention of the chair the fact that a quorum was not present, and therefore no further meetings could occur.

People did indeed stay in the room, and a record was made from a sound point of view, I am sure. However, I just want assurance from the Chair that the moment the quorum was called, the power to print ended. We were not in a situation of hearing witnesses or any special motion. If indeed it is helpful to the House to go back into committee to resolve the issue of whether or not there should be printing beyond the point of calling of the quorum, we would be glad to call the committee back together to consider the matter.

I am just trying to be helpful to make sure that we do not get into a situation of printing beyond the point where printing should have occurred because the meeting was indeed private and informal once the quorum was called. If we were to print all of that, and then start to distribute it, we could get ourselves into a bit of a problem in the Chamber.

Mr. Speaker: Again, the hon. member for Calgary West has raised a matter which I think is properly still a matter for the committee. If his position is well founded, I am sure that some discussion with those who do our printing for us would probably keep the situation under control.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

FARM INCOME PROTECTION ACT

MEASURE TO ENACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-98, an act authorizing agreements between the Government of Canada and the provinces to provide for protection for the income of producers of agricultural products and to enable the Government of Canada to take additional measures for that purpose, as reported (with amendments) from the Standing Committee on Agriculture; and the motion of Mr. Foster (p. 18780).

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Before I recognize the hon. member, it is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows:

the hon. member for Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing—the Budget; the hon. member for St. Leonard—Employment; the hon. member for The Battlefords—Meadow Lake—Northern benefits.

The hon. member for Prince Edward—Hastings.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will recall that just before Question Period you had recognized the hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt to have the floor.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt has the floor.

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Saskatoon—Humboldt): Mr. Speaker, the motion that we are debating is again an indication that obviously, but maybe surprisingly, it is the opposition members who are taking a responsible approach to this particular piece of legislation. Maybe this extends to their responsible approach to what we, as legislators, should be taking toward all movements within the government.

That is, this particular motion is limiting to some extent the possibility of advantage being taken by people or organizations beyond what would ordinarily be the intent of the bill.

The motion states:

> That Bill C-98 be amended in Clause 7 by adding immediately after line 27 on page 7 the following:
>
> "(1.1) A producer participating in a net income stabilization account program must be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident."

It seems that this is obviously reasonable and eminently logical because the intent of Bill C-98 is stabilization of the agricultural industry within Canada. It is not intended to be the stabilization of a particular farm by someone who owns that farm, but who lives outside the country.

We recognize that if he is a permanent resident, it is an acceptable part and recognition of the fact that he is contributing and paying in Canada. However, if he is not a citizen or a permanent resident, then he will not, in the event of taking advantage of these operations, be doing so to the advantage of Canada. We recognize and hope that this is not an extension. Most or all of the people who fall into this category are just south of the border and farm on the Canadian side.

NISA, the Net Income Stabilization Account, is a surprising bit of legislation under any circumstances in that it is a glorified RRSP in some ways as far as farmers are concerned. It is glorified in the sense that no other RRSP across Canada has the government matching the contributions that the farmer makes into it. No other RRSP guarantees a certain level of interest return.

That is a very specific bit of ability on the part of the government if it is acceptable to the taxpayers generally of assisting a farmer who is in a situation where some place down the line he can use money that was maybe a little in excess a few years before. The contributions by the government increase it enough to make it a worthwhile operation.

We have to recognize that it is using taxpayers' money to match funds put into the specific account and that we are also guaranteeing a specific return, which I understand is 3 per cent above the prime rate. You, Mr. Speaker, would be happy with such an RRSP.

Why are we giving this kind of specific help in extending it to people who do not live in Canada and who are not citizens of Canada? The particular fund account is divided into two specific accounts, one of which is after tax: The producer part is after tax. The second fund, which is a specific section or will be kept separately, will be kept for the contributions by the government or governments—because the provincial government may also make contributions to this fund—and to the interest that is raised. In other words, it is set up in such a way that the farmer portion of it, which is put in after tax, and the government portion are kept separately. But both portions are going to be available to the farmer if he decides he needs them or if he qualifies for them.

• (1610)

If you are my age, Mr. Speaker, that qualification might be within a couple of years. So it is a particular situation which I think needs to be looked at. I compliment the member for Algoma in making sure that we in this legislature have taken a good look at limiting wherever possible the waste, the misuse that can come out of this.

It also relates back to the original three motions which were before this House that suggested that the total amount returned from any of the accounts here—NISA,

GRIP or the income revenue account—all be limited so that there would not be the excesses that are possible under the present legislation.

There is no doubt that the legislation itself, the structure under which this legislation is developed, the direction that it goes in making sure there is some kind of a net for the farmer, is acceptable. But if you link these moves in such a way that specific people who do not qualify, do not need, then it quits being a safety net and it becomes a method of giving money to people who should not be getting it.

That is what this particular clause does and what the other clauses that we objected to earlier, or which we think should be put in, also do.

Mr. Lyle Vanclief (Prince Edward—Hastings): The motion moved by my colleague from Algoma restricting the receipt of benefits from and participation in the NISA section of this Farm Income Stabilization bill I think is one worthy of serious consideration.

As has been pointed out by other members of the House, what we are doing is making this part of this program available to people who are not necessarily citizens of this country. This is a good part of the act, it is a very generous part of the act, and once in place will serve a very useful purpose, and hopefully will bring some more stability to the farm income situation that has gone on far too long in this country.

It is a part of the act that is going to require a considerable number of taxpayers' dollars to make it successful, with contributions from both the provincial and federal governments as well as from the participants themselves. I think we have to give some serious thought to this —not that we don't necessarily want foreign ownership of farms. If one wanted to be cynical, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if this is because of the benefit this would give to foreign owners as well as to Canadian ownership. I wonder if this is a message that the present government is sending to foreign owners, that if they get involved in the Canadian farming operations they can benefit from this type of program. I hope that is not the case, and I do not think that is the case, but it certainly would be looked upon and can be looked upon by potential or present foreign ownerships as a very beneficial way of bringing money, and it does allow them to bring money, from outside the country into the country to receive a basic interest plus a bit of a premium on that. This could be very beneficial for them. This would be at the expense of Canadian taxpayers.

I do not think the Canadian taxpayer has any strong objection to this type of program being put in place to lend stability to Canadian producers. That, quite frankly, is the purpose of this bill. However, I do not think it should be available to those who are not Canadian citizens or are not permanent residents of Canada. I am not at all sure that we are doing ourselves or the industry justice if we leave this out. I feel this amendment is needed in the bill to make it proper and to make it fair for Canadian citizens and for Canadian taxpayers.

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina—Qu'Appelle): Mr. Speaker, I, too, wish to speak in support of Motion No. 7 introduced by my friends from the Liberal Party.

As my colleague from Saskatoon–Humboldt pointed out, while we support the broad outlines of the legislation before us, the draftsmanship of it is so wanting that we are very much afraid that within the legislation carries the seeds of its own destruction. There are so many loopholes and so many opportunities for abuse in the legislation that we are dearly afraid that the cost of this program is going to accelerate way beyond what the estimates now are and because of that, the program will self–destruct.

We expected and we hoped for good legislation. It is something that this government has promised western Canadian farmers for many years now. I remember well the former Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Wise, in 1985 promising us a comprehensive farm assistance type program. It has taken the government, through many droughts, price wars and political campaigns, to finally come to Parliament with certain proposals with its legislation. It is amazing to us, given all this time, how faulty this legislation is.

Of course the problem that Motion No. 7 addresses is a serious one. It might not be significant in terms of total dollars and cents, but it will certainly drain money from the public purse to benefit individuals whom I am certain no member of this House on either side of this Chamber would want to see money going to, namely some of those folks who live and are citizens south of the border who farm in Canada and would benefit under this program. Surely no member of this House on either side believe that this program is intended to benefit those types of individuals. Surely one has to be a Canadian citizen or a

permanent resident of Canada to be able to seek the benefits of the legislation in front of us today.

It is this type of sloppiness that creates this type of government waste that the people back home are furious about. They expect something a little better from Parliament. They expect something a little better from our political system. They certainly expect something a little bit better from the Conservative government.

I think it astonish the farm folks back home, many of whom support the Conservative government, many of them who hoped that in 1984 with the defeat of the Liberal government that finally the concerns of western Canada would get a decent hearing in the Parliament of this nation. High on their priority list was some legislation that would introduce a permanent program to protect western agriculture from the ups and downs of the price wars that existed between the treasuries of Europe and the United States. As well, they would like some protection from the ups and downs of our weather and the uncertainty that this provides to western agriculture.

• (1620)

We know in the west that we can grow good products, products that the world needs. In the long term there will a market for those products. Those products can and should be sold at prices that would sustain an agricultural economy, that would sustain family farms back home.

What they were asking for generations from the national Parliament was some well thought out programs that would put into place some of the permanent guarantees, some of the permanent stability, to ensure that our farm families will be able to withstand the downturns and enjoy the upturns.

The legislation that we have in front of us today, Bill C–98, fails to do that. It is with deep and profound regret that the farmers in Saskatchewan—and dare I say farmers right across the country, many of whom were historic supporters of the Conservative Party—feel a tremendous sense of disappointment, disillusionment and betrayal by this party and this government.

When one gets back home, it is amazing to see the sense of hopelessness and the sense of cynicism that people have concerning our institutions, particularly our federal Parliament and our federal government. When we look at Bill C–98, at the loopholes that are incorporated in that bill and at the shoddy draftsmanship of that bill—I understand even the bureaucrats shudder when they look at the bill—we can begin to understand why the folks at home are becoming so cynical of the whole political process. They feel that they are not being listened to, that they have become marginalized.

On several occasions I have talked with farmers back home who have told me that they have voted for that party all of their lives, that their kids and their wives have voted for them. "But this is the last time", they tell me. They feel betrayed. They feel that we did not get a government in Ottawa that understood their needs and that was able to act on their needs.

It has taken a long time, from 1984 with the election of this government to now, almost seven years, for the government finally to get around to introducing the legislation the west has been wanting for such a long time. However, when it introduces the legislation, it is a piece of legislation that is totally unacceptable. It has within it its own seeds of destruction through the loopholes, the wastefulness and the exploitation that it would encourage. One wonders whether this party and this government really understand the needs of western agriculture.

My party has also introduced motions in this House. Motion Nos. 1, 2, and 3 attempt to put a cap on the program, to make certain that a few people will not get a large amount of the benefits from the public purse. I understand that up to 90–some per cent of the farmers who would be eligible for this program would fall under the cap of $100,000.

It is a means of ensuring that public moneys are well spent, that there will be the maximum benefit to the maximum number of people, rather than have it so open ended that there will be a few individuals who will be able to farm the system rather than farm in a manner that makes environmental and economic sense.

It is a piece of legislation that is full of loopholes, that has been sloppily designed and that deserves some major modifications. Therefore I also wish to indicate my support of Motion No. 7.

Mr. Murray Cardiff (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I will keep my remarks confined to Motion No. 7 wherein it indicates that it must be a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident.

It is very easy to diverge and respond to some of the comments that have been made. However I will not do that at this time.

Under the current legislation we have in place many programs in support of agriculture, such as the WGSA, the Crop Insurance Program, the Agricultural Stabilization Act, and so on. They recognize those producers who have farmed in Canada, regardless of their citizenship and/or the country of their residence. That has always been the case.

We have to recognize that we have a border which we share with the United States. It is probably the longest free-standing border in the world. We have several producers who live near the Canadian and American border on both sides and farm in both countries. Canadians are not excluded from U.S. programs, and we do not intend to start a system of cross-border exclusion.

For NISA, a producer must file a Canadian income tax form to be eligible to participate. In this case, a non-resident must report income earned in Canada and conversely become eligible under support programs.

To do anything different from this would not be consistent with other legislation we have. For this reason the government cannot accept this amendment.

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, I was wondering if a member of the government was going to respond to this very favourable and positive amendment put forward by the member for Algoma.

I saw, as I rose in my place here, the member for Algoma rising as well. He probably had a few things to say to the hon. parliamentary secretary in response to his response. Therefore, I will try to keep my remarks brief as well, to allow the mover of this motion perhaps to respond briefly to the parliamentary secretary.

I want to say a couple of things. First of all, I find it quite astonishing that the government is quite prepared to put away funds through this legislation, through the NISA account, for American citizens. As the parliamentary secretary indicated, this legislation is not any different from the Western Grain Stabilization Act or other acts. That does not necessarily mean that if they have made one mistake on one occasion they should compound it by continuing to make that mistake in other legislation.

As far as I am concerned, the NISA program has many faults and problems with it. I will deal with that in other circumstances. However, one of the faults with NISA is that it does not limit the matching accounts, government funding, taxpayers money, to Canadian citizens.

As I indicated earlier today in remarks in this House on the motions that have been put forward by a number of members, I feel very strongly that the NISA account is a reward for wealthy producers in this country and does not address the farm problems that are compounding the financial crisis at the farm gate.

I do not believe that the government has the intention of trying to solve the farm crisis in Canada, because the programs we see seem to continue to compound those problems. As I indicated earlier, the fact that there is a $22 billion debt in agriculture in this country is not being addressed by this legislation at all. In fact, no legislation since this government has come into power has addressed the growing farm debt problem.

• (1630)

There has been a number of attempts to address the income problems. Those obviously have been inadequate, just as the GRIP and NISA programs will prove to be inadequate because they are not addressing the long-term financial crisis that affects the individual farmers at the farm gate.

Certainly we have a world marketplace problem that must be addressed. The Americans are a big part of that. The fact that this legislation will allow Canadian taxpayers' money to go and sit in American accounts to exacerbate further our anger with the American farm bill is just atrocious.

The government opposite is refusing to accept what I think is a very simple, reasoned, and logical amendment. It simply restricts the payments on this account to Canadian citizens or permanent residents. It is perfectly logical. We in Saskatchewan have had a long history of

trying to protect Saskatchewan farm land from foreign ownership, particularly American ownership. Not only are we now prepared to accept Americans farming our land. We are also prepared to help them retire in California, New Mexico, or Arizona by matching funds that they are able to put away. It just astounds me.

We fought prior to the 1988 general election the issue of free trade. Agricultural producers in Saskatchewan, for the most part, voted against the free trade deal. We did not like what was being proposed to us in terms of agricultural matters.

We felt that the American agricultural industry was putting too much pressure on the Canadian system to allow for long-term development of the agricultural sector in Canada. We felt that if Canadian producers were going to continue to be successful in the world market and to maintain our markets world-wide we somehow had to prevent the Americans from doing what they are continuing to do, despite all efforts to the contrary: to take our markets and move their products and obviously their people into our areas.

The Farmland Security Act in Saskatchewan was designed to protect Saskatchewan farmers farming on their own land. This government and its Conservative buddies in the Government of Saskatchewan who will be there for a short period of time longer, I suppose, are doing everything they can to ensure that Saskatchewan farmers get the short end of the stick. This simple amendment corrects a major problem with a major flaw in this legislation. It would be very simple for the government to say: "Okay, we are only going to pay money to Canadian citizens". That makes a tremendous amount of sense to me.

I did not have the opportunity to sit in on a lot of the standing committee testimony that was provided when the Standing Committee on Agriculture met. Therefore I was quite surprised when I saw this amendment brought forward on the Order Paper. Like most people I had reasoned, without having to look for it, that the government simply would not be providing funds to non-Canadians either in the NISA or in pay-outs to GRIP. I am very grateful to the hon. member for Algoma for discovering this in the legislation, recognizing that something was not there which to my mind should be. It just had to be there.

For an act to allow Canadian taxpayers' money to be paid to anyone who is not a Canadian citizen in an industry which we consider so valuable and under threat from American interests is a matter which has to be addressed. I am obviously among many on this side of the House who will support this amendment when it is put to us. I hope the government will see fit to support it as well.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture is conferring with a Saskatchewan member of Parliament at this moment. I am hoping that the member for Swift Current—Maple Creek has managed to convince the parliamentary secretary to change his mind. I certainly appreciate any efforts that Saskatchewan members from all sides of this House can make to ensure that this act is amended properly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is the House ready for the question on Motion No. 7?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Pursuant to Standing Order 76(8), the recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma) moved:

Motion No. 8

That Bill C-98 be amended in Clause 10 by striking out lines 3 to 9 at page 9 and substituting the following therefor:

"10. No information submitted by a producer for the purpose of administering a program established under an agreement may be communicated, disclosed or made available to an official of the Department of National Revenue without the prior written permission of the producer."

He said: Mr. Speaker, the existing legislation provides that information can be passed from the Department of Agriculture, the programs running GRIP and NISA, to the Department of National Revenue. We do not necessarily agree that even that should happen. Surely, if it is going to happen, there should be the permission of the producer.

I know every member of Parliament in this House has had the experience of making representations on behalf of constituents and has had to get a waiver so that they could make those representations. If a member of Parliament has to get a waiver from his constituent to make representations, to get a tax refund or to get a reassessment, it seems to me the Department of Agriculture should have to do the same.

Yet, this legislation gives you *carte blanche*. You just push the computer and you get a spit-out of it. That would be bad enough if it was a federal public servant who was doing it, but it is not even being administered by a federal public servant. If it were a federal public servant, we could come into the House and give his minister hell here on the floor of the House Commons.

This program is all going to be administered by provincial civil servants. How does a federal member of Parliament get after a provincial civil servant who abuses the income tax confidentiality rules? Surely it is reasonable that the government has to get permission.

We had quite a debate in the committee itself. I do not want to relate what happens at the committee because that is not protocol here, but essentially the government says: "Oh, well, we do this. When you sign the form you have got to get permission". That is fine. Why not have it in the statutes if at some future time some public servant or government decides that it is not going to get the permission of the producer to get this information from the Department of National Revenue, that it will just go ahead and get it, and that it is authorized by Bill C-98 so why bother?

This amendment is a very simple one. It requires that if the government is going to call up information—and this is generally speaking a crop insurance commission of the provincial government from the Department of National Revenue—then it has to get permission from the producer.

I have talked to many Liberal senators. They have told me that if this thing comes to them like this, then there is going to be great difficulty.

• (1640)

I would suggest to the parliamentary secretary, who is usually a very reasonable person although not always today, that if he really wants to expedite the passage of this bill and does not want to have it bounce back from the Senate, then he should accept this amendment.

It is reasonable. It is fair. It is in line with what the government is already doing. I do not know why the government should not be prepared to simply accept the amendment which says:

> "10. No information submitted by a producer for the purpose of administering a program established under an agreement may be communicated, disclosed or made available to an official of the Department of National Revenue without the prior written permission of the producer."

It is a very reasonable, understandable clause. I was surprised at the incredible weakness of the parliamentary secretary's defence of the fact that the Government of Canada was going to provide a NISA account for non-residents and non-Canadian citizens.

To hear him tell it, NISA is like contributing to the western grain stabilization or receiving a benefit under the Agricultural Stabilization Act. For that matter, it is like getting the benefit which is implied when a producer delivers wheat to the Canadian Wheat Board and gets the initial price which may turn out to be higher than the market price.

NISA is a very special kind of deal. The producer can put in up 2 per cent of his qualifying income from his crop which is automatically matched by the government. He receives 3 per cent on top of commercial rates of interest which, right now, are probably 15 per cent. He can top it up with another 20 per cent of qualifying crop income. He will receive 3 per cent above the commercial rates of interest on that.

It is a very special arrangement. In this day and age of restraint, when we are cutting back on everything, we should not be passing this off as if it was the payment under ASA or under western grain stabilization. It is a very special arrangement. We are not proposing this kind

of arrangement for GRIP because it is a different kind of program.

The response of the minister was extremely weak on Motion No. 7. I would like to move Motion No. 8 which simply requires that the government gets permission from the producer whenever it is securing information from the Department of National Revenue.

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Saskatoon—Humboldt): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this motion as well.

It is becoming very much of a communications world. The ability to move information and data from one place to another is becoming a great part of our life. Because of that, we are endangering, to a great extent, our privacy.

We have a tendency to say that we can trust Revenue Canada. If we have nothing to hide, Mr. Speaker, then we have nothing to worry about. However, that really is not the point.

The point is that what this clause gives in its present form is that:

> Information submitted for the purposes of administering a program established under an agreement may be communicated, disclosed or made available to an official of the Department of National Revenue solely for the purposes of administering or enforcing the Income Tax Act.

This assumes that the Department of National Revenue will ask for the agreement, but chances are it will ask for it on a broad basis and it will get a report from the program which will have listed everybody who has decided that he or she is going to be part of any of these programs.

Consequently, that is putting into the public domain information which we have always indicated in other programs is not available in the public domain.

As the former speaker suggested, even if we had a specific administrator whose responsibility it was to say yes or no to whether or not that information went to the Department of Revenue, that would limit it considerably.

But the real issue becomes whether any farmer who is part of this program wants this information to become part of the public record. The way it is worded at present, it can be. But I agree entirely with the position taken by the member for Algoma that agreements should be confidential and it is up to the producer to decide what is and is not private information. If the government wants this information, it should come to the farmer for it. It should not be able to go some place else for it. In that case, the farmer has no control, or even any knowledge of what information is being given out concerning the business.

I think it is time we started taking a harder line on that kind of approach and this motion is a good start. In other words, if we are a democratic nation that puts a great deal of value in the individual and in the privacy of each one of us, then we must put safeguards into our legislation rather than leaving it open to any kind of meddling or information which can, not necessarily be harmful but which we do not necessarily want to be broadly known.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, that we can gain support for this particular motion. It is a very small change, it just goes from "information being available without any consideration to the participant", to saying that the participant must be at least informed. If he has nothing to hide, there is going to be no problem; if he does have something to hide, it is going to be a little more difficult to get it, I suppose. But that is still his right.

Mr. Lyle Vanclief (Prince Edward—Hastings): Mr. Speaker, this motion by my colleague from Algoma shows the diligence with which he has reviewed this bill. This is absolutely necessary. We have discussed this with members on the opposite side of the House and their quick answer is that this permission will be given on the application form.

But there is nothing in the legislation saying that that request for permission must be on the application form. I think in this country it is necessary and it is assumed that this type of permission be asked for.

This motion amending the bill serves the purpose of keeping the government honest, in making sure that it asks for that permission and does not go after this information without asking the private individual for permission to do so.

Again, I ask the government to reconsider. It is only common sense that the legislation say what the agreements do at present. This is necessary in order to make it legal and right and proper, so that the producers can have the protection they are entitled to in Canada.

Mr. John Harvard (Winnipeg St. James): Mr. Speaker, I would like to add my two cents worth—three cents?

I think the amendment is utterly reasonable. The government, in effect, is saying to us: "You have our word. You have our promise that before any information is passed along to Revenue Canada, we will seek the permission of the producer. We will seek the permission of farmers". In fact, it is telling us that the forms already contain that provision. Well, I do not think that is good enough. When it comes to enacting good legislation, we should do it in a business-like way. Let us not leave anything to doubt.

• (1650)

I know the government says: "Our word is good. Do not worry, we are going to be honourable about this". If that is the case, I think it is quite reasonable to ask the government to go just one more step. Put it in the legislation. Put it there in black and white. Before anything like this is done, it will be put in legislation. It removes all doubt.

I hope that members opposite will realize what we are asking for and pass this motion.

Mr. Geoff Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I would like to put forward a couple of thoughts relative to Motion No. 8. Certainly, one very similar had been dealt with in committee.

In any event, just before touching on that, there was some reference made to the previous Motion No. 7 by the member for Algoma and I am sure I will be allowed the same indulgence.

It is fairly evident that we have a long border between the United States and Canada, some 3,000 or 4,000 miles and that border is not one that is made out of stone, concrete or brick. It is not a Berlin wall, Mr. Speaker. It is one in which there are a number of natural occurrences such as rivers, streams and valleys. Along the length of a border like that, there would be people who farm, for no other reason than the terrain and the topography of the land on both sides of the border.

The understanding has always been that the rules apply equally to those people on both sides of the line. Therefore, it would seem inconsistent to exclude Americans or others, who farm on this side of the border from participation in the Canadian programs when our people are accorded participation in like circumstances across the way.

The Western Grain Stabilization Act, I believe, was amended some time ago and among other things it allowed the privilege of participation to non-Canadians under these circumstances.

I think it was in that debate that the hon. member for Prince Albert at that time said, and I quote him, from the July 8, 1988 *Hansard*:

> There is a concern that has been expressed about whether to extend this privilege of stabilization to non-Canadians. I know that that has to be dealt with within the Charter and it is something that we need to look at a little more closely, although I have no great concern about it myself.

He had no concern at all about extending stabilization to Americans a couple of years ago. It is hard to understand why there would be any concern today with the extension of that privilege of the farm income protection act benefits on a reciprocal basis.

Motion No. 8 is one which promotes a little bit of mischief, because if it was contained in the bill in the form which is proposed by the member for Algoma, it would, I believe, leave a false impression, an implication that a producer would have a choice as to whether to permit the exchange of information between Revenue Canada and the administrators of the program when in fact that is not the case at all.

With this wording, I believe that anyone reading it, such as a producer would assume that there was a choice involved. For that reason I have some concerns.

There are a couple of good reasons why the requirement is in the bill in clause 10 as written. I think the first is just a matter of audit purposes. There is a considerable amount of taxpayers' money going into these programs. It has always been the case that the taxpayers of this country expect prudent management of their money and they expect accountability. They would certainly expect that the program would be able to withstand audit. Then it becomes a question of the manner of enforcement.

At this point I would like to refer to the report of the Auditor General for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1990 in which the Auditor General had quite a bit to say in regard to the Department of National Revenue, and in particular, about the economies that could be affected

through the use of computerization and through the use of matching. Indeed what he noted was among other things that most of the current matching process is highly automated and does not demand a great many human resources. He was saying that in the context of encouraging more use of computerization and more use of matching between sources of information in order to reduce the horrendous audit cost when you have people involved manually trying to track things down and to secure the information that they would require in the ordinary course, in the normal audit of any expenditure of taxpayers' money.

Again, the Auditor General mentions at page 566 of that report that the computer matching is highly productive and could be expanded:

> Many new computer systems have been implemented in the last ten years to improve taxpayer services, management information and enforcement activities.

And so on. It indicates beyond any question and recommends that it would be wise for government in terms of economy to move toward more computerization and more matching and less reliance on person-years and the archaic and inefficient methods of the past.

Certainly, from the point of view of audit, which I think is inherent in any expenditure of taxpayers' money and there is a considerable amount of it here, it is not unreasonable to expect that if that is going to be done, and I think it has to be done, then it ought to be done in the most expeditious, most efficient way possible because I believe that all members of the House would want the administration of these programs done in the most effective and least costly way possible in order that the benefits can be paid out to producers rather than utilized in bureaucracy and that sort of thing.

The second point I want to make in regard to this is that I hope there is a potential, in regard to NISA, the Net Income Stabilization Account, that there could be some form of automatic triggering because one of the options is the taxable income. It might well be possible that there could be an automatic trigger through the exchange of information between the two programs.

It is quite clear that the information cannot be divulged in any event without the consent of the taxpayer or the program participant and the forms under the regulations have, as I understand it, that wording in them, wording which has been contained in every other application form for similar programs.

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina—Qu'Appelle): Mr. Speaker, I am quite amazed when I read the legislation and listen to some of the objections of the government members. Is this the same government that was so concerned about Revenue Canada and the Draconian methods that Revenue Canada used? Is this the same government where the member for Welland—Grey—Dufferin—Simcoe introduced a taxpayers' bill of rights?

I would really encourage the member for Welland—Grey—Dufferin—Simcoe to have a look at this legislation rather than leaving the House because it is totally destroying the piece of legislation that he was so proud of, the document that was called "The Taxpayers' Bill of Rights". The taxpayer's bill of rights is being raped by Bill C-98, and the member for Welland—Grey—Dufferin—Simcoe walks out. What is going on here? Is this the same government? Are these the same people who were so concerned about the rights and the privacy and the legal rights of ordinary Canadians against Revenue Canada, against the big brother state? Yet, here they are willing to allow our farmers across the country to be totally open to Revenue Canada. Before they can participate in this program, they have to sign away their rights as individuals and allow Revenue Canada to go into their records at will for the purposes of this program.

• (1700)

Surely one has to draw the line somewhere. Surely we cannot accept that this is the Orwellian world of 1984. Certainly all members who are concerned about individual basic human rights, concerned about the encroachment of government—particularly the tax department—are people who should be rising in their seats today to support the amendment that our friend from Algoma has introduced in the House today.

It is a good amendment. It is one really that the basic Conservative philosophy would be supporting. Dare I say that if those members were sitting on this side of the House, they would be leading a charge; they would be advancing on to the throne, on to you Mr. Speaker, as they so bravely did in years gone by. They would make a tremendous last-ditch stand on this issue of preserving the right to privacy of our farmers when it

comes to government computers and particularly to Revenue Canada.

When I talk to the folks back home about the GRIP and the NISA, farmers are just shaking their heads; they cannot entirely understand the program and they have not been given all of the information. I think, as well, when they recognize the loss of personal freedom in sections like the one we are debating today that gives Revenue Canada such vast powers, it will feed their cynicism.

A number of the farmers in my district are not certain that they can sign up on this program. They are quite outraged at the prospect of tying short-term assistance on to the necessity of supporting this program. In essence, what they are saying is that the way the government has set up the NISA and the GRIP, while it does not address the needs of the farm community, it appears they have to sign up for NISA and GRIP before they can take advantage of any *ad hoc* payment and program. They are angry that when they sign up they also sign away their rights to privacy. They are afraid of the Draconian method the government is using; the government is saying this is it, take it or leave it. If you leave it you are not going to benefit from any of the *ad hoc* programs. If you take it you are going to have to sign away your rights to privacy as far as income tax is concerned.

This Draconian way, this way of using the big black boots on the farm community, is something that is totally unacceptable back home. The farmers in my district don't like the program; it is not addressing their needs. They become more outraged the more they learn about it.

No wonder the government is in such a hurry to push this legislation through. It has had almost eight years now, seven years, to come up with a program. It introduces the legislation in what we all expect to be the dying days of this session. It wants to jam this thing through. It doesn't want to give it the proper scrutiny it deserves. It commits to the treasury potentially billions of dollars.

It does not want to listen to the suggestions that the opposition has come up with by which this program could become a smart program by targeting those in greatest need in order to have the maximum benefit of helping western agriculture. It is not interested in any of the suggestions. It just wants to jam it through with its boots. We find this to be totally unacceptable.

I too wish to indicate my support for the amendment that is in front of us today.

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, The Battlefords—Meadow Lake is one of those constituencies that is very much involved in agriculture. It is a constituency which rests a few miles north of Saskatoon and runs all the way up into the forest land of Saskatchewan. I have within my constituency some of the best farmland, the highest-yielding farmland, in the province and I run right through to some of the poorest farmland, the most marginal farmland, in the province. Therefore, I have some of the farming community that has been intensively involved in grains production and, without diversification, has been very hard hit by the changes in grain prices in the world market.

I also have those people who have had to all their lives carve out a little piece of land with a couple of cows, some chickens and hogs, and a small piece of grain land. Those people are the ones who are on the edge, who have no funds whatsoever to put into a NISA program. They have nothing in the bank; they are going from day to day. They are heavily in debt, making up a large percentage of the debt. They have not been involved in crop insurance or western grain stabilization. Therefore, any premiums that are going to be paid for a GRIP or NISA program are brand new expenses for a good part of the people who farm in the north-central part of my constituency.

For that cross-section of Saskatchewan producers, I am trying to speak fairly clearly to the government opposite which is putting together a program, an agreement, that is not on the table. The legislation that we are trying to deal with today that simply enables the government to create that agreement. The farmers of Saskatchewan, as are the farmers in the rest of Canada, are not in any position to debate or even think about the specifics in that agreement. There are crop insurance people in Saskatchewan right now going door to door talking to farmers, telling them that they had better sign up for this program because the premier of Saskatchewan has said that if they do not sign up for this program, they will not be eligible for any other program that comes out of Saskatchewan or out of the federal government.

These people who need cash to get their crop in the ground this year, who need to find a way to have their debt restructured so that they can survive until such time as there is adequate income produced from their industry, who are relying on us in this Chamber to provide for them an income protection and stabilization program that meets their needs have to be astounded by the way in which all of this process is happening.

I want to speak as loudly and as clearly as I can to the government opposite, to the parliamentary secretary, to the minister, to the Prime Minister, and say that these people need long-term income stabilization programs to secure their future in the industry and to secure the future of the industry in Canada: the agrifood industry, the agriculture industry, the farm industry. Without it, we are going to lose it.

Therefore, because all of this is involved in these agreements that are not on the table, we are stuck with having to amend bits and pieces of very flawed pieces of legislation in order to try to make the point to the government opposite that things are needed that are not there. Because this bill does not address the big picture, we are reduced to talking about little pieces of that big picture.

• (1710)

Therefore, I support the motion that is on the floor today from the member for Algoma. He has identified another small piece of this legislation that needs to be addressed.

I am concerned. If the government does not support this motion, which says that no information submitted by a producer for the purpose of administering a program established under agreement, may be communicated, disclosed or made available to an official of the Department of National Revenue without prior written permission of the producer, I am concerned about what it is behind its thinking. What is it trying to do if it will not allow the producer to be the one who controls the information that goes to Revenue Canada?

Many of my producers have had a great deal of difficulty with Revenue Canada over the last few years. Many of my producers live in that area that is marked for the northern tax allowance benefit program. Many of those people have been told one thing by Revenue Canada one day, and the next day something else. It has ended up costing them $2,500 to $4,000 in the course of a year because of the way in which Revenue Canada has dealt with them. They do not trust Revenue Canada and they certainly do not trust this government in the way it is handling this type of situation.

I give a number of examples of this Revenue Canada activity. For example, when a producer signs on to the program and puts so much money into NISA, and has money matched by NISA and fills out the forms and does everything that needs to be done, that is not done for tax purposes. That is done for the business purposes of that farm operation. The piece of paper that has that information on it in the GRIP or the NISA program does not recognize that that producer may have that year been separated or divorced or lost a child or had a number of things happen within their family circumstances that has affected their income tax operation.

For this program to be able to transfer information about that farm operation from an agricultural agreement point of view, over to Revenue Canada, for Revenue Canada to interpret it, audit it, review it, do whatever Revenue Canada wants to, is a tremendous breach of the privacy and personal circumstances of those individual producers.

The information that is provided to the GRIP and NISA programs, when they are created and set up, have nothing to do with taxation matters. We fill out tax forms, we pay our taxes, we do what we are supposed to do. Revenue Canada has to accept those signed documents as being the documents that are, in essence, the documents for tax purposes. Not the GRIP and NISA agreements, not the GRIP and NISA forms, not the GRIP and NISA programs.

Therefore, I am very, very pleased with this amendment, as I have been with the amendments submitted by my colleague from Moose Jaw—Lake Centre here in addressing some of the things that have been missing from this legislation.

In the end, I would like to see the agreements come before this Parliament for full debate before they are accepted. I would like to see the future of agriculture as described by this government in terms of its programming for the next 50 years put in front of this Parliament for debate.

Growing Together, the paper that outlined in very general and nebulous terms what this government thinks it wants to do, has not been up for debate by this country and by this Parliament. We are very anxious to see some future for Canadian agriculture. Dealing with matters such as these, pieces of legislation that simply give the government *carte blanche* is something we do not want to do.

I appreciate the time and attention the members from Moose Jaw—Lake Centre and Algoma have given to this bill, and to my colleague and friend, the member from Mackenzie, who has worked so hard for us in agriculture matters. I am very much in support of this particular amendment and I will support it at the time of the vote.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Pursuant to Standing Order 76(8), the recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma) moved:

Motion No. 9

That Bill C-98 be amended in Clause 11 by striking out lines 21 and 22 at page 9 and substituting the following therefor:

"members who shall represent Canada, the provinces concerned, producers and any other group of persons".

He said: Mr. Speaker, these amendments were brought forward from the committee. We do not have the final committee report of the bill. I would ask unanimous consent to read the modified version of this which has the same context:

That Clause 11 be amended by striking out lines 20 to 22 at page 9 and substituting the following therefor:

"special measures committee which shall consist of members representing Canada, the provinces concerned, producers and any other group of persons.

I think there is agreement around the House to accept that as read.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): So ordered.

Mr. Rod Laporte (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I would like to address a few comments to this motion if I could.

This motion is a good motion. It is motion No. 9 in the list of amendments. It has to do with clause 11 of the bill, which talks about a special measures committee.

A special measures committee is to review this bill where the minister is of the opinion that exceptional circumstances are important. In other words, where the third line of defence comes into place, there will be a committee that will be formed to advise the minister on what form a third line of defence should take.

The problem with clause 11, as was discussed many times during the committee debate, was that there are a lot of "mays" in this clause. It says:

That the minister may implement such procedures or other special measures as the minister considers necessary to determine the appropriate action to be taken to remedy those circumstances.

In other words, the third line of defence. It goes on to state:

That the minister may appoint a committee to be known as a special measures committee consisting of members who may—

This is the crucial word in this clause:

—who may represent Canada, may represent a province, may represent producers and may represent any group of persons who the minister considers appropriate.

In other words, the minister is to appoint a committee, but on that committee he can put anybody he wants. It

may represent Canada, the provinces, the producers. Of course, it may not represent them either.

The concern is that we should have a "shall" instead of a "may". Certainly, it would make people on this side of the House feel more comfortable, and I am sure it would make the producers across this country feel a little more comfortable if they know that the special measures committee shall consist of members who represent Canada, the provinces concerned, the producers and any other group.

What it does is solidify in legislation the fact that there will be a group formed that will be representative of producers; in fact, it will include them. We do not know what is going to happen down the road with this legislation. We do not know when third line defences will be required.

It is very important that we pass legislation that does not allow the government to get away with things. We do not know what type of government we will have in the future. We are sometimes surprised at the type of government we have had in the past. If we had a New Democratic government of course these matters would be different.

• (1720)

It is important regardless of which party is in power. All kidding aside, it is important whatever party is in power that there are some assurances, that the people of Canada have some assurances, that the producers of this country have some assurances that there is some protection for them in legislation.

What we are saying is that this is an important clause to be put in place. I am pleased that this matter was brought forth.

I want to make a couple of other remarks. This group, this committee that will be formed, is going to be a very important committee. The third line of defence is certainly an important factor in this whole bill. There is still much discussion to go on with respect to the third line of defence. As I said it will come from time to time. It is a worth-while committee which will be doing very important work. I am pleased that the government will see fit to let this motion pass.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Motions Nos. 10 and 11 will be grouped for debate. They are in the names of the hon. member for Prince Edward—Hastings and the hon. member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre. Both motions are in order.

They will be grouped for debate and an affirmative vote on Motion No. 10 obviates the need for a vote on Motion No. 11.

Mr. Lyle Vanclief (Prince Edward—Hastings) moved:

Motion No. 10

That Bill C-98 be amended in Clause 19 by striking out lines 25 to 34 at page 16 and substituting the following therefor:

"19.(1) A review of the operation of this Act shall be completed:

(a) on any day before April 1, 1993, and

(b) the expiration of every fifth year after that date by the Minister, who may for the purpose of that review consult with representatives of such organizations as the Minister considers appropriate.

(2) The Minister shall cause:

(a) the results of any review carried out under subsection (1), and

(b) any report received by the Minister under paragraph 5(3)(a) to be laid".

Mr. Rod Laporte (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre) moved:

That Bill C-98 be amended in Clause 19 by striking out lines 27 to 36 at page 16 and substituting the following therefor:

"(a) no later than October 1, 1992, and

(b) no later than the expiration of every fifth year after that day by the Standing Committee of the House of Commons on Agriculture or any special committee of the House of Commons established for the purpose, which may receive evidence from representatives of such organizations as the Committee considers appropriate."

Mr. Vanclief: Mr. Speaker, just to clarify this motion, it looks like the rewording of it changes considerably the wording in the bill as we have seen it before. It does not do that, other than the fact that the original bill says that a review of the operation of this act shall be completed.

In subparagraph (a) it says: "on any day before April 1, 1996".

The purpose of this motion is to make sure that the review is done prior to that. That is five years down the road. I know the government has agreed to a review committee earlier today, of which we are very appreciative, but I think it is important that we change this date. This motion says: "on any day before April 1, 1993", which is two years down the road, and it goes on to say at every five-year interval thereafter.

That is the purpose of the motion. I think it is worth while that it be placed in the bill at this stage, and I will leave the debate at that.

Mr. Laporte: Mr. Speaker, the motion I have placed before the House proposes two changes to the legislation as it now stands. The first, as does the previous motion, calls for an earlier review than is set out in the bill.

The bill calls for a review within the next five years and concern has been expressed by some producers, certainly producers from the prairie pools, that in fact there should be a review before that time, preferably starting within a year from now. We are dealing with new legislation that is going to have a lot of loopholes and problems. It is important that we try to get it right. In fact we look forward to a review process that is going to improve the program, that is going to provide farmers and producers across this country with a good program.

The second part of my motion deals with that review. The way the legislation reads now in clause 19, a review will simply be done by the minister and tabled in front of the House. Quite frankly, I have some concern with that in a couple of areas.

First of all, this is a bill that is dealing with hundreds of millions of dollars. This is an expensive program. This is also the first program coming out of the *Growing Together* paper. Hopefully there will be others, but this is the first piece of legislation. What we are doing is casting a new form; we are casting a new way for agriculture in this country. There is a new direction that is being set by this legislation.

It is very important as we set a new direction for agriculture that we ensure that there is a proper review process in place to fine-tune the legislation. This legislation needs some fine-tuning, but it is important that we have a review process in place that is going to deal with the review and the necessary changes down the road.

The best place that can be done is through Parliament. We are all elected here to represent our various ridings and collectively the country. What has happened with Parliament over the years is that we have an executive that tends to dominate this place, especially with majority governments. We have a situation sometimes where we have a few members of the House who really dictate what goes through this House.

What we are talking about here is a fundamental matter involving the democracy of this nation. This motion does not call for the minister to do a review but for a committee of the House of Commons or the Standing Committee of Agriculture to do the review.

The government has indicated, and we raised this in committee, why do we have to have that? The committee of agriculture can review this any time it wants and so on. It is more important than that. Although the committee of agriculture can do the review, there is no guarantee in legislation that it will do the review.

We are seeing right now in this House all sorts of negotiations and problems happening with respect to the Standing Orders which are now in the process of being changed. In fact, the proposed set of Standing Orders that I saw are going to further limit the abilities of members of Parliament to carry out their duty. It is for that very reason that we need some kind of protection in legislation so that producers will know that in fact there is to be an all-party committee that is to have a good and thorough review of this bill.

There are precedents in this House for that. Most of them are relatively recent. I draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to the Employment Equity Act which in section 13 says that "five years after the coming into force of this act, and at the end of every three-year period thereafter, a comprehensive review of the provisions and operation of this act including the effect of those provisions shall be undertaken by such committee of the House of Commons as designated or established by the House for that purpose".

An act to amend the Parole Act and the Penitentiary Act says in section 14 that "three years after the coming into force of this act a comprehensive review of the provisions and operations of certain sections of this act shall be undertaken by such committee of the House of Commons or both Houses of Parliament as may be

designated or established by Parliament for that purpose".

The Privacy Act in subsection 75(1) says that "the administration of this act shall be reviewed on a permanent basis by such committee of the House of Commons, of the Senate or of both Houses of Parliament, as may be designated or established by Parliament for that purpose".

The Access to Information Act says as well, in section 75, that "the administration of this act shall be reviewed on a permanent basis by such committee of the House of Commons, of the Senate or of both Houses of Parliament, as may be designated or established by Parliament for that purpose".

The Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act, in section 56, also calls for a comprehensive review by a committee of the House of Commons that is designated or established by Parliament for that purpose.

The Official Languages Act in section 88 does the same thing.

• (1730)

There is a number of precedents and what these precedents do is establish in the legislation a permanent guarantee that this legislation will have a proper and thorough review by a committee of the House of Commons. We have seen it, as I said, with the proposed changes to the Standing Orders which are to limit further the power of members to carry out their function as members properly.

I have only been a member since 1988, but I have talked to members who have been here for a lot longer than myself. They are saying that they continue to see an erosion of their powers as individual members and that it is more difficult for them to carry out their duties. I find that one of the most satisfying aspects of being a member is working within committees. I find committee work is most rewarding. We have all-party committees so we have a view from all political perspectives. The committee is on an open basis. It gets together and decides what it is going to look at, who is going to be a witness in front of the committee, and sets out the task for that committee. It is gratifying, enjoyable and rewarding. We have to be allowed to do our job. If the government continues to hamstring us then it is impossible to do that.

It is important to put this motion into the statute to guarantee to the producers in this country that there is going to be some thorough review, because this is a fundamental change in agriculture as we know it today. We are on the road to carving out a new direction. The government has talked, and I can say with some justification that there is consultation. There was consultation through part of this process.

After having looked at the legislation, farmers are now having some second thoughts on it. In front of our committee members of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture said: "We have to be careful. We are in a period of trusting the government to bring in decent legislation." They also said: "We have not really been consulted since August and we are hoping that the government will bring in proper legislation."

There have been comments like those and comments from other producers before the committee. Others who have appeared before the committee have said: "Look it, we are not really sure exactly which way the government is going with this legislation".

As committee members we have not seen any of the proposed agreements. They will not technically be signed until this bill is passed, but we have not seen the proposed agreements. We know snippets here and snippets there. We know what is going on in some areas, but we have not had a chance to look at this legislation. It is for that very reason that we should have in this legislation this clause that allows members of Parliament to carry out their duties properly so they can do a proper and thorough investigation of this bill at appropriate times, knowing full well that it will not be taken away at the whim of a majority government that wants to change the Standing Orders. It is for that reason that I do hope that the government and my colleagues in the Liberal Party will support this worth-while amendment.

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Saskatoon—Humboldt): Mr. Speaker, I guess it is a matter of either supreme confidence or supreme arrogance on the part of the government that it thinks that any legislation it can make is going to be perfect the first time out.

If we had a great deal of past experience that the legislation which has come out of this government can withstand the test of time, maybe we would say it was supreme confidence that would allow it to say: "We do

not need to look this legislation over for five years". However, we have many examples of poor legislation, legislation badly drafted and rushed through or pushed through without the right kind of vetting.

This particular legislation has within it a considerable amount of openness. On the surface that sounds like a good thing, but it is it is legislation which is allowing agreements to be established between the provinces and the federal government. It is giving a body outside the Parliament of Canada a considerable amount of power to spend taxpayers' money.

As I said, it may seem to be good legislation now but there is no guarantee. Possibly we might have even gone further than these two amendments and suggested that we have a continuous review of how this legislation is going to work. We could have suggested that we put on that review committee a number of producers from each of the provinces, from the administration of the plans and from the federal government.

This suggestion says: "Let us take a look at this as early as possible, in suitable times, and continue to look at it so that we have a fairly good control of how it develops".

As I said, if we could be confident that it was going to work and we had the experience that most pieces of legislation worked well, we would say: "Yes, go ahead. We will hold it for five years and then we will start looking at it". But we have to assume that it is not going to work. Many of the people who have looked at it closely are already saying that there are flaws in it which we are going to have to deal with as early as possible.

We are being told things almost daily by farmers who are becoming very knowledgeable about this legislation and about the agreements that this legislation allows. They are saying: "This is going to be good legislation for a couple of years, but what about that third year? There are certain things about this legislation that we already do not like. We should look at those right away of we should look at those at a very early stage".

If this legislation goes the way that some people expect it to go, it will go into huge deficits. Unless we have a consultation and review process in place which draws this Parliament back in, it is going to become a matter between the two ministers of agriculture within the agreement they have signed. That is not the intent of the legislation. The intent of the legislation is to allow this Parliament to establish a structure for the agreements.

It is taxpayers' money we are putting on the line here, and a considerable amount of money it is. Therefore, it behoves us as responsible legislators to make sure that we protect not only the farmer in a different situation who can be gouged by this kind of legislation or these kinds of agreements, but also the taxpayer who foots the bill in the end if this becomes a costly runaway project.

Much as I want to have legislation that is going to help the farmer, I would much rather have stable legislation which makes the farmer look at it and say: "Yes, I can be part of this for the next ten years". If it is going wrong, I do not want him to leave. I want him to get in there and help fix it up. He must have enough confidence in it so that he would be part of the rearranging of the requirements which make it a good program. If we do not have the kind of review that is being suggested by these two motions, then we depend upon the minister.

• (1740)

There are three things about this review of which we should be careful. First, who shall do it? Second, how often should it be done? Third, to whom should it go, who should be involved in it and who should look at the monitoring of it? If we do that, we will have some kind of continuous monitoring of the situation and the parts of the legislation and the agreements which we already recognize as being flawed can be fixed up so that they will work.

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, I have just a few short words.

An hon. member: Do you promise?

Mr. Althouse: Yes, I promise. The main point of this motion is to draw attention to what could be a real problem with the way the bill is drafted now. As those of us who are watching the drafting of agreements between the provinces and the federal government are aware, those agreements are being signed for five-year periods. They come into effect on April 1 and they will lapse and be re-signed on April 1, 1996. It is extremely difficult to do a proper review, a serious review, if the review is

reported in at the same time as the new agreements are signed.

It is extremely important, if we are going to have a serious review, that it be done at least a year before those next agreements are signed, or the whole effort is futile. Therefore, I suggest that we pick one of these dates that are before us—they are only five or six months apart—and have the review done after a couple of years of experience. In that way, we will have some idea as parliamentarians, as farm groups, as provinces, and as federal negotiators, as to what pitfalls to be looking for well in advance of negotiating and signing the next set of agreements.

The way the legislation is currently, it has no chance of being a realistic review process if the review must be tabled for public discussion at the same time as the new agreements are being signed. The review will have no effect at all if those two dates coincide, because the public will not have a chance to take advantage of the studies and the evidence that was found during the course of the review. New agreements will be signed without the public or the farm groups being fully aware of the shortcomings of the previous arrangement.

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina—Qu'Appelle): Mr. Speaker, I also rise in support of the amendments introduced. What the amendment is asking for is that we put in this legislation a time for the review; one suggestion is 1992 and the other suggestion is 1993, with just a few months' difference between the two.

The essence, as my colleagues from Mackenzie and Moose Jaw—Lake Centre have pointed out, is the need to have this legislation reviewed not in the distant future but to have it reviewed a year from its coming into effect. As has been pointed out, this is a commitment of large sums of money.

Second, there are various and genuine concerns which have been expressed about this program. In the province of Saskatchewan, the provincial government has organized meetings across the province to try to explain GRIP and NISA. It has not been all that successful because it does not know the answers to the questions that the farmers are asking. There is a lot of uncertainty about this program. There is uncertainty about what the benefits will be. There is uncertainty about how much the fees will be. There is uncertainty about how it will work. Those who are out there to explain the legislation cannot really answer the questions that farmers have been raising.

That is why the lukewarm reaction to the GRIP and NISA programs is not surprising. Many farmers are just backing off. In part, they are saying: we don't know enough about this. We are not prepared to commit ourselves and the sums of money that appear to be necessary to be able to enrol in the program. We are not prepared yet to commit that. That is another reason why this program should be reviewed.

It should be reviewed as well in one or two years time on the effectiveness of the program. Is it really doing what it is supposed to be doing? Is it creating the foundation for our farm economy, and is it doing it in an effective way? Or is it becoming a boondoggle?

There is a part of me that sniffs another scientific research tax credit scam here. It was a quickie little thing that the Liberals had introduced in the dying days of the government in 1984 and it resulted in the loss of several billions of dollars of money that was not properly used towards research and development. A lot of it was wasted, Mr. Speaker. Had that money been addressed to research and development then the state of research and development would have been in a much better position in Canada today than it is.

I have that same gnawing feeling here, that we are legislation that is so loose, its draftsmanship is so awkward, that it could result in the loss of large amounts of public money, most of which will not go to the people who need it the most. Most of that public money conceivably could go to a few individuals, while the vast majority of the farmers who need the money, those who are struggling to survive, who are being sucked under and down, are not the ones who will be receiving the type of benefits they will need in order to survive.

That is the fear I have about this program. I might be wrong. I hope I am wrong, I hope it does what the government claims it will do; that it will help family farms survive, and will allow a stable agricultural economy to flourish in Canada. I hope it does that. But let us make certain it does that.

Why not allow a review in 1992-93 to make certain that it does do that, to see if there is any need for some tinkering, for some amendments, for some adjustments? Every program needs adjustments. That is part of the

process of experiences; you experience things, you learn things, and you adjust as you go along.

Why does the Minister of Finance not do that? That is a whole other question about the Minister of Finance.

But what we are appealing for here in our amendment is for the government to recognize that it might need adjustments, and to allow those adjustments to be written into the legislation to ensure that this review will occur which involves all the farm organizations and the farm groups, that will involve Parliament and a committee of Parliament, the Standing Committee on Agriculture. These too should all be involved in the process of the review.

As members of this House, especially those who represent farm communities, we will pick up on how this program works and how it doesn't work. We will very quickly know the little idiosyncrasies in this program, the types of situations that even farm representatives, farm bureaucrats and even the minister in his office cannot even think of. We will pick up the little nuances and bring that experience and that information on to the floor of the House of Commons and into the committee on agriculture, so that our experience and the knowledge that we pick up in being members of Parliament are part of the input into this review process.

• (1750)

The amendment before us is a piece of common sense. I sincerely hope the government will be gracious in accepting the amendment because I believe it will strengthen the legislation. Hopefully it will create a bill, create a farm program that will do what I am sure all members of the House would like to see it do, enable a viable farm economy for Canada.

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, I just want to comment on Motions Nos. 10 and 11. Between the two I assume that Motion No. 10 will come to a vote first. It seems to me that it is the preferable motion because it suggests that a review be made by April 1, 1993. GRIP really starts August 1, 1991. The terminal point for that crop year is August 1, 1992. The final pay-out comes some time after that, perhaps in the fall of 1992.

If we are going to have a reasonable review of at least one full year of the operation of GRIP, to try to do it before April 1, 1993 is simply not practical.

I would hope that if the government is accepting either one of these amendments that it would accept the first one standing in the name of the hon. member for Prince Edward—Hastings. It allows for one full year of operation of GRIP plus a few months afterwards so that we can at least have a report and a review which really reflects one complete crop year operation, taking into account premiums, the benefits paid out and the over-all operation to ensure that it is a reasonable and fair assessment of the value of the program.

I hope these comments will be taken into consideration by the government. We are very appreciative of the fact that Motion No. 5 has been accepted and does provide for some review, although it does not specify an exact date but provides for a continuing review without putting the deadline of April 1, 1993, as Motion No. 10 does.

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, I have just three short points as the clock winds around to six o'clock. First, I want to thank the Minister of Agriculture for his presence in the House and take the opportunity to say to him that the farmers in The Battlefords—Meadow Lake and in Saskatchewan want to see some bridge financing now. They want to see some pay-outs in time for planting this spring. They are going to have to know about this now.

On behalf of the producers of Saskatchewan, of western Canada, in particular The Battlefords—Meadow Lake, I ask the Minister of Agriculture to make that pitch to cabinet and to make an announcement to the people on the prairies.

Mr. de Jong: Don't tie it to GRIP and NISA.

Mr. Taylor: As the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle indicates, don't tie it to GRIP and NISA. I think that is very important too. Do not say: "Sign up or you don't get this". That is a very important point. The finance is necessary now. We know GRIP and NISA is coming later.

The second point is also on a congratulatory note. I notice in Bill C-98 a clause concerning environmental assessment. This is the first time I have noticed an environmental assessment written into government legislation. I think this is a major step forward in the legislative process. I want to encourage the government

to continue to do this in all of its legislative processes, as well as all of its policy making. I have a couple of problems with the way in which it is written into the bill, but I am pleased to see that the step has been taken. The fact that we could have environmental assessment after the damage has been done by the bill is a matter that concerns me.

The third item I want to raise is this amendment. I support the motion in front of us, because I believe a review of the bill within the timeframe set out in the amendment is much more important than the timeframe set out in the bill itself.

The points that were made by the hon. member for Mackenzie are very well taken, that in fact this review must take place before any renegotiation, any new signing of any agreement occurs. The review process is very important.

As my friend from Moose Jaw—Lake Centre pointed out, it is very important we ensure that the review process is conducted by parliamentarians who have regular day to day discussions, communications, consultation with the producers who are the people who put us into this place to speak on their behalf in matters such as this.

With those few points, I hope the amendments that were put forward here today by members of the opposition will be supported by the government. I wish us all well in the deliberations that come and on our speeches at third reading, whenever that takes place.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Pursuant to Standing Order 76(8), a recorded division of the proposed motion stands deferred.

Normally at this time the House would proceed to taking the deferred division at report stage of the bill now before the House. However, pursuant to Standing Order 94.(2)(b) the recorded divisions will stand deferred until 7 p.m. Monday, March 25, 1991.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PARLIAMENT OF CANADA ACT

MEASURE TO AMEND—CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

Hon. Marcel Danis (for Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons) moved that the amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-79, an Act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act, be read the second time and concurred in.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, I know that the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier would like to be here to discuss this important motion. He supports the motion; he has worked very hard on this bill with hon. members on all sides of the House. I want to thank him on behalf of our caucus for his assistance on this bill. I know that were he here, he would speak for it. He had an important meeting in his constituency at this time.

I may say that we support the amendments. We believe the act will improve Parliament and we support it.

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, briefly, I know how hard members have worked on this bill and how quickly we would like to it to be given Royal Assent. Therefore, I move:

That the question be now put.

Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Mr. Speaker, as you know, there have been long deliberations about Bill C-79, the Parliament of Canada Act.

Some considerable progress has been made in dealing with the concerns that have arisen with regard to it.

However, there are still outstanding issues which need to be considered, which need to be debated. It would be unfortunate and undesirable to move to votes at this time with outstanding issues remaining. There are still some serious questions which need to be addressed. I think we need to spend some more time in trying to ensure that there is an arrangement which can be reached to the satisfaction of all the parties.

I do not think that would necessarily take all that long, and I do not think it is necessary to be precipitous. I notice, Mr. Speaker, that it is 6 p.m.

• (1800)

Mr. Hawkes: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Because of the important nature of it, I think there might be a predisposition in the House to not see the clock for a bit if people do want to put some of this perspective on the table.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is there consent not to see the clock?

Some hon. members: No.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[*English*]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 is deemed to have been moved.

THE BUDGET

Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Mr. Speaker, one theme that has come up repeatedly in the past few federal budgets is that Canada is facing a huge deficit. Too large a percentage of Canadians' tax dollars is going to paying the interest on the deficit. If moves are not made to decrease the deficit immediately, then the burden on future generations will be unmanageable.

I am sure we are all in agreement about the seriousness of the deficit and that reducing it is important. However, what we do not agree on is how best to reduce it.

Perhaps I can just make an analogy to describe what I see as the present government's method of reducing the deficit. Suppose a homeowner had a leaky roof but no money to repair it. Surely, it would be wise to find the money somehow in order to repair that roof. By not repairing the roof, in time it will fall and the homeowner will have no place to live. In addition, the loss of a substantial investment will take place.

Unfortunately, it is clear that the government and its economic policies follow an approach which is permitting the roof to fall in. It is not investing in the future.

We have seen cutbacks to social programs of all kinds that would have been inconceivable 10 years ago. Many feel that programs that make us proud to be Canadians, such as medicare, will soon be lost with the lessening of federal contributions to the provinces.

Colleges and universities are being forced to raise tuition fees because with less support from the federal government, this is the only way that they feel they can raise money to ensure continued programs.

The result is increasing inaccessibility of post-secondary education with more and more less well-off Canadians being turned away from an education. All these cutbacks are in the name of reducing the deficit. All Canadians must do their part is what we have been told by the government.

Are all these cutbacks really going to help reduce the deficit in the long run? I fear that by cutting back on social programs, we are allowing the roof to slowly cave in. The price we will have to pay to fix it in the future will be very great, indeed.

A Senate committee which looked at child poverty recently heard a report estimating that children who drop out from school due to poverty over the next 20 years will cost the economy $33 billion. That is an amount greater than this year's entire deficit.

Are poor families getting any help from the government in this budget? Clearly, they are not. On top of the blow of the GST, we are seeing further limits to cap funding, cuts to transfer payments to the provinces and still no national child care strategy.

There are no spending measures intended to combat the effects of the recession. Unemployment premiums will rise and the benefits from unemployment insurance have decreased. This is not good news, Mr. Speaker, as I am sure you will agree, for the 10.2 per cent of Canadians who are unemployed.

All these cuts I have just mentioned will certainly have an impact on poor Canadian families and on their children. Children are poor because their parents are poor. I think that, all too often, this government ignores this fact.

When we hear about 1.4 million Canadians being out of work, that is not just 1.4 million Canadians who are suffering. It is many more than that in terms of families with children who are finding it difficult to provide basic food, shelter and clothing for themselves.

That is 1.4 million families with children who are at risk of dropping out of school because of poverty. That is happening at a cost of $33 billion to the economy over 20 years as predicted before the Senate committee.

Is this the kind of social financial planning that will reduce the deficit, cut spending here and there to save now with the result being huge expenditures down the road to pay for those, by comparison, relatively small cuts now? I do not think so.

Perhaps I could provide another example: the case of low birth weight babies. Annually, Canada has spent over $200 million a year caring for low birth weight babies. All these costs do not end just with the initial care. Low birth-weight babies are at high risk of infant mortality, many illnesses, intellectual language and motor disabilities, increased rates of school failure and are at high risk of being socially maladaptive.

• (1805)

Would it not be wise to provide poor pregnant women with adequate food and nutrition before the baby is born? The cost would be marginal in comparison to the huge financial and human costs incurred after they are born. I do not think anybody could argue that this would not be a wise investment. Yet the government continues to ignore these problems in Canada, sending the message to poorer Canadians that they must do their part to help fight the deficit.

The fact of the matter is that if the government only invested in poor families now, the poor would be able to do more than their fair share to help fight the deficit later. They would help save the government many times over what it is saving by cutting social programs.

I am past appealing to members of the present government on the basis of their compassion, their compassion for poor children who are ridiculed at school because they wear clothes from the Salvation Army, and who cannot stay awake in school because they have not had anything to eat for breakfast. I am past the point of asking for compassion for the single mother who works eight hours a day for minimum wage.

I am trying to appeal to the only thing that the government seems to understand or care about and that is the bottom line. To invest today in Canadians is a good investment; it will save billions of dollars in the future. The alternative, which is presently being followed, is to save a relatively small amount of money now, with the result being a generation of Canadian children being sacrificed to poverty, only to incur greater expenses in the future.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre H. Vincent (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to respond to the hon. member's question and attempt to explain government spending and transfer payments to the provinces. Mr. Speaker, the hon. member does not seem to understand how the federal system of transfer payments to the provinces works. The two main ways the government transfers sums of money to the provinces are what we call established programs financing and equalization payments.

Mr. Speaker, established programs financing is money that is apportioned equally to all provinces on a per capita basis. Equalization consists in payments made to the so-called poorer provinces. Most provinces receive both transfer and equalization payments. This includes Quebec and a number of other provinces.

The provinces are given this money to spend as they see fit. This year, over $36 billion will be transferred by the federal government to the provinces, who will use this money to finance education, hospitals, and all other areas under their jurisdiction. Mr. Speaker, federal transfers to the provinces were not cut in the latest Budget because this year—if I compare with next year and two years from now—the provinces will receive more money than they received last year. There was a reduction in the increase, and I am sure the hon. member will understand when I explain this in terms of his salary. His salary hasn't been cut, but the increase to

which he is entitled has been reduced. He will get a raise just the same, however, and this is exactly what the government and the Budget are doing with transfer payments to the prvoinces.

Mr. Speaker, I see that my time has expired.

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard): Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to address an issue of major importance for Canadians generally, but more specifically for those in the Montreal area.

On December 10 last, I directed a question to the Minister of Employment and Immigration concerning the tragic job situation in the Province of Quebec. At the time, Quebec had lost 87,000 jobs over the previous six months and I had predicted that the situation would deteriorate even further. Mr. Speaker, I was right.

As recently as three months ago, I asked the Minister to take concrete measures to create long-term jobs as well as implement immediate programs to assist working men and women who had just lost their jobs.

• (1810)

In her reply at the time, the Minister of Employment and Immigration stated that employment programs were available in Quebec and that these programs would bring results which would meet my expectations.

I must say today that, as far as job creation is concerned, I am not at all satisfied with the results this Tory government's initiatives have brought to the Montreal area.

And the basis of the information I have received from Statistics Canada, I must conclude that the programs to which the Minister alluded to, last December, were nothing but empty shells.

Mr. Speaker, let us have a look at the results the Conservatives have obtained with their job creation initiatives. Today, one out of every four Montrealers lives under the poverty line. The unemployment rate on the territory which includes the Island of Montreal and Island of Laval reached 15.1 per cent in February, according to Statistics Canada. Of all the major Canadian centres, Montreal had the highest unemployment rate. Some 225,000 Montrealers are unemployed.

Such is the result brought about by this government's employment policies. Although the unemployment rate in the Montreal area keeps increasing, we are still without any economy recovery program to create long-term jobs.

On top of this economic flight we now have to contend with the last Tory budget. This Budget, tabled on February 26, is not providing any assistance program to the unemployed. Quite the contrary, Mr. Speaker: The Minister of Finance announced in his Budget speech a $100 million cut from its Canadian Jobs Strategy.

Another factor which is hardly conducive to job creation is the research and development funding reduction. As evidence of this, total 1987 federal government expenditures for that item amounted to 1.4 per cent of the gross national product, as compared to only 1.28 per cent now.

Mr. Speaker, I am asking the Minister of Employment how does she expect Canadians to believe that this government is serious when it affirms that it wants to create permanent jobs and help the unemployed when in fact all the basic job creation programs are reduced?

Then again, Mr. Speaker, bankruptcy figures contribute precious little to restore the confidence of the unemployed looking for work. In excess of 11,000 companies went belly up in 1990, and this figure has been on the increase ever since. The result of these bankruptcies is a direct increase in unemployment levels. I have already pointed out that Montreal's unemployment rate now stands at 15.1 per cent. Unemployed Montrealers are not in a mood to rejoice when they see these figures.

Quebec is not immune to the havoc stemming from the bankruptcy trend. The number of Quebec bankruptcies soared to 40 per cent in the first months of 1991. Mr. Speaker, Statistics Canada officials tell us that 1,618 individuals have sought protection under the Bankruptcy Act. Yet the minister told me on December 10 that I would be pleased at the outcome of job creation programs.

Who can possibly rejoice over a 40 per cent rise in the number of bankruptcies? Mr. Speaker, who can possibly rejoice over an unemployment rate topping 15 per cent?

I can assure the Minister of Employment and Immigration that nobody is pleased in Montreal. Would the minister care to ask the 1,800 General Motors employees who have just been told they will be laid off for one year whether they are going to be pleased?

I spoke about the economic situation in Montreal on a number of occasions since December 10, and again yesterday, Mr. Speaker, and I am still waiting for concrete measures designed to boost the economy in the region of Montreal.

So again I ask the Minister of Employment and Immigration what measures does her government intend to take to create jobs in Montreal before it is too late? What does the government have to offer to the 225,000 people who are out of work in the region of Montreal? Mr. Speaker, let us hope again that she has more than pious wished to express.

Mr. Pierre H. Vincent (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance): I am pleased to answer my hon. colleague from Saint-Léonard who, I must say, has got quite a nerve to come and talk about problems in Montreal. I would like to quote a few statistics, Mr. Speaker, if I may. My colleague quoted several, but here is one more, Mr. Speaker.

I was in private practice as a lawyer before I was elected to this House in 1984, and during the three years of Liberal rule from 1981 to 1984, my hon. colleague's own party, 4,000 jobs were lost—that is right, Mr. Speaker, not created but lost—in the Montreal region.

• (1815)

Since this government was elected in 1984, 276,000 new jobs created in Quebec, 83,000 of which in the Montreal region, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gagliano: What about unemployment!

Mr. Vincent: When you were talking, I listened. I would ask for the same consideration. As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, 83,000 jobs were created in the Montreal region by this government and its policies, compared to zero, actually minus 4,000, for the Liberal government from 1980 to 1984.

I would have a few more statistics for the hon. member, Mr. Speaker. Again, the hon. member is requesting policies and programs, but let me quote some figures to show what this government has accomplished since 1984. Employment rates are higher, the misery index is lower and the average family income, after having decreased by 1.8 per cent between 1981 and 1984, increased by 5.7 per cent from 1984 to 1989 in constant dollars, Mr. Speaker.

In the province of Quebec, the number of families with incomes below the poverty line decreased by 26.7 per cent between 1984 and 1989, while it had increased by 22.2 per cent between 1981 and 1984. Mr. Speaker, the last budget—

Mr. Gagliano: Come and tell that to the people of Montreal!

Mr. Vincent: —will once again ensure that these figures remain in the black for Montreal and the rest of the province. In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to tell my hon. colleague that we have no lesson to take from his party.

[*English*]

NORTHERN BENEFITS

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, on June 7, 1990, I rose in this Chamber to ask a question about the northern tax allowance, a matter which is very important to a large number of residents in my constituency in northwest Saskatchewan.

My question was not adequately answered by the Minister of Finance at that time, and subsequently he has announced that a new permanent program will be established to replace the current one, the one that we found most unfair and discriminating.

However, during the past year, and for some during the past 18 months, residents of my constituency have been left in the dark about how the old tax program and now the new one would be applied in their area. For one part of my constituency the question is still not resolved, and for another the resolution of the question is totally inadequate. I am still trying to get this government to acknowledge that a fundamental unfairness is affecting the residents of the towns of Loon Lake, Makwa, and the rural municipalities of Loon Lake and Beaver River.

I have contacted the finance minister and the minister responsible for Revenue Canada on numerous occasions, and they are well aware that the people in these communities and rural municipalities were once declared eligible for the northern tax benefit in 1987 but were then subsequently reviewed and disqualified and forced to pay back taxes for which they had been eligible under the program. They were asked to pay back taxes with fines, interest and penalties, including court costs for some who took the matter to tax court and some now in the Federal Court of Canada.

There are two bits of unfairness in all of this. First, the people of these areas were told one thing and then assessed differently and penalized for it. Second, they remain as isolated and northern as any of the other residents in the surrounding areas who are eligible for the northern tax benefit.

Let us take the village of Pierceland, for example, which is inside the boundaries of the rural municipality of Beaver River. By a special order, the people of Pierceland are eligible for the northern tax benefits but the rural residents who may live 50 feet outside the town's boundaries are not eligible.

A nurse at the hospital who lives in town will get the benefit; the nurse who lives out of town does not. There is no fairness in that program.

Another example is a teacher who lives in the town of Loon Lake but works in the town of Meadow Lake, a half hour drive away. That teacher who lives in Loon Lake does not get the northern tax benefit, but the teacher who may live across the street from the school in Meadow Lake does get the benefit. That is not fair.

• (1820)

I might add that the new program established by the minister does not correct the unfairness of this. I want to ask the minister to put Loon Lake, Makwa, the rural municipality of Loon Lake, and the rural municipality of Beaver River on par with the program for the towns of Meadow Lake, Pierceland and Goodsoil.

I also want to ask the Minister of Finance to re-evaluate the new program to ensure that there is justice within it. For most residents in my constituency currently eligible for the benefit, the benefit program will be phased out by the 1995 tax year under the new program.

All of these people presently benefiting from the tax program should not be disentitled by 1995. They are northern and isolated by definition. If they are considered to be in need of this tax break today, I see no reason why they should be considered less in need in the future when they are asked to be phased out of the program.

As I see it, all Canadians should pay tax and for the taxes we pay we must receive a service. For the residents of southern and urban Canada the direct government benefits for their taxes paid are accessible. For those who live in Ottawa for example the services of government are more accessible than for those who live outside of Ottawa. For those who live in southern and urban Saskatchewan, the benefits of government are much more accessible than the benefits available to those who live in northern and isolated communities.

But every resident of Canada pays tax and theoretically it is an equal portion of tax. For northern residents, the benefits are not as accessible as for those in the southern part of the program. The northern tax benefit, as I understand it, simply recognizes that northern residents do not have equal access to government programs and returns to them some of their tax dollars in compensation for that lack of access.

Otherwise, our unfair tax program is even more unfair with northern and rural people paying a greater share than is warranted. I am hoping the Minister of Finance can correct this.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre H. Vincent (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, according to the northern tax allowance program, which came into effect in 1987, every person who has been living in an eligible community for at least 6 months is entitled to the maximum $450 monthly deduction. Furthermore, the employee and his family are entitled to a deduction for travelling expenses paid up by the employer, including up to two trips a year for vacation purposes, as well as any travel taken for medical reasons.

Under the 1987 program, determination of eligible communities created some administrative problems because the criteria were applied on a local basis. It was time-consuming and led to mistakes. Problems surfaced because certain communities were eligible while neighbouring towns were not. This had to be replaced.

To this end, the Minister of Finance established, on April 29, 1988, the Task Force on Tax Benefits for Northern and Isolated Areas. Its mandate was to look into the eligibility criteria and to make recommandations for improving the program. The task force submitted its report to the minister on October 27, 1989.

The task force members took 18 months to study the question and prepare their report. They held consultations across Canada and made a thorough analysis of the subject. The task force concluded that a zonal approach was the most equitable and simple solution. Since the task force report was submitted to him, the Minister of Finance has received hundreds of letters and documents on this issue and has consulted with the communities concerned on many occasions.

Following these consultations and the review of the task force recommandations, the minister has developed a new northern tax allowance system for Northern and isolated areas. According to this new system, the inhabitants of the northern area, as recommended by the task force, will be entitled to the entire deduction, up to $450 per month, while people living in an intermediate area will receive half of the benefits provided. Moreover, residents of communities for which the benefits will be reduced or removed will have a long transitional period.

This new program meets adequately the general consensus on the need to reform the old program which provided disparate benefits. It will allow for elimination inequities, facilitation of compliance with the rules and improvement of the administrative process. It will also provide more efficient tax assistance to residents of remote areas of the North.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning, pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

The House adjourned at 6.25 p.m.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, March 22, 1991

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

[*English*]

PRIVILEGE

BILL C-79

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. I would like to begin by giving a brief explanation before I get into the real matter of privilege.

Last night in the House at about 5.58 p.m., the Minister of State and deputy leader of the government in the House of Commons moved:

> That the amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-79, an act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act, be read the second time and concurred in.

The minister did not make a speech. A Liberal member, the member for Kingston and the Islands, immediately got up, agreed with the minister and spoke for less than 15 or 20 seconds. Then the chief government Whip got up and moved that the previous question be put.

We were fortunate that the member for Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing, our deputy House leader, was in the House. He spoke until six o'clock, at which time again the chief government Whip rose and tried to have the House speak after six o'clock to end the discussion on this matter.

That is all within the rules of the House. I do not question that, but the result of what they did affects the privileges of each and every member of the House.

As a result of the Senate amendments, which the House has not had a chance to review or debate, we are opening a credibility gap which members of the House and the public will never be able to bridge.

As a result of the Senate amendments, whether they were intended or not—

Mr. Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to the hon. member and this sounds a great deal like debate, and not a point of privilege. I would just ask the Chair to take a close look at the words of the hon. member. We are here to debate an opposition day, not an issue that was before the House last night.

Mr. Speaker: I appreciate the remarks of the hon. parliamentary secretary. I was listening extremely carefully. I want the hon. member for Churchill to know that also. At the moment the hon. member for Churchill has set out certain facts that seem to have happened. He has agreed that whatever happened was within the rules of this place. I think when the hon. parliamentary secretary sought the floor, the hon. member for Churchill was just starting to say how this could possibly be a question of privilege.

I probably have to hear a little bit more to see whether there is any basis for privilege in the hon. member's presentation.

• (1010)

I think it is appropriate that the hon. member stay on the procedural point. It is going to be difficult enough for a Speaker to find a prima facie privilege when what seems to have happened was within the rules.

The result may not be what somebody wants, but that may not be anything resembling a question of privilege.

I am sure the hon. member for Churchill will hone in very carefully on exactly what the question of privilege is and assist the Chair accordingly.

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your intervention.

Had the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader been listening, he would have heard me say that I would just give a very short precis of what happened last night. That is what I did.

The Speaker is correct in inferring that I had said I was getting on to the meat of the matter of privilege that affects all of us.

As a result of what happened last night, I and other members of Parliament cannot amend the motion. The chief government Whip got up and moved that the previous question be put.

The privilege is this. As a result of what happened, members in this House are not going to be guaranteed fair and equitable treatment and process by the legislation as it now stands. The Board of Internal Economy in the House and the committee that has the equivalent responsibility in the Senate, with its majority formed by the government, will decide when they will issue their opinions to police officers and when they will not.

Mr. Speaker: The difficulty I am in is this: The hon. parliamentary secretary has just said "debate" and it most certainly is debate.

What we have here is something which even the hon. member for Churchill agrees was done within the rules. The consequence may be that certain things somebody in the House might have wanted to do cannot take place at this time. That may have certain results.

It may be that a piece of legislation has moved farther than members in the House would want. The substance of that legislation is hardly something about which when the rules are followed, I can enter into a debate. What I am being asked to do by the hon. member for Churchill, it seems to me, is to say that the legislation is offensive, at least in the minds of some members, and that as a consequence of what was done, certain things will inevitably take place under the legislation if, in fact, the legislation is ever passed by the House. That is so clearly a question of debate that it puts the Speaker in very great difficulty trying to infer even a *prima facie* case of privilege under the circumstances.

I understand that there may be strong feelings about this bill. There are strong feelings about bills all the time in this Chamber, but we have rules. If the rules are followed, the fact that somebody does not like the consequence of the bill is not a question of privilege.

Of course, I will ask the hon. member for Churchill if he has anything further to add to what he has already said that would change my view. I must say in fairness to all hon. members that the fact that hon. members may not like the consequences of a bill is not something that can be debated in the "guise"—I do not mean that in any sinister sense—of a question of privilege.

Mr. Churchill: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately because of what happened within the rules last night, we have a situation now where there will be two classes of MPs.

We will have a government majority on the Board of Internal Economy which will decide when unfavourable opinions will not be given to police officers.

SPEAKER'S RULING

Mr. Speaker: I understand the feelings with respect to the substance of the bill, if of course the bill ever becomes law. The government has moved that the question be now put, and there may well be further discussion with respect to the bill.

I understand the substance of this bill well. Hon. members will remember that I accepted their invitation to appear in front of the committee that was studying it. Whether I assisted or not I do not know, but I assure the hon. member for Churchill that if there is anybody in this Chamber who is aware of what the bill is about it is certainly your Chairman.

The hon. member has made his point, but it is not privilege and I cannot proceed with it.

The hon. member for Churchill is seeking the floor.

* * *

POINT OF ORDER

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, since you will not accept that I have a privilege when I believe I have a very basic privilege to the rights of members in this House, I will rise on a point of order.

Under the rules of this House and the way it has been conducted by this government, with the collusion of the Liberals, members will not have a fair hearing. There is no Board of Internal Economy hearing that we can trust in this issue. The board is not an ethics committee.

Mr. Speaker: It is probably best that we proceed to another matter.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: We do have a rule here that it is not appropriate to impute the motives of hon. members, despite the fact that in the course of vigorous debate it sometimes happens.

There is no particular need to rise on that point, and I think we should move to Orders of the Day.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: I am sure the hon. member would want to assist the Chair in maintaining the decorum that is necessary here. There are, no doubt, other ways to express the very strong feelings that are here, but not in a question of privilege. I am sure hon. members wish to co-operate.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S. O. 81—CORPORATE TAXATION

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona) moved:

That this House condemn the government for implementing a debt reduction program which accepts the savings of children but fails to ensure that large, profitable Canadian corporations and wealthy individuals pay their fair share.

He said: Madam Speaker, this motion, which I will read again—that this House condemn the government for implementing a debt reduction program which accepts the savings of children but fails to ensure that large, profitable Canadian corporations and wealthy individuals pay their fair share—has its origins in the disgust that many of us in this caucus, and I am sure many other Canadians, felt when we saw the other day the Minister of Finance accepting a cheque from a young child who was making his contribution to the debt reduction fund.

• (1020)

We feel that the Minister of Finance has really gone overboard in this case and that the entire government has gone overboard in its exploitation of children in order to help reduce the deficit.

Perhaps they could keep it down to a dull roar at the other end. We feel that the Minister of Finance, not only through his willingness to accept cheques from children in order to help bring down the deficit, but through other policies which the government has implemented, had an over-all policy which is harmful to children and which neglects one of the ways in which we could bring down the deficit, and that is to have a fairer taxation system. That is what I want to concentrate on today.

Mr. McDermid: Madam Speaker, the member is trying to deliver a speech and there are conversations being carried on, on all sides of the House. I think it very unfair to him. I would ask that there be some semblance of order so we can hear his speech.

Mr. Blaikie: Madam Speaker, normally I do not start raising my voice until I am about five minutes into a speech. I am trying to keep my blood pressure down, at least at the beginning.

To pick up where I left off, as I said, this motion has its origins in the disgust that we all felt watching the Minister of Finance on TV the other day accepting this cheque from children to help bring down the deficit.

I was at Wayoata Elementary School in my riding not so long ago to receive from a couple of students, Tanya Kessling and Dana de Boer, a copy of a song they had written about the environment. I think this is the kind of thing we should be seeking from children: their insights about the environment and the prospects for preserving Planet Earth, rather than their money to help bring down the deficit.

The money to bring down the deficit is out there. It is out there in the form of tax expenditures in the billions of dollars that this government maintains by virtue of its policies and its refusal to close the various tax breaks that exist for the big business sector.

If we pay attention to who was present at this debt reduction charade we had the other day in which these little kids were being asked by the Minister of Finance to break their piggy banks so that the minister would not have to tax the corporations, it was attended by the Business Council on National Issues, represented by Mr. D'Aquino. Mr. D'Aquino and his ilk represent a lot of people who either individually or as part of the corporations they either work for or own, pay absolutely no tax whatsoever.

Mr. Blenkarn: They appoint them. What is wrong with that?

Mr. Blaikie: I hear the member for Mississauga South going on and on in the far corner there. I hope that when I am done, perhaps he will get up and have something to

say on the record rather than making life difficult for me when I am trying to speak on the record.

The Business Council on National Issues contains a number of companies, and I will just go over their record in the years 1988 and 1989, that made a profit and paid absolutely no tax at all or a very limited amount of taxes.

For instance, BCE Incorporated, Northwest Tel Incorporated, in 1989 had a pre-tax profit of $15.1 million and paid only $0.14 million in taxes. BP Canada in 1989 had a pre-tax profit of $6.2 million and had a credit of $1.4 million. Brascan in 1989 had a pre-tax profit of $442 million and paid only $0.3 million in taxes and in 1988 had a pre-tax profit of $262.8 million and paid no tax at all.

The list goes on. I will not bore the House with all the details of these various companies that make millions and millions of dollars. In the column which reads "taxes or credit", we find zero after zero after zero.

We find, not only with respect to these companies as companies, that individuals in Canada have been benefiting from the tax reforms brought in by the Tory government, to the extent that the number of people who made over $250,000 and paid absolutely no tax at all increased as a result of the Tory tax reform. The number of people who made over $50,000 and paid absolutely no tax at all increased as a result of the Tory tax reform. These are in the years 1988 and 1989.

I mention that in particular because the Minister of Finance is fond of accusing the NDP of using 1987 statistics which applied before the Tory tax reform, but I am using figures now which are after the Tory tax reform.

What we are referring to here is what we think is the moral flaw in the government's approach to reducing the deficit. If the Minister of Finance was serious about reducing the deficit and about distributing the burden of reducing that deficit, then we feel that some significant sacrifices should be asked of the corporate sector. This is what did not happen in the budget.

In that respect we released after the budget a list of what we called the five top loopholes we felt the Canadian government could deal with. We referred, for instance, to the interest deductibility rule, the business and entertainment tax deduction, the manufacturers and processing tax credit, the dividend tax credit, and the capital gains exemption. All these five top loopholes, in our judgment, added up to some $6.7 billion.

There may be elements of these loopholes or tax breaks which one may want to maintain, but it is clear that there is a lot of money here which could accrue to the public Treasury if there were the willingness on the part of the government to make the same demands of the rich and the powerful in Canada as it makes upon children.

The government is fond of saying that it does not want to send the bill for the deficit to our children, and it is referring to the children of the future. It is willing, however, to send the bill for the deficit to the children of the present, but not all children; only the children of the poor.

What the government really means when it says it is not willing to send the bill for the deficit to children is that it is not willing to send it to the children of the rich and the powerful. They will continue to receive the tax breaks.

Indeed, the government only recently indicated that it is bringing in a reform in order to preserve, in its tax free status, the money put in trust, back in 1972, by a great many wealthy Canadians, presumably for their children. This was done as a result of reforms which took place at that time when money was put in certain trusts, would be there for 21 years, and then become taxable at the end of that 21-year period.

That 21-year period is coming up in 1993, and what did the Minister of Finance do just before he produced the budget in which he called for everyone to make a sacrifice? He indicated that he is going to change the rules with respect to trusts so that that tax break can continue in a way that it would not have continued if he were to leave the legislation as it is, and the people who have that money in trust could pay the tax which they have had 21 years' notice of having to pay. It is not as if this is some sort of surprise attack by the Treasury on people who have this money in trust.

If the Minister of Finance is serious about reducing the deficit, if he wants credibility when he says to Public Service workers that they have to accept the 3 per cent cap on their wages or that sort of thing, he must not continue to allow the corporate sector and wealthy Canadians to benefit from the reforms he has made in the tax system. These reforms have made the income tax

system less progressive. The reforms he is unwilling to make would collect some of that money from the corporations. If he is not willing to do that, then he should not really have the nerve to go to the Public Service sector or any other Canadian, for that matter, and say: "We want you to make a sacrifice".

• (1030)

It is the same hypocrisy which attended the government's attempt just before the budget to up the salaries of heads of Crown corporations by 4.2 per cent. at the same time, within days, it asked the Public Service to accept a 3 per cent ceiling. Actually 4.2 per cent does not look like that much when we consider some of the increases which have happened lately at the Bank of Canada. We have the head of the Bank of Canada, the architect of the government's fiscal and monetary policy, seeing his salary rise inappropriately at the same time as he is the great lecturer, telling Canadians about how they have to accept restraint.

All these things undermine the government's credibility when it comes to the question of deficit reduction.

I would be concerned about that for two reasons. First, if I thought the government were really concerned about the deficit, I would ask: "Why don't you do these things in order to beef up your credibility and therefore be able to fight the deficit better?"

What it points to is that the government is not really that concerned about the deficit. What the government is doing is using the deficit as a cover for what is really an ideological and philosophical agenda with respect to Canada's social programs and Canada's social spending.

It is using the deficit as an excuse to attack these programs because the Conservatives do not have the courage to do this in an open way. They know if they revealed what they were really up to, the Canadian people would say "no". They play upon the appropriate fear that all Canadians have of debt and they say they have to do these sorts of things. Therefore Canadians are more inclined to say: "Well, maybe that is what we have to do".

A study being done at Statistics Canada—we cannot get our hands on it yet—which shows that 44 per cent of the accumulated deficit owes its origins to tax expenditures, to the tax breaks which have been given to wealthy individuals and corporations going back to 1975 when the Liberals first started to turn the tax system into something which the corporate sector could use to make money instead of actually doing productive things. That is apparently what this study shows. The other 50 per cent is attributable to paying the interest on the debt which was created by that 44 per cent. Only 6 per cent is attributable to social spending.

Study after study has shown that social spending is not the cause of the deficit. It is other policies of the government that are the cause of the deficit. Yet it is the unwillingness of governments to admit that this is the problem.

Why are government members unwilling to admit that? It is because they would have to challenge their friends. Instead of taking decisions about funding that affect people and kids on the streets of Vancouver, the inner city of Winnipeg or Toronto or wherever, people they will never have to see, people who they do not run into in their ridings, in their lives and their social networks—they do not meet them at cocktail parties at the Canadian Club or the Carleton Club or any place like that—they prefer long-distance decisions which they never have to come to terms with the reality of.

If the Conservatives did the right thing, they would have to explain to their friends, the people who finance the Liberal and Conservative parties through donations and the people who are part of the social and economic elite of this country, why they are finally being asked to kick in and do their part. If they did have that kind of courage, if they were willing to say to those people "look, do we have a country or don't we have a country", it would not be unrelated to the question of national unity and the sense of whether or not we have a country.

It is hard to work up a sense of patriotism when we know there are people with money in this country who are unwilling to contribute their fair share to getting the country out of the so-called debt crisis we are in.

All we ask is that they contribute their fair share through the tax system. We are not advocating that instead of having kids lined up with their piggy banks we have individual businessmen and corporations lined up with cheques to give to deficit reduction programs. That is not how you fight the deficit.

You fight the deficit by having a fair tax system. We do not want to be part of this charade in which people line up to give money to the debt reduction fund. For that matter, most of the businesses, if they were to give, would find a way to make it tax deductible anyway. I believe there is such a provision. Let us not have this charade.

Let us have a fair tax system in which both the corporate sector and the rich and powerful in this country are finally asked to pay their fair share. They have not been paying their share for some time due to the growing imbalance in the tax system whereby the share paid by corporate taxation has gone way down and the share paid through income taxes has gone way up. Even that share, at the same time as it has been going up, has been becoming less progressive. It is more and more the middle class that is paying a larger share of the over-all pie that exists between the income tax and the corporate tax.

The other way of taxing is through consumption taxes, and that has also been going up. That also hit the middle class even harder than anyone else. The icing on the cake as far as consumption taxes was concerned was the goods and services tax.

Over all we have a tax system which is more and more asking ordinary Canadians to pay the bill for this country, while some people get away with the taxation equivalent of murder. Some of these large Canadian families, like the Bronfmans and others, own all kinds of companies and pay absolutely no tax at all. These people have made millions and millions through playing the tax system, through literally taking money out of the pockets of ordinary Canadian taxpayers and becoming millionaires at their expense.

When the day comes that this government and other governments are willing to ask them to prove they truly care about the Canadian community and that Canada is not just a place to make a buck, then we will know that indeed we have the kind of community that will be able to withstand the pressures that are now on it.

One of the reasons we have the crisis that we have in this country is that we have fostered particularly over the last seven years, the attitude that a country is simply a place to make a dollar, that there is really no difference between one country or another, that the only way to measure these things is by how easy it is to make money in that particular country.

The majority of people, almost everybody that I know, do not have the mobility of capital. They cannot move their money down to the Caribbean or to the U.S. or to Europe or anywhere else. They are stuck here in Canada and they are glad they are stuck here in Canada, because they consider themselves to be Canadians. They do not consider themselves to be a bunch of parasites who are always judging one country over another to see whether that is the best place to put their money or is the best place to invest. They have a sense of community and belongingness and rootedness in their country, instead of having the kind of attitude which has been fostered over the years and which has been accelerated in the last seven years, whereby everything is to be judged on how much it helps one to make money or not make money.

Money is the root of all evil, and it is worshipped on the other side of the House. That is the root of Canada's problems.

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): Madam Speaker, I am going to participate in this debate, but I want to ask the hon. member to apologize for one thing he said today, because it is totally inaccurate. It has never been said by the Minister of Finance, nor has it been indicated by the Minister of Finance. The member erred, and I believe I am quoting him accurately when he said that the Minister of Finance has asked kids to break their piggy banks to help with the deficit.

• (1040)

The Minister of Finance never said that. The Minister of Finance has never indicated that. The Minister of Finance has never hinted at that. It is a very unfair statement that the hon. member made.

I sat very patiently listening to the hon. member's speech. He made some very good points. In my speech I hope I will be able to counter some of the things he said.

But that was a very unfair statement to make. I know what he is referring to. I will refer to that in my remarks as well. The Minister of Finance has never done that.

The Minister of Finance is trying to make sure that the kids today will not have to pay our bills down the road so that their kids have piggy banks. That is what this is all about. For the hon. member to make that statement, that accusation is totally unfair. I wish he would retract it.

Mr. Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I have no intention of retracting the statement. If the Minister of Finance is willing to appear on TV accepting a cheque from a young child for the purposes of reducing the deficit, then he has effectively given the message to a lot of kids that maybe this is something that they should do.

If they do not have their money in a piggy bank, well then I guess they cannot go and break it. To the extent that not all kids keep their money in piggy banks, I take it back. But to the extent that some kids do keep their money in piggy banks, that message implicitly calls upon them to do the same.

It is the Minister of Finance who should be ashamed of himself, not me, for allowing himself to be portrayed in that way and for allowing himself to appear in a context which gives that message.

While we are on this question, why do we want to ask future generations to pay for the deficit? I am asking the question: Why do we want to ask certain sectors of the current generation to pay for the deficit and not other sectors of this generation to pay for the deficit? That is the point. No one wants to leave any kind of inter-generational debt to anybody.

If we are leaving any debt to future generations, it is a debt which we are not willing to pay now on the environment, so that they have air to breath, soil to grow their food in, and water to drink. That is the short-sightedness in terms of the environmental deficit.

We are leaving them a deficit they might never ever be able to repay because we are so concerned about our fiscal deficit at this point that we are willing to cut back on the green plan and other things that we should be doing at this point. We will be leaving them a deficit in terms of social and economic malaise.

They will be paying for more police from now until doomsday if we do not start to do what needs to be done in order to solve the problems in our inner cities. It is a question not of spending; it is a question of investment, where we are willing to spend the kind of money that needs to be spent now in order to avoid problems for future generations.

Where do we get that money? We get that money by creating the national sense of community and the national sense of will to go to these people and say: "Look, maybe in the best of all possible worlds you'd be able to keep your 80 per cent lunches through the business entertainment tax deduction and we could still fund medicare". But it is not the best of all possible worlds. It is a world in which we have to make choices between the $1.1 billion that goes to the business entertainment tax deduction or the $1.1 billion that the Minister of Finance took out of Established Programs Financing for medicare.

If I have to choose between having more nurses on the wards or more free lunches for the business community, I will choose the nurses every time.

Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough West): Madam Speaker, I listened very carefully to the member and I have read the opposition motion that he put forward. I am very interested in what the NDP has to say.

As the premier of Ontario has learned, it is one thing to be in opposition and criticize and criticize; it is another thing to be in government. The NDP federally has not had the privilege, and probably never will have the privilege of being in government, and deservedly so.

I say this because instead of offering constructive criticism, instead of offering an alternative which the NDP is prepared to put forward, all we hear is criticism and carping.

The member, with respect, spoke of the goods and services tax, and it is a perfect example of the hypocrisy of the NDP. It is my understanding, and the member can correct me if I am wrong, that the goods and services tax is opposed by the federal NDP. But I remind the member—and I know he was there because I saw him on television—of the NDP leadership convention in 1989. Certain resolutions were passed at that convention, and I would like to refer him to one and ask for his comments, particularly in relation to his constant criticism. I quote:

> Be it further resolved that it is the position of the NDP that any reform of federal sales taxes must exempt essential goods and services from taxation.

I do not know how the hon. member reads that resolution, but it is one thing to say: "we are against the goods and services tax, there should be no goods and services tax", and it is another thing to have a resolution of the NDP saying that: "essential goods and services should not be taxed". That implies two things: that non-essential goods and services should be taxed, according to the NDP and, second, that services, which have never been federally taxed before, should be taxed.

If that is not hypocrisy I do not know what is. I ask the hon. member to comment on that and indicate precisely what the NDP solution is to these problems.

Mr. Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I recall Liberals at one time in Ontario saying that the NDP would never form the government, and displaying exactly the same kind of arrogance that the member just displayed with respect to the prospects of the NDP in Canada. It may well be—and I certainly hope it is—that that kind of arrogance will be rewarded with the same kind of political event it was rewarded with in Ontario.

The hon. member says we do not present any alternatives. We have been presenting alternative after alternative after alternative in this House, before the budget and certainly after the budget, outlining in questions to the Minister of Finance in finance committee, in statements that we have put out, where we think the government could find the money that it alleges it needs to raise through the goods and services tax and through cutbacks to what we regard as essential programs, like health care and post-secondary education.

The alternatives are there. If the member would care to read *Hansard*, he would find that we have been making the case over and over again, both in the debate on the GST and on the budget. The alternative to the GST is to have a fair taxation system, is to raise the money which is now forfeited through a variety of tax breaks and loopholes that we have outlined very clearly for the member and very clearly for the Minister of Finance. If the member has somehow missed it in all the things that come across his desk, I would be glad to provide him with the information, because it is there.

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona for bringing this motion forward, because it does give the government an opportunity for the government to put some facts before the House and before the people of Canada.

Many members here will be familiar with the saying: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it". However, today's motion makes it painfully clear to all Canadians that my hon. friends of the opposition have the same problems with history as they do with economics.

If this were 1981 or 1982, aspects of the motion before us would have been timely and true.

Mr. Blaikie: With a Liberal government.

Mr. McDermid: Years of Liberal governments had put in place a tax system that invited abuse and avoidance, a tax system chock-a-block of loopholes, exclusions and exceptions. The result was that many large profitable corporations and wealthy individuals were able to avoid paying their fair share of the national tax burden.

• (1050)

Of course, there was another aspect of that decade-ago government that the opposition would also like Canadians to overlook. I do not think the NDP would, but the Liberals certainly would. That was a government, some of whose members still sit across the floor of the House although I do not see any of them today, which turned surging deficits and soaring debt into the favoured tools of national policy. We are living with the tragic results of that policy today.

The budget our government tabled last month works directly at getting Canada out of the current recession and back to growth and job creation. It is also a budget that makes a crucial watershed choice about how this renewed prosperity must be not only achieved, but more importantly, sustained.

Instead of spending our way out of the recession, the budget's plan for economic recovery emphasizes controlling expenditures and reducing inflation. This is the key to the lower interest rates that will boost consumer spending and business investment to fuel growth and new jobs.

This approach, the fact that we are committed to stopping the growth of the national debt, obviously has its critics. We have heard them today. That is absolutely no surprise. After all, for nearly 20 years through the early 1980s Canadians were accustomed to a federal

government whose fiscal philosophy could be summed up in two words: charge it.

That is why in 1984, the government was handing out $1.33 in programs and services for every dollar it collected in taxes. That is why in the same year, we had the highest deficit in history: $38.5 billion. That is why our national debt had more than doubled to more than $200 billion in four short years.

The interest payments on that 1984 debt we inherited are a direct reason the federal government is in a deficit position today. It is the reason our national debt is now approaching $400 billion or about $15,000 for every man, woman and child in Canada.

The interest costs alone on the federal debt will eat up over $43 billion next year. That is equal to 36 cents of every tax dollar Canadians pay. It is more than the government spends on old age security, unemployment insurance, veterans' pensions and family allowance combined. That is why the February budget refuses to buy short-term recovery at the cost of a return to surging deficits and a runaway debt.

The lessons in the last 20 years make the point bluntly. This spendthrift approach only creates a vicious circle of higher inflation and interest rates leading us back inevitably to economic decline, lost jobs and lower government revenues.

Instead, we have taken a different path, based on a continuing commitment to deficit and debt control. The February budget severely restrains the cost of government, including wages and salaries for the Prime Minister and cabinet, for MPs and the federal Public Service.

It also extends the two-year expenditure control program that we introduced in 1990, including limits on the growth of transfers to provinces. It now continues through to 1994-95. The savings achieved will total more than $15 billion.

What makes this a watershed budget is that it also takes dramatic measures, including the creation of the Debt Servicing and Reduction Fund to achieve nothing less than a fundamental change in the political culture of government spending.

These interlocking measures will transform good financial management by government from the realm of promise and political will into a matter of law. They will ensure that all revenues from the goods and services tax go solely to servicing the deficit and getting that debt under control.

Perhaps I am being a bit unkind to today's opposition motion, because it can be read to suggest, although grudgingly, that they do recognize that debt reduction is a vital foundation for Canada's long-term prosperity and economic health. If that is so, I applaud sincerely this great transformation of the NDP. I wish the NDP had been more forthright in sharing such an historic transformation with all Canadians.

If this motion does finally recognize that we can no longer borrow our way to real recovery, it still fails to acknowledge the wide-ranging changes in the national tax system that our government has introduced over the last seven years. Last November my colleague, the Minister of National Revenue released his department's 1988 personal income tax statistics. I specifically asked my hon. friend today what year he was quoting from for the 1988 results, because these figures provide the first substantial result of the tax reform initiatives that we announced in 1987.

The two major thrusts of the reform were to lower tax rates and to broaden the tax base. Lower rates provided an incentive to work and invest, thereby raising living standards. Broadening the tax base, by removing special tax preferences, makes the tax system simpler and fairer and reduces the opportunities for tax planning and avoidance that were most often used by high-income Canadians.

As well, another key element of the reform was the conversion of personal exemptions into tax credits, many at enriched values, such as the child tax credit.

Unlike exemptions which provide the greatest benefit to higher income earners, credits are fairer because they provide the same degree of tax relief to all taxpayers. The results released last year showed that, as we promised, the tax system has become more progressive and the burden of taxation was reduced for most Canadians, especially for those with lower to moderate incomes.

For example, the figures released revealed the following facts. The share of total personal income tax burden paid by those earning less than $15,000 a year was reduced by almost two-thirds, from 2.1 per cent of all income tax collected in 1987 to .8 per cent in 1988, a very dramatic drop. The share of total federal income tax revenues paid by Canadians with incomes between $15,000 and $30,000 declined from 26.5 per cent to 23.1 per cent. For those earning between $30,000 and $50,000,

the share of total tax revenues dropped from 37.3 per cent in 1987 to 35.7 per cent in 1988.

By contrast, despite a larger proportional reduction in their tax rates, tax revenues from individuals with incomes between $50,000 and $100,000 increased by over 25 per cent, while tax revenues from people with incomes over $100,000 increased by 31 per cent. That is exactly what tax reform was designed to do.

I also want to highlight that the number of seniors paying income tax decreased by almost 300,000 taxpayers between 1987 and 1988. This represented an increase of 43.2 per cent in the number of seniors not paying income tax.

Madam Speaker, shall I call it eleven o'clock and continue the debate after Question Period.

[*Translation*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: It being eleven o'clock a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 30(5), the House will now proceed to Statements by Members pursuant to Standing Order 31.

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 31

[*English*]

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. George S. Rideout (Moncton): Madam Speaker, higher than reasonable gas prices continue to plague the people of my riding of Moncton. In Ottawa, Consumer and Corporate Affairs has launched an investigation into high gas prices. My colleague from Ottawa Centre got newspapers to threaten to publish the names of those stations which sold gasoline at 60 cents a litre or more. Lo and behold, magically, gas prices fell to 58 cents.

Moncton has a similar problem. I have written Consumer and Corporate Affairs to request that the file be reopened. The price of gasoline in Moncton is consistently out of line with the prices elsewhere in the province. Moncton consumers can pay 6 cents a litre more than in any other part of the province. Gasoline is 2 cents to 3 cents cheaper just 10 kilometres outside the boundaries of Dieppe, Moncton and Riverview. It is not fair and it is not just, especially in these economic times.

To date, I have received no answer from Consumer and Corporate Affairs. Could this be because the people in Consumer and Corporate Affairs have to buy their gasoline in Ottawa rather than in Moncton?

* * *

INDIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. Allan Koury (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve): Madam Speaker, as vice-chairman of the Aboriginal Committee, I have the great pleasure to offer congratulations to the 20 graduates of the Mohawk Law and Security Enforcement Program on behalf of the Minister and the Minister of State for the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

These students from Akwesasne Mohawk community were able to participate in this course through the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development's Indian Study Support Program which provided $200,000 in funding to cover the course expenses and curriculum development.

Employment and Immigration Canada provided additional funding of $470,000 under the job development program of the Canada Jobs Strategy.

This is an important step in providing Akwesasne residents with an opportunity for long-term employment. This program provides reserve members with skills and enables them to contribute to self-government and the administration of justice on reserves.

The department is fully committed to programs such as this which support and encourage the wishes of native people to gain control of their own affairs.

* * *

BALTIC STATES

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park): Madam Speaker, my colleagues and I have just returned from the Baltic States where we witnessed the March 17 unity referendum. As you know, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia refused to participate, though each country overwhelmingly endorsed independence in their own referendums.

Their leaders said that the speed with which our Parliament expressed opposition to the Soviet military action in Vilnius on January 13 and in Riga on January 20 was significant in the build up of the international pressure which they are convinced averted a further military crack-down.

Talks between the Soviets and Baltic governments are now deadlocked. I propose that Canada, with our history as a peacekeeping peacemaking country, take the lead by promoting a special international conference on the subject of the Baltics.

The objective would be to bring interested parties together in discussions where objective criteria and the rules of international law would be used to determine the legal status of the annexation of 1940 and to set the semantics and terms of reference for further negotiations which will hopefully result in a resolution to this complex issue.

* * *

REFORM PARTY

Mr. Larry Schneider (Regina—Wascana): Madam Speaker, again I would like to address a concern I have with the Reform Party and its vague agriculture policy.

Mr. Manning admits to his lack of agricultural expertise and acknowledges that his agricultural ideas might not work. Not only is this an insult to farmers across the country, but it is also a knife in the back to the small business sector everywhere.

We all know that the ties between the economies of the agricultural sector and small business are inseparable. For every one dollar a farmer puts into the system, this results in a seven-fold multiplier to the economy of small business.

How can the Reform Party ask anyone to take it seriously when it does not appear to have the desire or ability to formulate an agricultural policy which would in turn mean support for the small business sector?

This concerns me and I think it should concern anyone who thinks the Reform Party has anything to offer this country or its citizens.

S. O. 31

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Madam Speaker, environmentalists resigned from the new Global Warming Advisory Committee today because the government's position is "gravely inadequate".

While scientists from across the globe have concluded that the greenhouse effect is real and other countries adopt urgent strategies to reduce releases of carbon dioxide, methane, halocarbons and nitrous oxide, Canada waits at the sidelines with no specific targets or timetables for reduction. Even the Canadian promise of last November in Geneva to freeze greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2000 has proven to be false.

The Minister of the Environment recognizes that projects, such as the Point Aconi thermal plant, should be subjected to a full EARP because of its massive carbon dioxide releases, yet he does nothing.

The Standing Committee on Environment on Monday will release a unanimous report on global warming called "Out of Balance—The Risk of Irreversible Climate Change" where once again we call for a 20 per cent reduction of carbon dioxide releases, a call for action now not next year.

Delay is a crime no future generation will forgive.

* * *

TORONTO HUMANE SOCIETY

Mr. John A. MacDougall (Timiskaming): Madam Speaker, the Toronto Humane Society yesterday decided to blacklist certain Canadians from their membership. In making the announcement of their exclusions, Secretary Treasurer Bob Hambley stated: "There's the morality of it. If you want to be involved in the humane movement, you have to take a stand".

Well, let me tell Mr. Hambley, the greatest environmentalists are those who live off the riches of the land. They are the trappers, the bushmen, the miners, the farmers. They have the greatest understanding of nature. They have a profound respect for the wild animals, the forests and the soil.

I say to those members of the Toronto Humane Society, those city dwellers who walk on cement, breathe the auto exhaust and keep their pet dogs and cats on

leashes and wander through a square block park, your righteous words sicken those who know better.

Care and respect for animals and the land begins with a profound understanding of environmental issues, not hollow and ignorant morality statements.

* * *

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan): Madam Speaker, in Tuesday's throne speech in Prince Edward Island, the provincial government announced the creation of a Ministry for the Elderly. For far too long the concerns of Canadian senior citizens have been ignored.

The federal government has a Minister of State for Seniors, but this government will not allow her to do her job. If this government had the needs of seniors in mind, it would not be cutting funding for basic medical research and it would do something about the poverty in which so many of our seniors are forced to live.

I congratulate the government of Premier Joe Ghiz. By appointing a Minister for the Elderly, the government of Prince Edward Island recognizes the contributions that seniors have made to Canada. These are the people who have made this great country what it is today. Every effort should be made to ensure that our seniors live with as much dignity and independence as possible.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SENATORS' ALLOWANCES

Mr. Jacques Vien (Laurentides): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate the hon. member for Ontario on his efforts to defeat an attempt by the senators to vote themselves a non-taxable per diem allowance of $153, simply for reporting to work. The Senate voted in favour of this controversial bonus last June. Imagine, in addition to their salaries and non-taxable allowances, the senators would have received a non-taxable per diem allowance of $153, simply for reporting to work.

All the efforts of the hon. member for Ontario were directed towards having this unnecessary allowance cancelled, and I am sure, Madam Speaker, that this would be greatly appreciated by many, many Canadians.

* * *

[*English*]

INDIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Madam Speaker, I have a copy of a recent letter from the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs to Manitoba's Minister of Family Services. This letter shows how trivial this government regards its constitutional responsibility to native people. In it, the federal minister states that federal funding for all social services to natives living off-reserve will be cut off after March 31, 1991, in nine days.

The federal government has a responsibility to all native people in Canada. It is shameful that the federal government is going to dump its responsibility for off-reserve natives on to the provinces. This is both unfair to the native people and to the provinces that will be forced to pick up the bill. It is even more shameful that the federal government would take this action with only three weeks notice and without any consultation with the provinces or native people.

It also poisons the constitutional debate in this country with regard to aboriginal people and federal-provincial relations.

It seems clear that this government is not interested in developing good relations with the provinces or with native people alike.

* * *

CROSS-BORDER SHOPPING

Mr. Jerry Pickard (Essex—Kent): Madam Speaker, Canadians crossing into Detroit at Windsor presently spend $1 million to $1.5 million weekly in the U.S. This border shopping is causing hardship for Canadian retailers.

The brain dead policy of the Minister of Revenue to fast track border crossings will sound the death knell for retailers in border areas.

This government's policy on trade and the goods and services tax have already made it easier and cheaper for Canadians to shop in the U.S. Instead of taking measures to reverse this trend, it is introducing initiatives that will

encourage more cross-border shopping. Ask the merchants, the unemployed, the seniors in Windsor and Essex-Kent what they think of the minister's PACE project.

• (1110)

In my riding PACE stands for lost revenue, forced closures, unemployment and unfair competition. It is breaking the backs of—

Madam Deputy Speaker: The time has expired.

* * *

[*Translation*]

TRIBUTE TO HAROLD HARVEY AND RICHARD BEAMISH

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Madam Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to Messrs. Harold Harvey and Richard Beamish, who discovered the disastrous effects of acid rain.

The two men made this discovery entirely by accident during the summer of 1964, when they were on Lumsden Lake in Ontario's Killarney Provincial Park, 50 kilometres south of Sudbury.

Working from canoes and backpacking hundreds of kilograms of nets and equipment on numerous expeditions, Harvey and Beamish investigated the disappearance of fish from vast expanses of Ontario's territory.

I also want to thank the Speaker of the House of Commons, the hon. John Fraser, for what he did as Minister of Fisheries in 1979. He took these findings seriously and asked the government to take action.

The people of Canada are indeed indebted to Harvey and Beamish!

* * *

[*English*]

CROSS-BORDER SHOPPING

Mr. Bob Kilger (Stormont—Dundas): Madam Speaker, cross-border shopping has caused serious economic problems for Canadian border communities. The decision by the government to consider using express lanes at Canada-U.S. border crossings and the recent Ontario Supreme Court ruling against Sunday shopping will add to the steadily increasing numbers of Canadians shopping in the U.S.

Total border crossings are up 15 per cent over last year. Crossings have almost doubled at the Cornwall-Massena border, up from 43,000 in February 1990 to 77,000 for the same month this year. The loss in business revenues and jobs outline the negative economic impact cross-border shopping is having on our border communities.

I call upon the government to immediately implement initiatives to help these communities deal with this threat to their economic survival.

* * *

NATIONAL UNITY

Hon. Alan Redway (Don Valley East): Madam Speaker, most Canadians with whom I talk want to see some fundamental changes made in Canada, but they do not want those changes to be made by 11 middle-aged white men in blue suits meeting behind closed doors. They want an open and fair process, a process that involves everyone.

I personally believe that the best way to do this is by establishing, through a direct election, a national constituent assembly. That is not a revolutionary idea. It has been done in other countries. But we need a constituent assembly in which men and women, native Canadians, Canadians born here and Canadians born elsewhere, are all represented in the same proportion as they appear in Canadian society itself, one which meets and discusses the issues in public.

That is the only way that all Canadians will be able to feel that they have personally participated in the process.

* * *

SUPREME COURT OF CANADA RULING

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Burnaby): Madam Speaker, the women of Canada have something to celebrate today. Yesterday's Supreme Court ruling that a foetus is not a person until it has completely left a woman's body simply reaffirms that life does begin at birth.

But this decision does more than reaffirm what equality-seeking women already knew. The decision serves as yet another reminder to this government that there is no need for an abortion bill, except one which promotes equal access to midwifery and other reproductive health services.

That is why the New Democratic Party calls on the federal government to work with the provinces in getting midwives out of legal limbo. Regulations, mandatory formal training, and the right to decent wages are initiatives that Canada must take to be the last industrialized member of the World Health Organization to legally recognize midwifery.

* * *

[*Translation*]

WORLD BALLOONING CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr. Clément Couture (Saint-Jean): Madam Speaker, today I would like to pay tribute to the town of Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, which will host the World Ballooning Championship from August 10 to August 18 this year. This world championship is a first for Canada, and will be attended by more than 400 participants from 35 different countries.

This unprecedented event will be one of the highlights of the tourist season in Canada. The Canadian government is proud of Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu and all the organizers of this tenth world championship, and it hopes the event will be a resounding success.

I also want to take this opportunity to urge all Canadians to come and take part in the championship events at Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu. You won't be disappointed!

* * *

[*English*]

WOODBRIDGE HOUSING PROJECT

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (York North): Mr. Speaker, Canadians want their government to listen to their concerns. They want to be consulted on national as well as local issues that affect them and their communities.

In my riding of York North, in the city of Vaughan there is a growing concern among residents that their views are being ignored in relation to the development of 106 acres of land for a housing project in the Woodbridge area.

I firmly believe that the minister of housing has a responsibility to listen to the concerns expressed by the residents, the ratepayers associations, and the elected officials of the area.

The residents know what is best for their community. Their concerns must be addressed and taken into account before construction begins. Madam Speaker, I urge the government to listen to Canadians and act accordingly.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*English*]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. Patrick Watson, chairman-designate of the CBC, has accused the Prime Minister, and I quote, "of playing games", "a cheap trick", and "indifference" in dealing with the CBC cuts.

Mr. Watson said in defending the savage cuts the Prime Minister expressed "a lofty kind of contempt for all those people who've lost jobs and all those communities that had service taken away from them".

How does the Prime Minister justify his own outrageous distortion of the facts surrounding the CBC cuts?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, in response to the acting leader, I must say that it is rather unfortunate that Mr. Watson placed such a distorted interpretation on the comments of the Prime Minister because the Prime Minister's comments were taken specifically from a quote from Mr. Watson which appeared in *The Globe and Mail* on February 27, 1991, in an article entitled "It's Time to Clean House if the CBC is to Survive".

The article goes on to say that despite the recent budget cuts, the corporation still has a handsome annual income and "I am frankly embarrassed we can't manage on $1.4 billion a year. That's a lot of money," chairman-designate Patrick Watson told *The Globe and Mail* reporter.

I think it is pretty clear in the quote, and I trust that it is accurate, that that is precisely what Mr. Watson said and that is precisely the context in which the Prime Minister referred to Mr. Watson's remarks.

I could go on and quote further from the article, but unfortunately there is some unparliamentary language in it, so I would not be allowed to do so.

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Madam Speaker, I would like to quote further from Mr. Watson who, I remind the Deputy Prime Minister, is the Prime Minister's appointee. I quote: "I think it's pretty sad that the Prime Minister should resort to a cheap trick—in order to protect his government, when he knows perfectly well the precarious situation the CBC is in".

Why has the Prime Minister distorted the comments of Mr. Watson when he knows that Goose Bay, Corner Brook, Sydney, Rimouski, Sept-Iles, Matane, Toronto, Windsor, Saskatoon, and Calgary have lost their local stations and local programming has been eliminated across the country at a time when the Prime Minister claims he is fighting to keep this country together?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, perhaps the hon. Acting Leader of the Liberal Party may want to ask Mr. Watson whether in fact he was quoted accurately or inaccurately. It is pretty clear that he stated, and I quote: "I am frankly embarrassed if we can't manage on $1.4 billion a year. That's a lot of money," said Patrick Watson.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Madam Speaker, what is so unfortunate about the CBC cutbacks is that today, the Prime Minister claims to champion the cause of Canadian unity. Real unity is impossible unless our two language groups in Canada are able to communicate. Why is the Prime Minister again trying to weaken the unity of this country? Could the Prime Minister or the Acting Prime Minister tell us how closing down CBLFT, for instance, the only French station in Toronto, will help anglophone and francophone groups across this country communicate? How will closing down this station help Canada's unity?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Madam Speaker, the CBC's total revenues have increased yearly since 1985. What the Acting Prime Minister said this morning is quite clear. Mr. Watson said in February that $1.4 billion was enough. It is up to the CBC to manage its finances and that is what it is doing. Did Mr. Watson change his mind about what he thought two months ago? Does he now think he is a politician? Is that it? What does he mean? In February, he said clearly: I have enough money. That is what he said about the $1.4 billion. Let the CBC look after its finances. It is a good service appreciated by all Canadians, and we want it to stay that way, but run by CBC.

• (1120)

[*English*]

Mr. David Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

Mayor Al Duerr of Calgary told the CRTC this week that Calgarians' "money is important to the CBC but our news and views are not".

Will the Deputy Prime Minister tell the House if any of his Calgary MPs stood up against the cutbacks affecting their city?

Some hon. members: Order, order.

Mr. Kilgour: Does he really think—

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. member has been in this House for quite awhile, and I do not think this is a question being asked of the government. The hon. member will put his question.

Mr. Kilgour: Will the Deputy Prime Minister tell the House whether he thinks that one local news show from Edmonton is sufficient for 2.3 million Albertans from High Level to Milk River.

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Madam Speaker, what is important to note here is that the global receipts of the CBC have been increasing constantly each year since 1985.

In the month of February, which is not that long ago, Mr. Watson seemed pleased and said that $1.4 billion was enough money. It is not for me to decide that.

These are the people who are running the CBC. Let them administer the work of the CBC. I appreciate how effective a force it has been in providing service to some Canadians. Obviously there are other means that are

being provided across the country. We do not support them all.

Let me just repeat what is written in *The Globe and Mail*. Mr. Watson said again: "I am frankly embarrassed if we cannot manage on $1.4 billion a year. It is a lot of money". That is what I want us to reflect on.

Mr. David Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast): Madam Speaker, I have considerable respect for the minister.

He knows and I know that the CBC is part of the glue holding this great, single country together. He knows the 11 stations that were cut have weakened the bonds that keep Canadians together: his province and my province and all the other 11 stations affected.

He also knows that the president of the CBC told the CRTC that the highest levels of governments, or some such words, were consulted about these cutbacks. Will he tell us whether he as a member from Quebec was part of the decision to cut back the CBC?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Madam Speaker, when you have more money, not less money, it means you are able to administer better, not worse.

There were decisions that were taken by the board of the CBC—this is totally appropriate—on how a corporation should be administered. We on our own behalf have seen to it that the CBC has received significant support in each of the years we have been in office, and that continues unabated.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

A few weeks ago in this House the Minister of Finance put forth a budget destined to fight a recession on the backs of the poor, the unemployed and the sick. Today Statistics Canada announces that inflation is 6.2 per cent higher than it was last year at this time.

In the same budget the finance minister announced that the government would be limiting the salaries of federal employees so that a secretary is expected to cope with this increased cost of living at a much reduced salary.

Will the throne speech, which the government has announced it will be making later in the spring, reverse this government's current policies that hurt low income and poor Canadians and introduce some economic policies that will help working Canadians?

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Madam Speaker, if the hon. leader of the NDP were to read the budget carefully, she would understand that all the measures we have taken are aimed precisely at helping working Canadians and at getting Canada back to work.

We are very proud on this side of the House that over a number of years we have created 1.5 million jobs. After seven years of record growth, the economy was overheating and we have had to take some measures to reduce it. It is sad to see many Canadians thrown out of jobs. We understand that.

That is why we must take measures to ensure that interest rates go down. They have been going down. Over the last three months they have gone down by 200 basis points. The inflation rate from early January went down six-tenths of a point.

We are heading in the right direction. We are confident that come this summer the recession will end and we will all be in a better position.

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Madam Speaker, I have a supplementary question.

The people who are unemployed, the 1.5 million Canadians who do not have jobs, the increasing number of children who are lining up at food banks and those families who cannot afford to put food on the table, cannot afford to wait either.

While this government is fighting a recession in which it says that everyone should share the burden, and seeing clearly that it is the unemployed who are paying the price, I point out to the government certain sectors of this country like the mining sector, which made 164 per cent higher profits this year and the petroleum industry, which made 149 per cent higher profits this year.

I ask the minister: Why not bring in a fair tax system which will ensure that everyone truly pays his or her share of the cost?

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Madam Speaker, in listening to the hon. member I would think that she believes in the policy that was used of government creating jobs. This was followed in eastern Europe. It does not work.

It is through private enterprise that we create jobs. By helping Canadians to create jobs artificially, competing with companies that already have difficulty maintaining employment, causing more people to be thrown out of jobs and less income to help social programs is not the way.

The only good way is to help the economy and to create an environment for Canadians to be able to get on with the job. This is what we are doing.

We have increased our contribution this year for the unemployed. We have provided the money to help them surmount this difficult period. We all agree it is a difficult period, but we must use the right methods to extricate ourselves from it.

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Madam Speaker, I am sure Canadians are hoping the "right methods" that this government has used—the failed economic policies of the goods and services tax, the trade deal and the high interest rates which have destroyed this country's economy—will not be the methods that this minister is talking about using.

[*Translation*]

Madam Speaker, day in day out, this government tells this House that national unity is an absolute priority. But it will take more than constitutional amendments brought in one after another to safeguard national unity. This government must build a country where it is pleasant to live, in the West as well as in the Maritimes and in Quebec. What kind of country does this government have in mind for the thousands of young people who are unemployed in Quebec and elsewhere in the country?

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): I wonder, Madam Speaker, if the hon. leader of the New Democratic Party imagines that by borrowing abroad and thus increasing the Canadian debt we would be preparing a better future for our young people. What these young people are looking for, Madam Speaker, are ways of building a life for themselves, of earning a living and of competing. Canada is a huge but sparsely populated country with no national market. It has to be competitive. It is our responsibility, as national government, to manage that environment. We brought about, in just a few years, the greatest era of prosperity this country has ever known and we are preparing yet another one.

* * *

• (1130)

BANKRUPTCIES

Mr. Mark Assad (Gatineau—La Lièvre): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. The rising number of bankruptcies in Quebec is proof positive that the recession is getting worse. According to the figures, there were 2,000 bankruptcies last month, which is 40 per cent more than in February 1990. For almost a year, the business community has been saying that high interest rates would provoke a recession. And now we have one! What does the minister intend to do to provide some relief, especially for owners of small businesses who have always created most of the jobs in this country?

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Madam Speaker, I am surprised at these comments coming from the other side. Perhaps I may point out that we had the beginning of a recession a few months ago. There was a major inflationary crisis. However, we have taken a number of measures and interest rates are now going down.

If we look at what happened under the Liberals in a similar situation for instance, a Canadian with a $50,000 mortgage had to pay $910 per month, while today, he would pay $411 per month, which is $4,900 less per year. Now that is the kind of policy that actively improves the economic situation in this country. Interest rates are going down, and that will give businesses a chance to recover.

Mr. Mark Assad (Gatineau—La Lièvre): Madam Speaker, the minister quoted figures from 1982, when this side of the House was in power. However, we were later judged by Canadians and Quebecers. We paid for it! And 9 years later, now that the responsibility is yours, I want to ask the minister this: Don't you think you will be judged as harshly by the people of Canada as we were at the time?

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Madam Speaker, if he applies the same criteria that were used at the time, I don't think so. Certainly not. In fact, according to Statistics Canada, inflation is down by 6/10 of a point. That's not bad in such a short time.

There is another point I would like to make. You mentioned the GST. Initially, because of the Liberal filibuster in the Senate, many small businesses thought the GST would not be enforced, so they did not bother to claim their inventory rebate. We had reserved a considerable amount for this purpose, over $1 billion. They started claiming this rebate around the end of January, however, so the savings will start being passed on to Canadians, and that is how this tax will help our businesses compete with the United States.

[*English*]

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

In the last 24 hours alone, another 160 companies and individuals have been driven into bankruptcy. In the month of February alone, in the province of Saskatchewan bankruptcies are up a stunning 60 per cent. In B.C. since the beginning of 1991, over 1,000 companies have bitten the dust.

Does the Deputy Prime Minister take responsibility on behalf of his government for this economic tragedy, or will he reject his government's insane fiscal policies which have caused this national tragedy?

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Madam Speaker, it is certainly not with any great deal of pleasure, far from it, that we see the difficulties that many of our companies and many Canadians are facing these days because of the recession.

The hon. member can repeat that every day. He can look at what is happening in the United States, and the same thing is happening in Europe. However, what is happening in Canada that is not happening elsewhere is that our interest rates and our inflation rate are going down. This will create the condition for a renewal of our economic progress.

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

In the coming months in the province of Saskatchewan alone, over another 30 farms will have to declare bankruptcy, losing not just their land but also their dreams, their pride, and a way of life.

Will we have to wait until the entire agricultural sector in western Canada is driven into bankruptcy before the Deputy Prime Minister and the Saskatchewan MPs understand the depth of destruction of their own economic policies?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's concern about the situation in Saskatchewan. As I am sure he is aware, the agricultural economy is largely a grains and oilseeds based economy and one that has been affected very seriously by the trade war that has been going on, the result of which has driven prices down to depression levels.

He knows that currently before the House there is a very broad and comprehensive agricultural measure, the Farm Income Protection Act, which speaks to the very point that the hon. member raises.

I appreciate the genuine support that members on our side of the House, and particularly the Liberals, have given toward moving this legislation along. If we can only get some support from the NDP to move it along quickly, we will be able to have it in place for April 1, so that farmers will be able to have the kind of protection which will provide stability and confidence for the future.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Madam Speaker, my question is for the right hon. Secretary of State for External Affairs.

Yesterday in Washington Canada's ambassador, Mr. Burney, said that his government would not let the environment get in the way of progress.

By progress, he was referring to the free trade deal which would encourage polluting companies to avoid environmental regulations by moving to Mexico, a country with such lax environmental standards that a 90–second breath of fresh air now costs $2 in the capital city of Mexico City.

Would the right hon. minister clarify whether his government shares the view that environmental standards and regulation are an obstacle to progress?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, neither I share that view nor does the Ambassador of Canada to the United States. New Democratic Party members would serve the interests of truth and of their own responsibility if, instead of misquoting Canadians when they declare themselves on important issues, they would quote them correctly.

If you have an issue to join, state the issue honestly. Do not introduce dishonesties into this House of Commons to try to improve your own partisan position.

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Madam Speaker, there is one thing you can always be sure of in this Chamber, and that is when you hit a nerve right on with the right hon. minister of external affairs, it is because of accuracy and not because of the dishonesty that he is always trying to flick over at the opposition.

I will quote from the transcript, and this is exactly what Mr. Burney had to say: "What should not happen, in my view, is that environmental concerns should not become the obstacle to progress toward a trade agreement". That is exactly what he said.

Is that the view that Canada is taking into these negotiations, that environment can play second fiddle, that all the polluting industries from Canada can simply move on down to Mexico?

I would like to hear some truth from the minister of external affairs.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Why doesn't the hon. member sit down and listen to some truth? He knows very well that what was said by the Ambassador of Canada to the United States was that these two issues have to be pursued with equal speed but on separate tracks. One is not an obstacle to the other.

If the hon. member would adhere to his own earnest demands for the truth, he would tell the truth in this House of Commons and not abuse his place as a member of Parliament by trying to spread falsities across the country.

Oral Questions

JAMES BAY AGREEMENT

Ms. Ethel Blondin (Western Arctic): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Acting Prime Minister.

Yesterday, Mr. Diom Sagamish, Vice-Chief of the Grand Council of the Cree, said:

> If we are provoked—and James Bay II is massive provocation—then I will not predict how Cree anger and frustration will manifest itself. Law and order is not always justice.
>
> Will James Bay be the next Oka? Respect Cree rights and your own constitution. That is the real answer.

I ask the Deputy Prime Minister, is the government really prepared to listen? Is it listening and is it prepared to take appropriate action to ensure that fundamental change is undertaken and that the government will deal directly with the native leaders on how the James Bay project is handled and their constitutional agenda?

• (1140)

Mrs. Dorothy Dobbie (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Madam Speaker, I should say that the hon. member raises an issue of great concern to all of us. But she should know, and I am sure she does know, that there are leaders of the Cree involved in the discussions about James Bay. Everybody is concerned that there be no further incidents up there.

If the hon. member is as sincere as she always presents herself to be in this House—and as I have said before, I am sure she is—she will work with us to ensure that the concerns of the Cree are addressed in the most appropriate manner and that we work towards a conclusion that will be suitable for everybody.

Ms. Ethel Blondin (Western Arctic): Madam Speaker, I am really offended and disappointed. I got an invitation from the Deputy Prime Minister to address questions to him on aboriginal issues and he does not answer today. That is appalling.

Mr. Andre: You want appalling, look in a mirror.

Ms. Blondin: If you want appalling, looking at yourself Harvie Andre.

Some hon. members: Bravo.

Ms. Blondin: Madam Speaker, the Cree of James Bay feel they have been abandoned by the federal government in their attempts to have federal laws and international conventions on the environment upheld.

Clearly, this government is unwilling to live up to its own laws and constitutional responsibilities. Therefore, will the Deputy Prime Minister accept the offer of Noel Brown, the deputy director of the United Nations—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not know if anyone on the right-hand side of the House has heard the question. I know that because of all the noise, I did not. The hon. member may want to put her question very succinctly, very briefly, please.

Ms. Blondin: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that. I want to ask whether the Deputy Prime Minister or the government is unwilling to meet its obligations and live up to its own laws and constitutional responsibilities. Will it accept the offer of the deputy director of the United Nations Environmental Program to intervene on behalf of the Crees to help resolve this issue?

Hon. Pierre H. Cadieux (Solicitor General of Canada): Madam Speaker, I think the hon. member has raised a very important point. It is a question of respecting the laws of Canada.

The governments in this country do respect the laws and if everybody did, it would probably resolve the problems.

As I said in committee yesterday, the solution is at the negotiating table and the Government of Canada is always there.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton—The Sydneys): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

The case of Linda MacDonald is a blight on the Canadian justice system. She was an unwilling victim of brainwashing, funded by the Canadian government in 1963. As a result, she lost her memory. She could not recognize her own children. She had to learn to walk all over again and she even had to be toilet trained.

The Minister of Justice has refused compensation to this person. Will the government reconsider this unfortunate and misguided decision and compensate Mrs. MacDonald?

Hon. Pierre H. Cadieux (Solicitor General of Canada): Madam Speaker, I am informed that my colleague the Minister of Justice, as indicated by my colleague here, has looked into this matter. I understand the matter is still before the courts and it would be inappropriate for me to comment any further at this point.

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton—The Sydneys): Madam Speaker, the Solicitor General is not correct in that. This matter was co-funded with the CIA. In 1962 the CIA withdrew funding and Mrs. MacDonald underwent these experiments in 1963.

In her reply to Mrs. MacDonald, the Minister of Justice said that the allegations of impropriety against the Canadian government were ill-founded. It is not an issue of propriety; it is an issue of negligence. The government was negligent.

In the sense of common decency, will government please admit its negligence and compensate Mrs. MacDonald?

Hon. Pierre H. Cadieux (Solicitor General of Canada): Madam Speaker, I am not sure exactly to what my colleague is referring when he says I am not exact. The case is still before the courts. The Minister of Justice has looked into it. There have been meetings with the attorneys representing the plaintiffs in this case and the case will go on.

It would be inappropriate for me to comment any further at this point.

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BILL C-79

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Madam Speaker, before I ask my question, I would like to apologize to the House for some of the language I used earlier this morning.

My question is for the minister responsible for the C-79 legislation which was before the House for two minutes last night. In a meeting that occurred in my office on Monday of this week with a representative of his office and the Privy Council Office, I was told that as the legislation was amended by the Senate, it takes away any obligation by the board to give any opinion that it has made with regard to the proper use or improper use of

the goods and services of the House of Commons to a police officer.

Will the minister tell the House what he thinks the public perception would be if the board refuses to give an opinion to a police officer, an opinion that that board has already made. What would the public perception be?

Hon. Marcel Danis (Minister of State (Youth) and Minister of State (Fitness and Amateur Sport) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, I think my hon. friend, who is a member of the committee which studied this legislation for over one year, has a very wrong impression of our Board of Internal Economy.

I heard his comments this morning. He appeared to say that this new board, reformed by this government in 1985, which all members of all political parties sit on—I sat on it for a number of years—is partisan. I can assure my hon. friend that it is a totally non-partisan board. His House leader sits on the board.

I can say very honestly that I have never seen one decision made by that board on a partisan basis. I really do not know what he is afraid of.

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Madam Speaker, a supplementary question to the minister. The problem is that the board under this legislation has been given new powers and new obligations. Again, the problem is public perception. There will be a Conservative majority on the board. What is going to be the public perception when the board refuses to give that information to a police officer after that police officer has asked for that information?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The minister may want to answer the question, but this is a highly hypothetical question. If the hon. minister wants to answer, of course I will recognize him. If not, we will go on.

Hon. Marcel Danis (Minister of State (Youth) and Minister of State (Fitness and Amateur Sport) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): The hon. member must know who sits on this board. The Speaker sits on the board; the Deputy Speaker sits on the board; the House leaders of the three political parties; the Whips; one member appointed by the Leader of the Official Opposition and two members appointed by the Leader of the Government.

Does the hon. member really think that his own House leader would engage in some type of conspiracy on something? I do not think so.

* * *

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. Today Statistics Canada reported that for the second month in a row prices in Canada were higher by over 6 per cent from last year. Statistics Canada said:

> This rate of increase remained well above the 4.8 per cent annual average experienced in 1990 as price levels continued to reflect the introduction of the goods and services tax in January 1991.

• (1150)

I ask the Deputy Prime Minister, why does this government insist on pursuing policies which are so harmful to the Canadian economy and its workers and consumers. Why won't it make some changes to help them right now?

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Madam Speaker, I have a feeling that this question has been asked and has been answered before.

I will repeat again that Statistics Canada has indicated that inflation rates, the CPI, is coming down. It has come down from early January to now by six-tenths of a point. Interest rates also are coming down and this, I believe, is the result of the only valid policy that can be followed by a government. The former Liberal government did not follow it and Canadians have been paying the price.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Madam Speaker, I would suggest the minister read the Statistics Canada statement which says in part that "the impact of the January 1991 introduction of the goods and services tax can still be felt in prices". Look at the price of clothing—up 9.9 per cent since last February. I ask the minister how such results can possibly help workers and the Canadian economy. Again to the minister: Why is the government so intent on implementing policies such as the GST which have such a devastating impact on our economy?

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Madam Speaker, the government itself had warned that there would be a one-time increase in the Consumer Price Index, so there is nothing unexpected there. But the government indicated as well that the introduction of the GST would rid Canadian manufacturers and companies of an extremely harmful federal tax and pump $9 billion into the economy, something which would be bound to have a very positive impact.

For their part, Bank of Canada officials also predicted that this temporary adjustment would not have any effect on interest rates and might easily be absorbed by the economy, if you will. That is what is happening now There was a sudden rise at the beginning because the billions of dollars the government had set aside to refund the old tax were not claimed by companies, convinced as they were that the Liberal senators would be successful in their attempt to prevent the adoption of the GST legislation. Such was not the case and, over the past few weeks, we have seen the six tenths of a point decline.

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[*English*]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Secretary of State for External Affairs. We have learned that as a consequence of the budget recently brought down by the government that the Department of External Affairs is considering cancelling the very important consular facility in Kiev in the Soviet Union, as promised by the Prime Minister during his trip to that country last year.

I would like to ask the minister if he will give us assurances in this House that this very important consular facility, long sought by Canadians of Ukrainian descent and very crucial during these very turbulent times in the Soviet Union will not be a casualty of the government's budget but in fact the plans will go ahead.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, if there are casualties, they will not be of the budget but of the long period of excessive spending by Liberal governments that put this country into a situation where it is simply not possible for us any longer to continue to follow all of the policies we would wish to follow.

A series of budgets have been brought down, which have begun to reverse a trend set in place by Liberal governments, a trend which was deadly to the future of this country. The most recent budget was part of that process. It will impact on all departments. The Department of External Affairs is considering the impact that particular budget will have on some of our activities but no final decision has been taken.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Madam Speaker, as the Secretary of State for External Affairs well knows, the recent Statistics Canada study shows that it is not a problem of spending, it is a problem of monetary policy and that this government has driven up the deficit.

I would ask him again, because we did not get the assurance. He knows that a commitment has been made by the Prime Minister. He knows that this is an extremely important facility at this time in the Soviet Union. In terms of the entire department can we at least ask this specific question? Can the minister assure us that the consular office in Kiev will not be a casualty of the cutbacks now being contemplated in the Department of External Affairs? Can we get that assurance today?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Canadians are paying a very high and continuing price for the extravagance of Liberal governments who sat in office as though there would never come a time when we would have to deal with the realities of fiscal responsibility in this country.

This government has recognized, with the broad support of the Canadian public, that those days cannot continue forever. That will have implications for this department as it does for other departments. We are considering the exact nature of those implications. No decisions have been taken on where exactly those limitations may apply.

Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

As the minister knows, Saskatchewan has been in serious breach of its Canada Assistance Plan agreement with the Government of Canada. The province has denied social assistance, as the minister knows, to

entitled people who refuse to participate in work for welfare programs, clearly a violation of CAP. Also, as across the country, welfare rates in Saskatchewan are well below what are needed in order to meet the basic needs of Canadians, another violation of CAP.

After months of promises to look into the evidence in Saskatchewan, will the minister act now to stop Saskatchewan from breaking the law? Why will he not enforce the Canada Assistance Plan agreement?

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I want to refer the House, first of all, to the statements that were made in the hon. member's question. He says I know that Saskatchewan was breaking the law in instituting a work for welfare program.

What I know is that allegations have been made by the hon. member to that effect. What I know is that I undertook to look into the matter, to have it fully investigated. What I know is that the results of that investigation showed that no work for welfare program existed; indeed, we have it in writing from the government of Saskatchewan that they do not have such a policy.

Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Madam Speaker, over a year ago, social action groups in Saskatchewan informed the minister, giving him names of people who had been denied social assistance because they had refused to work on the make work programs that the government had provided. He has had information, he has had names, and he has refused to act.

We know the minister does not have a heart, Madam Speaker, but now we know he has no guts. He will not enforce the Canada Assistance Plan.

Why will he not stand up for his responsibilities to poor Canadians? Why does he not take them seriously? Why does he not enforce the Canada Assistance Plan?

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): I do not know whether the hon. member lacks heart or guts, but he apparently lacks the ability to understand that this government must act on the basis of facts. If the hon. member has facts, none to date which he has tendered, let him bring them forward.

Madam Speaker, what we have done is investigate every allegation that has been made. We have found no evidence which would justify the claims made by the hon. member.

If we are talking about what is lacking, what is lacking most of all here is any substantiation of the claims of the hon. member.

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CHILDREN'S BUREAU

Mr. Rey Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

The children's bureau was officially opened this week, six months after its mandate was first announced by the Prime Minister. During those six months, over one million children passed through the lines of food banks. That is more than 3,500 hungry children for each constituency.

How many thousands more will we have to line up before the children's bureau and the Ministry of Health implement the anti-poverty plan of action signed by the Prime Minister at the World Summit for Children?

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Madam Speaker, along with children's advocates across the country, I welcome the creation of the children's bureau. I was delighted this week to be able to preside over its official opening, although it has been in place for some time.

When the hon. member talks about children's poverty, he should be aware of the fact that since 1984 some 300,000 children in Canada have been able to escape poverty and low income circumstances as a result of the government's policies.

The greatest threat to the future of our children is if we allow our economy to get out of shape and if we allow that massive national debt, that amounts to some $15,000 for every man, woman and child in Canada, to grow.

It is no surprise, Madam Speaker, when every child being born in Canada inherits a $15,000 debt, that the first thing they do is cry.

Mr. Rey Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is for the same minister.

Canada lacks a nation-wide policy on child health. The implications of this for poor children are staggering. They are much more susceptible to injury and death.

• (1200)

Will the minister make it a top priority of the Children's Bureau to develop a comprehensive policy on child health for Canada? Please give a straight answer.

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): A straight answer, Mr. Speaker, that is we are going to do everything we can to improve child health in Canada. We have already taken a number of important steps, including the creation of the Children's Hospital Injury Reporting Program, which is, for the first time, giving us a data base in Canada on children's injuries which will allow us to act in a very proactive way to reduce the deaths and injuries among children. Accidents are the major cause of deaths among children between the ages of 5 and 14 in Canada.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I have received notice of a question of privilege.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

COMMENTS DURING QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Madam Speaker, my question of privilege arises from the remarks made by the right hon. Secretary of State for External Affairs during Question Period. It would not be the first time this week that the minister's words during Question Period have been challenged.

The Minister used the words "false" and "dishonest" regarding a question that I put in the House. I want to seek a response from the the right hon. minister because the quotation I used is a verbatim transcript that I obtained from the main Library of Parliament from Media Tapes and Transcripts Limited, dated March 22, 1991, eight o'clock. I obtained it at 9.14 a.m. It is a verbatim transcript from World Report on CBC. The quotation that I used came directly from the verbatim transcript.

If the right hon. minister would like to clarify his remarks, I certainly hope that he would because I know he knows the rules of this place. When a member quotes from a document that is obtained from a public broadcast and is from the Library, it is not up to the minister to suggest that it is false or dishonest to use it.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, of course I was not suggesting that the transcript was false or dishonest. My comments related to the characterization of that transcript by the hon. member. It is a practice I wish he would stop and that members of his party would stop.

Mr. Fulton: Madam Speaker, I would ask that you review the "blues" of what was said during Question Period. I am prepared to move the necessary motion to have this matter referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections because I think that kind of nonsense from the former Prime Minister is an abuse of the privileges of not only myself as a member but all members of this House.

Madam Deputy Speaker: This, to my understanding, is a dispute as to facts and I do not think there is a case of privilege in that. Nevertheless, the "blues" will be checked and should there be, the hon. member will be advised. To my understanding, this is more a dispute as to facts than it is of breach of privilege.

* * *

POINT OF ORDER

COMMENTS DURING QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. David Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): Very briefly, Madam Speaker. While my colleague from Western Arctic was posing a question, a number of comments from across the way were stated. Some of these comments were quite sexist and quite unparliamentary. I was wondering whether we could reserve the right to raise a point of privilege after we have had an opportunity to review the "blues" and to examine exactly what has been said by ministers of the Crown with regard to comments directed at my colleague from Western Arctic.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. member may remember that at one point I did have to rise and ask the House to be a little more quiet so that we could hear whatever was said around the House. I am sure that should anyone have said things that I did not hear, it would then be deemed necessary for that person to apologize and the person would do so, but the right is reserved.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

PETITIONS

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to ten petitions.

[*Editor's Note: See today's Votes and Proceedings.*]

[*English*]

HERITAGE LANGUAGE SCHOOLS

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean): Madam Speaker, I have signatures from approximately 50 people who are concerned about the elimination of the cultural enrichment program of the Ministry of State for Multiculturalism and Citizenship.

The petitioners feel it will have a disastrous effect on the quality of instruction in heritage language schools. They would like the continuation of the preservation and enhancement of heritage languages as an integral part of multicultural policy.

These undersigned petitioners call upon Parliament to ensure that the quality of heritage language instruction in Canada is consistent with the preservation and promotion of our multicultural heritage.

FOOD AND DRUG REGULATIONS

Mr. René Soetens (Ontario): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, it is my privilege to present a petition today.

There are many constituents in Canada and in this case, many constituents from Scarborough and from my riding of Ontario, who are concerned about people who suffer allergies relating to the contents of food.

Through this petition, the petitioners request that the Parliament of Canada enact legislation amending the food and drug regulations in order to require manufacturers to list specific food ingredients and additives used in prepackaged foods in place of the general classifications now permitted. Further, the legislation should require restaurants and foodretailers to provide, on demand, to customers a list of all the food ingredients in their prepared foods.

LOW-LEVEL FLIGHTS

Mr. Dan Heap (Trinity—Spadina): Madam Speaker, I have another petition from about 300 Canadians, mostly in the Toronto area, which calls upon Parliament to withdraw Canadian Forces from the gulf region so we can be assured that they are not deployed in an offensive capacity.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to use our tax dollars for useful social programs such as child care, pensions, health care and education, and not for military adventures in the Middle East.

I have a petition from 100 or more people from the Toronto area.

The petitioners urge the government to commit our country to take all possible measures at the United Nations and elsewhere to bring an end to war, and to restore peace to the region of the gulf through an international peace conference on the Middle East.

MIDDLE EAST

Mr. Dan Heap (Trinity—Spadina): Madam Speaker, I have a petition, found in order by the Clerk, under Standing Order 36 from a number of people in the Toronto area who are concerned about the low-level flight training that continues in Labrador and parts of Quebec.

The petitioners ask that Parliament call upon the Canadian government to end all NATO-NORAD low-level flight training in Canada and to redirect Canada's NATO-NORAD funding toward enabling Canada's original people to gain control of their lands and their livelihood, and toward sustainable development for all Canadians.

PETRO-CANADA

Mr. David D. Stupich (Nanaimo—Cowichan): Madam Speaker, I have a number of petitions signed in communities from one end of my riding to the other stating that especially at a time of serious instability in the international oil markets, Canadians need Petro-Canada to act as a watch-dog on the mostly foreign-owned and controlled oil industry.

Canadians need Petro-Canada to take the lead as a green energy company helping them to make environmentally responsible energy choices and we need Petro-Canada to remain 100 per cent Canadian.

The petitioners humbly pray and call upon Parliament to repeal Bill C-84, an act respecting the privatization of the national petroleum company of Canada and keep Petro-Canada as a Crown corporation acting in the best interests of all Canadians.

• (1210)

COMMEMORATIVE STAMP

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park): Madam Speaker, these are petitions signed by Canadians from St. Catharines, Guelph and metropolitan Toronto again requesting that Canada Post issue a commemorative stamp in honour of Madam Sklodowska Curie who discovered radium and who helped heal many people around the world, including Canadians. It would be only fitting that Canada issue a stamp in her memory on the 125th anniversary of her birth.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Shall all questions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S. O. 81—CORPORATE TAXATION

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Blaikie (p. 18859).

Madam Deputy Speaker: When the House began Statements by Members and Question Period, the hon. Minister of State for Finance and Privatization had the floor. He had 10 minutes remaining for his speech.

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): Madam Speaker, I appreciate that. When we interrupted for Statements by Members and Question Period, I was just reviewing the changes in the tax system and the results of tax reform which are very positive and have provided concrete evidence of the mistaken assumptions and unwarranted condemnation from the New Democratic Party at the heart of today's motion.

They highlight how the fundamental structural changes we have taken deliver tangible benefits, benefits I might say, assisting Canadians today at a time of economic weakness and hardship, when in fact they are most necessary.

Under our government, Canada's personal income tax system has indeed become more progressive and fair, reducing the burden of taxation on those most in need. The reforms have ensured that those Canadians who enjoy above average incomes are paying the increased share of the national tax burden, which their affluence makes reasonable.

What about corporations? We heard about those this morning. Here again, the opposition's motion is about as outdated as its economics. When we first took office in 1984 we recognized that there were problems with the tax system we inherited when it came to business paying it's share of the national tax burden. That is why in 1987 we introduced measures to eliminate loopholes that had allowed too many businesses to avoid paying any corporate income tax, even when they were fully profitable. That is not all we did.

This motion seems to forget that in order to help in the battle against the large corporations tax, in order to help against the national deficit, the 1989 budget included the large corporations tax. This measure, one of those that opposition members in the Senate, I might say, refused to pass for over a year, ensures that all large corporations will pay tax.

The bottom line impact of these measures is emerging. Government revenue figures for 1989-90 show that at a time of declining corporate profitability, total corporate tax receipts actually increased some 11 per cent. In the banking sector alone, which paid very low levels of tax in the early 1980s, federal corporate income taxes in 1989 amounted to $1 billion, so changes have been made.

In fact, leaving aside the impact of the recession, the over-all impact of tax reform and the large corporations tax has increased the government's revenue from corporate income tax by $2 billion annually compared to what it would be under the previous system. Yes, there are

still companies which rate as profitable, but which do not pay corporate income tax, as my friend from Winnipeg Transcona pointed out this morning. However, there is no favouritism involved, no conspiracy against the hard-working taxpayer, no exemption from the struggle to control the deficit.

One of the things he forgets to conveniently mention when he talks about corporations that do not pay taxes in a given year is that he does not go back to see if they had losses in the year before, which of course they can write off. If the profits do not cover those losses, then it is still not a profitable company, although it shows that it made a profit in any given year.

The figures the New Democratic Party stands up in the House day after day and lays on us are somewhat misleading, making it sound like these corporations are cheating the tax system when, in fact, they are not. The combination of tax reform and the large corporation tax should cut in half the number of profitable corporations which do not pay tax. All large corporations will pay tax due to the large corporations tax.

Among the small and medium-sized profitable firms which are not taxed, the majority of these will not pay tax, as I mentioned, because of losses in previous years.

The blunt truth is that this government has taken concrete and historic action to reform the tax system we inherited. By perpetuating the myth of the corporate welfare bum, this motion sadly demonstrates the lack of substance and the absence, I might say, of meaningful alternatives which the combined opposition brings to bear on today's dilemmas. It is political grandstanding at its most cynical best.

There is a related issue I want to address head on which was brought up today by the hon. member. This is the argument that the 80 per cent tax write-off which business can claim on business related meals and entertainment expenses is a tax boondoggle and should be abolished.

This is a claim that blindly ignores the competitive reality confronting Canadian businesses. The ability to deduct these costs as legitimate business expenses is a fact of life in the United States as much as it is in Canada. Both systems recognize that meal meetings and business entertaining are legitimate parts of the business process, helping to generate sales, profits and jobs.

My colleague from Pickering has made it very, very clear how, when he was in the business world, a couple of meals ended up helping Canada to the tune of some $60 million in sales.

It is part of the legitimacy of doing business in this country. If Canadian firms were to lose this measure, we would be placing them at a direct disadvantage by increasing the comparative burden of taxation compared to their American companies, i.e., their competitors. It is not a formula for effective debt reduction. Instead, it is a prescription that would ultimately lead to lost sales, lost jobs and finally, lower government revenues. Then we would hear the NDP, up on its feet here in the House, complaining about lost jobs and so on and so forth.

Is this what the opposition wants? I do not think so. Not when it sits down and takes a very close look at this. For the government's part, the fair and proper answer, of course, is no. Absolutely not.

Two days ago at the Debt Freedom Conference, chaired by one of my hon. colleagues, a young Canadian handed the Minister of Finance a cheque for $168. The hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona made a big deal out of that this morning. This was money which 12 year old Corey Snow had raised through a garage sale and was his contribution directly for the purpose of helping our national debt. At the same conference, other individuals and groups also demonstrated the recognition that the public debt is a national problem which demands a national solution. We are all in it together.

The 1991 budget in its plan for economic recovery is making that solution real and certain. It takes the tough, decisive actions on spending restraint to bring down inflation and to bring down interest rates, so that the deficits for 1990-91 and 1991-92 will be $30.5 billion, despite the difficulties caused by the recession. For 1992-93, the deficit will fall below $25 billion for the first time in a decade; for 1995-96, it will be down to just $6.5 billion.

I want to emphasize, as the Minister of Finance has done with audiences across Canada; there is no misplaced optimism or mathematical mumbo-jumbo at work when we say the deficit will come down to $24 billion by 1992-93.

• (1220)

The fact is that we will no longer be faced with the transitional costs of the GST. That represents a $2 billion saving. The gulf war spending will be behind us. The expenditure control plan will deliver incremental savings. Lower interest rates will ease the burden on servicing the debt, and economic recovery will reduce unemployment insurance costs and strengthen government revenues.

In turn, this sharp drop in the deficit combined with national recovery will see the debt begin to shrink as a portion of our economy. This threshold step will mean that government revenues, combined with the continuing benefits of lower interest rates and government spending caps, will be sufficient to eliminate the need for new financial borrowing by the government in 1994–95, a very worth-while goal. That is the target we set out two years ago, in 1989.

In conclusion, in the words of the Minister of Finance delivered to the Debt Freedom Conference here in Ottawa on Wednesday, I am convinced that economic recovery is within our sights. Interest rates have fallen more than four percentage points from the peak last May. Indications are that housing sales are picking up. In fact, *The Toronto Star* reported earlier this week that the sale of new homes in that city last month was at its highest level in two years.

Following the conclusion of the gulf war, oil prices have returned to near their pre-crisis levels and United States consumer confidence appears to have jumped sharply. Given such stimulus, there is every reason to expect growth to resume by mid-year and to expand by 3.5 per cent in 1992. Just as important, the plan for economic recovery sets us on a path where that growth can be sustained, and confidence and investment flourish in the years to come.

Contributing to that recovery and growth will be the national tax system that we have reformed, based on a concrete and proven commitment to fairness and progressiveness. The facts are evident. It is this motion that fails to meet the test of truth and fairness.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Madam Speaker, as usual, I listened to my hon. friend with interest. While I find I do not agree with very much that he says, I do not say he is being misleading. I think we just see the world quite differently and I think that is fair.

My questions are twofold. First, at the Debt Freedom Conference when the children gave the Minister of Finance money presumably to apply toward the debt, does he know whether the Minister of Finance accepted it? How does that actually work, when a person comes forward with a pile of money and hands it to the Minister of Finance? I ask that just out of curiosity.

Second, being from Toronto, he will know that in the Skydome, because of the Income Tax Act, corporate executives and all sorts of other people who tend to come from higher income families or are members of high income families entertain their friends and guests in boxes. A lot of the costs of their tickets and the entertainment is written off as a business expense. Consequently, it is a tax break to allow certain people to entertain their friends and watch the games and other events from privileged boxes, as opposed to the normal citizen in Toronto who attends the games or whatever and has to pay the full price of the ticket and cannot write it off on his or her income tax.

What I am trying to bring to the minister's attention is whether he personally has difficulty with that part of the tax system that continues to allow a very small spectrum of our society to wine and dine friends at the taxpayers' expense, enabling them not to pay, in my judgment, what would be their fair share toward the debt in this case, being the issue of conversation.

Could he explain where the money that the children presented goes? Does he actually believe that this tax system that allows this to occur is really the right way to proceed during these tough economic times?

Mr. McDermid: Madam Speaker, to answer the first question, up until this budget any moneys that came in from people—and believe it or not people in the United States left money to the government and people did donate money to the government during the year— went into the Consolidated Revenue Fund. They were given a tax receipt for that and so on.

Under the budget which the Minister of Finance introduced in February, he set up a deficit and debt reduction fund. This fund will be audited by the Auditor General and will receive the moneys from the goods and services tax, the net proceeds from privatization, and any moneys that are given to the government for deficit reduction.

Believe it or not, since the budget the Minister of Finance has received some cheques from individuals to go into this fund, such as the cheque that was given by this 12-year old Canadian, Corey Snow, who had a garage sale and donated the proceeds to the deficit reduction fund. I give him full marks for that. He felt that was part of being Canadian. He wanted to make that contribution. Nobody coerced him into doing it; he did it on his own. I applaud that kind of initiative.

As a matter of fact, there was another group of kids that had a lemonade stand. I think they raised $5.58, something like that, a very small amount, and they donated that to the fund as well. I congratulate them for that.

However, the government has the responsibility of getting the deficit down to a position where it no longer has to go to the public for borrowing and it can start paying back some of the bonds and treasury bills that this government has, which by the middle of this year will total some $400 billion.

The next question the hon. member asked was about legitimate business entertainment expenses in the Skydome, in which the provincial Government of Ontario has the majority ownership and in which his friends the premier of the province of Ontario, the vice-president of the Canadian Labour Congress and president of Canadian Auto Workers have their own box where they can go and watch every event that goes on. They get into everything, not just the baseball games but the rock concerts, the tractor pulls, and all the other events that go on. What is really interesting, though, is that the NDP government in Ontario wants to privatize the Skydome. The NDP government in Ontario is going to privatize the Skydome. Isn't that interesting?

The hon. member knows full well that they are legitimate business expenses. They are in other countries. If he wants some very good evidence on how it works, just ask my friend from the riding of Ontario which takes in Pickering. I was there the other day. He can give concrete examples from when he was in the business world working for Lasco Steel of how a legitimate business expense, which it was, paid dividends for Canada in export sales to the United States.

I can tell him that it is a legitimate expense.

I have another short point. The New Democratic Party purports to support small business and tourism. The small business companies throughout Canada and the tourism industry, which the hon. member purports to support, support this particular business expenditure. As a matter of fact, they were very upset at the government when the government reduced it from an 100 per cent write-off to an 80 per cent write-off. The hon. member had better be careful because he is speaking with forked tongue in the House.

Mr. René Soetens (Ontario): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. minister for a response to the question he has just alluded to and also the question raised by the hon. member in the NDP.

They were discussing the business lunch expense and the Skydome. happens that I have some particular experience in this matter. For $200, while I was working in the private sector, I bought lunch for a group of people. That lunch culminated in the successful conclusion of a contract for the company by which I was employed of some $5 million. It created an awful lot of employment in my riding. It kept a contract in Canada that may have gone to some other country.

• (1230)

Having spent $200 on lunch which was only 80 per cent deductible, I guess it cost the company in a sense $160 which it could deduct from its expenses. Was that $160 tax deduction a wise investment so that this Canadian company could keep $5 million worth of orders in Canada? It did make about 10 per cent profit on that order. Was it better for the company and Canada to be able to deduct $160 or to get a share of the half million dollars in profit through the form of income tax? The corporation paid 43 per cent income tax that year.

Is it better to get a share of $160 through a tax deduction, or is it better to get a share of half a million dollars in profit through income tax?

Mr. McDermid: Madam Speaker, that question obviously answers itself.

The hon. member is correct. It is a legitimate business expense. It is one which serves a very useful purpose within our business of creating economic activity within

this country, and the New Democratic Party knows that. It keeps bringing these things forward.

For example, it is suggesting we wipe out capital gains tax. Yet the capital gains tax gives a half—

An hon. member: Like the Americans have done.

Mr. McDermid: Now my hon. friend over here is saying: "Like the Americans have done".

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Kamloops is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Riis: Madam Speaker, I am not sure it is a point of order, but I simply want to say that the United States does not have a deduction for capital gains and I do not think—

Madam Deputy Speaker: I think we are getting into a question of dispute as to facts and it is a question of debate. There is one minute left for the hon. minister.

Mr. McDermid: The Americans have a much lower corporate tax rate. The hon. member is saying that we do not tax them enough, but the point I am trying to make is that we have a $500,000 capital gains tax exemption for three groups. First is farmers because their farm is really their nest-egg, their pension. We give them a capital gains exemption once in a lifetime of $500,000. Second is small business. The third area that gets a one-time capital gains exemption of $100,000 is the investor. That is nothing to the big guys, the big shots, but to the little investor, to the small person who has a few dollars to invest and makes a bit of a capital gain on it, it means a tremendous amount. Their investment in the economy is extremely important. The big shots do not need this. They do not need this at all. It is the little investor who has faith in this country, who invests in the country, who we are helping with this, and it is good for the economy of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the motion introduced by the hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona.

The motion now before the House takes the government to task for implementing a debt reduction program which accepts the savings of children but not those of large, profitable corporations. In other words the responsibility for reducing Canada's debt does not rest equitably on ordinary taxpayers and major corporations. On the strength of the Conservative government's performance since 1984, I will find it very difficult to believe that debt servicing charges will be shared equitably if ever this debt reduction program becomes reality.

Their reasoning is more for the wealthy and less for the others, more for large corporations and less for small businesses. Such is the doctrine of the Conservatives. No wonder hardship is on the increase in Canada, they create it.

The Tory government has abandoned the traditional role of the government in Canada, which is to redistribute wealth equitably and provide a social security system for the neediest in our society. Since they came to power in 1984, the Tories have been out to destroy all the institutions that provided a safety net for Canadians. They made cuts in the Canada Assistance Plan, they reduced pensions, and now they are going to start on medicare. That is the Tory philosophy: Give to the rich and soak the poor and the average Canadian.

Madam Speaker, I realize we must reduce the debt. However, I don't think the Tory way of doing it is the right way. We should reduce the debt by making everyone pay a fair share. Look at the GST, a consumer tax system implemented by the Tories. Since the GST was introduced and corporate expenses have now become business expenses, corporations can deduct those expenses and claim a credit on the GST paid. For instance, Madam Speaker, the president of a large corporation who goes to a restaurant can claim a credit on the GST paid because he can put the bill on his expense account. This way, a company that claims the GST credit doesn't pay GST. However, a construction worker who buys a sandwich at the mobile cantine pays GST and he doesn't get a credit. That's Tory tax justice!

Let's take a look at what the government proposes. On February 26, in his Budget speech, the Minister of Finance said that any excess funds collected through the GST would go directly towards reducing the debt, after having promised many times that the goods and services tax would be revenue neutral. It was supposed to be a replacement tax to collect money that was formerly collected through the federal sales tax, and it was introduced to replace a system that had become obsolete and was no longer equitable.

According to the Budget things have changed, but Canadians have realized for some time that this regressive tax would not be revenue neutral.

Finally, the Minister of Finance realized that the GST would produce a lot of revenue for his government. In his last Budget, he proposed that GST revenues would go directly towards paying off the debt. Clearly, the GST has been selected as the front line weapon to attack our debt. However, the debt we are talking about today doubled in only six years, thanks to the Conservative government. It is a fact that the debt accumulated during the past six years under the Tories equals the amount accumulated between 1867 and 1984, in 117 years. They doubled it in six years. In other words, in six years, the Tory government managed to accumulate the same debt amount that all other governments of this country had accumulated in 117 years!

If it were not for the sinister policies of this government, including high interest rates, the GST would be unnecessary.

[*English*]

Canadians realize that the government's inept economic policies such as the high interest rate policy unnecessarily added to the debt. Canadians are now being asked to pay for the government's mismanagement of the economy with the goods and services tax. Liberals have said all along that this was the largest tax grab in history. But the government said it would be revenue neutral. We were right.

• (1240)

The Liberals said all along that the GST would be inflationary, and again we were right.

We just have to look at the statistics released today. In the month of January we had an increase in the cost of living of more than 2 per cent. The Minister of Finance, when asked, said; this is just temporary, next month it will go away. Well, we had the statistics for February today, and we still have over 6 per cent inflation in Canada. So what happened? What happened there?

Now the government has decided to use the revenue collected from the GST to finance the debt. We must now look at who is paying the GST. I should add, Madam Speaker, that this additional revenue amounts to a $8 billion. But don't take my word for it, ask the Minister of National Revenue. He announced it publicly.

If the GST is financing the debt, who is financing the revenue collected from this tax? The answer is obvious, and is the essence of the motion in front of us today.

For the record, Madam Speaker, I will tell you who is asked to pay the GST and finance the reduction of the national debt. Students are paying the GST, senior citizens are paying the GST, unemployed Canadians are paying the GST, Canadians on welfare are now paying the GST.

[*Translation*]

As I just pointed out, students, senior citizens, the unemployed and the neediest in our society are paying the GST that will be used to reduce the national debt. These people have one thing in common: they are responsible for financing the debt reduction fund. However, they are hardly in a position to do so. The Tories apparently think this debt should be paid by people who hardly have enough money anyway. Why does the government want to punish low-income Canadians for the impact of its disastrous economic policies? This government has decided to punish Canadians who are least well off for the present state of the economy in this country. Canadians are not responsible for today's recession. The Tory government is. This government is going to pay a very high price in the next election.

The Liberal Party of Canada agrees with the tenor of the motion before the House today. We believe that responsibility for the debt should be shared equally. This responsibility should never be placed on the shoulders of students, the sick and the unemployed. We believe this policy is deplorable and most unfair.

[*English*]

There is one ray of hope. There is light at the end of the tunnel. The ray of hope is that the next federal election is fast approaching, and Canadians will finally and decisively rid this country of this Tory government. They will, with no doubt, rid this country of the unjust and inept policies in which they have been inundated over the past seven years.

[*Translation*]

Madam Speaker, not six months ago but just a few weeks ago, the headlines told us how disastrous the economic situation is in this country. A few days ago, a foreman and a vice-president were attacked by an employee who had just been told he was fired. There we have the human tragedy brought about by these policies. More than $200 million was invested in General Motors because we wanted to protect jobs in Quebec and Canada. Now GM has annonced it is going to close its plant for a year and 1,800 employees will no longer have jobs. So much for this Tory government's economic policies!

[*English*]

The Globe and Mail, March 21, 1991, yesterday, stated "Bankruptcies Soar to Records", "Bankruptcies up 68 per cent". That is the economic policy of this Tory government.

[*Translation*]

Last week, on March 14, *Le Devoir* reported:

Canada is losing the free trade battle.

Who said that? André Bédard, president of the National Bank of Canada. He said that he had campaigned with the Tories to get them elected because he thought free trade was a good idea. And now he says that Canada is losing the free trade battle. Again, so much for Tory economic policies!

[*English*]

The minister mentioned earlier how construction was going up. *The Ottawa Citizen*, March 12, not long ago: "New home starts hit six year low, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation says". The opposition is not saying that. It is the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation which is a Crown corporation.

[*Translation*]

188,000 jobless in Montreal

That was in *La Presse* on March 13, Madam Speaker.

[*English*]

"Department stores take a hammering"; states *The Globe and Mail* on March 14. Montreal, besides being the capital of the unemployed, now is the capital of the economic slump. Again, Montreal in January lost more than 20 per cent. It is the highest city that lost the most retail sales in Canada.

[*Translation*]

On March 14, *La Presse* reported:

Retail sales: January a disaster.

As I said before, Montreal lost 20 per cent, followed by Quebec City with 18 per cent, in just one month.

[*English*]

The Toronto Star on March 14 stated: "Few believe Tories can end recession". That is the reality. This government is, on economic policy, as a matter of fact on all policy, totally bankrupt and it should go to the people so the people can elect a new government. Then this country can prosper and get back into business.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Madam Speaker, I listened closely to the hon. member. He seems to be forgetting that, in the days when the Liberals were in power—he was there then—for every dollar the government of Canada received, this very generous government spent $1.33, which put us in this horrible situation we are now trying to get out of.

The hon. member talked about the GST. He failed to mention that value added tax systems are in place in 48 countries, including the most dynamic countries in the world, and that Canada has the most generous system of all and that shows the most consideration for the lower income earners.

He also failed to mention, as the knowledgeable man he is on the business world, how beneficial this tax reform will be for our imports and how much it will improve our competitiveness on the global market. I would like to know if the hon. member recognizes the fact that the old federal sales tax was a disaster, as determined by five successive commissions. I would also like to know if he will admit that the previous Liberal government had said that it had to be replaced by a value added tax but that no one had the courage to do it because such a reform is very unpopular.

I would like the hon. member to tell me what he thinks of this reform. Is it necessary or not?

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard): Madam Speaker, I thank the President of the Treasury Board for his question and I will attempt to address each and every point he has made.

First of all, the government keeps harping about the so-called free spending policy of its predecessor. But the President of the Treasury Board must certainly have the relevant figures within his reach. If he would only look at our last financial statements, that for March 31, 1984, he would realize that before his Party came to power, we had a deficit of about $32 billion. After six or seven years of economic growth and in spite of the many tax increases, the deficit this year is about the same. After all that time, the government should therefore stop blaming its predecessor, and begin to assume its own responsibilities.

• (1250)

I should like to deal now with the GST and the 40 countries of the world with a similar scheme. But once and for all, let us be realistic and call a spade a spade. It is a fact that nearly 40 countries have a GST of sort, but how many have two retail sales tax system? Name one. In most of these 40 countries, there is no sales tax at all. They have what is called a value added tax scheme, a business tax or a goods and services tax, but only Canada has one.

Now, according to the statistics released this morning, we can see that clothing is the cost of living component which increased the most over the past two months. Why? Since you hail from Quebec, Madam Speaker, you are familiar with the situation there. Before January 1, there were no goods and services tax, no federal sales tax and no provincial sales tax. Now there are two! Overnight, there was an increase of 15.6 per cent, because people have to pay the provincial tax on top of the federal GST.

We should take this into account when we say that we had no choice and that Canada is now an "in" country because it has joined the other 40 countries with a GST. Nobody ever discussed with the previous federal tax system. I, for one, sat first on the Finance Committee which examined the tentative draft, and later on on the Finance Committee which studied the whole issue of the GST during this Parliament and the previous one. We all agreed on the need to reform the tax system. I remember quite well that, when the Finance Committee held hearings in Vancouver, the mayor of that city suggested then that it might be advisable for the three levels of government to stop picking each others pockets and get together instead on a true reform which would settle this matter once and for all.

The fact is that, in the end, whether it is called the federal GST or the Quebec TVQ, it is always the same Quebec taxpayer who foots the bill. The time has come to overhaul the tax system in order to pay the national debt, the deficit, and to become more competitives in this era of globalization. But no! I ask the President of the Treasury Board to read again the famous speech made by the Minister of Finance in which he insisted on the need to carry out a major reform. For political reasons, this reform was done in two stages: The first one, because he wanted to offer pre-election goodies to the people. After having placed over a million Canadians on the tax roll, he came back and said: Let us take 800,000 off. Some 200,000 remained, just the same. But there was an election. He just could not introduce his GST, because I am sure that if he had fought the 1988 election campaign on the GST instead of the free trade, there would be no Tory government today.

[*English*]

Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Madam Speaker, first let me say how pleased I am to rise to discuss this issue today and to say that I, in fact, commend those young children who are concerned about the financial state of the country, are concerned about the deficit and who have been moved to make their savings available to the government. There is no questioning their motives. There is no questioning why they did it. They did it for what they felt to be good reasons.

Why are we in this situation in the first place? Why has it come to children having to use their savings to cover the deficit of the Government of Canada?

We need to remove some myths about the way the deficit arose. If we do not, we will see this government continuing to put forward its argument, obviously with some success, that its social programs and government expenditures are out of control and must be brought back into line. In other words, those less well-off Canadians, the sick, students, and the young have to pay for the past mistakes of both this government and previous Liberal governments.

A recent secret Statistics Canada study shows that fully 44 per cent of Canada's national debt is due to tax breaks to corporations and to the wealthy. Another 50 per cent is caused by the interest payments and their compounding nature as a result of these revenue shortfalls. Fully 94 per cent of the national debt in Canada has nothing to do with government expenditures or social programs. Indeed, only 6 per cent of the national debt can be attributed to that.

Let's ask how this arose because we are faced with choices. Governments have to and do make choices every day. In this context, the government is making choices which benefit the rich, large corporations and hurt children. Then it is receiving from children gifts to help pay for the deficit.

We do not have to go back very long, but if we go back 15 years, we can see that the Liberals lowered the combined federal-provincial marginal tax rate from 56 per cent to 50 per cent so that richer Canadians pay less tax than they did before.

Once the Tories took office, this process speeded up. First, there was the $500,000 lifetime capital gains tax exemption. There was the lifting of about $6 billion in energy taxes from oil companies.

This government frequently says that we have no alternatives to dealing with the deficit. Let me say that we are concerned about the deficit. There is no point in ignoring the fact that the deficit is a serious problem for Canada, and that we do face with some very tough choices. We do need to reduce it.

We should not be reducing the deficit on the backs of the poor, on the backs of children or on the backs of the sick. We should not be cutting off our opportunity to invest in the future.

A senate committee on poverty recently heard that the financial consequences of Canada's disastrous dropout rate from high school is in the order of $33 billion over 20 years. In other words, if we concentrate our efforts on ensuring that children stay in school, that there was a future for them there and afterwards, this country would save $33 billion over 20 years. It would be an investment in the future. Without making that investment, it is hard to see how Canada will have a future.

We still have over 100,000 profitable corporations paying no tax. We still have thousands of wealthy individuals paying no tax. Over the last years, there has been a reduction in the taxes of the wealthy, and the figures simply do not substantiate the minister's suggestion that our income tax system has become more progressive. It has not become more progressive.

If we ask the lower income Canadians who have seen their taxes increased, they will tell us it is not more progressive and that it is not fair. They will tell us that they do not want to pay more taxes because the system is not fair.

If this set of government priorities and policies was working, we would be able to see it. After all, the proof of the pudding is in the eating, but as a result of these government policies, we have high interest rates, high unemployment rates, record bankruptcies, both corporate and individual.

We have 1.4 million Canadians unemployed and over one million Canadian children living in poverty. Ask them whether this government's policies have worked. They have not worked for those Canadians who are least able to support themselves.

It is time that this government paid attention to those issues. It is not just a question of different political philosophies. It is a question of the future. We cannot continue to ignore the needs of one million children in Canada, fully 20 per cent of our children, and expect Canada to thrive and be competitive in that global economy which is so important to compete in.

• (1300)

The government often says that it has no alternatives. What it really means, of course, is that it has alternatives but it does not like them. We have pointed out those alternatives on many occasions. Basically, one of the alternatives is to pay attention to the tax loopholes that were created by past Liberal and Conservative governments, which gave tax dollars to the wealthy and to corporations, which enabled rich Canadians to become richer, and which enabled business people to entertain their friends for nothing, basically, as a result of the tax system.

Let me just give five suggestions that would save about $5.5 billion. As we have said many times, we could eliminate the $100,000 capital gains exemption. That would save about $1.5 billion. We could eliminate, as has been mentioned, the business and entertainment tax deduction and save another $1 billion. We could eliminate the dividend tax credit and save another $1 billion. This is generally considered to be preventing double taxation of corporate income, but hardly any corporations pay income tax anyway. We could eliminate the

manufacturing and processing tax credit, because after all, the manufacturing sales tax is gone. We could remove tax breaks for real estate developers for take-overs and for those multinationals which finance their overseas borrowing at the expense of Canadian taxpayers. Those are just five things the government could do to help reduce the deficit and there is $5 billion right there.

Who would it hurt? It would only hurt the richest of Canadians. This government has chosen not to make the richest Canadians pay their fair share of the burden of dealing with the national debt. It has to be seen as an explicit choice because the evidence is clear. It has chosen to attack the least wealthy, the poorest Canadians.

Over the last few weeks we have seen, as a result of the federal budget, provincial budgets which have severely cut into health care programs, severely cut into the number of hospital beds and the quality of health care available, severely cut into employment in their provinces and severely cut into social assistance programs in those provinces.

The evidence is clear that this government has made a choice and it has made a choice to leave corporations alone and to place the burden unfairly on lower income Canadians.

Coming from the province of Saskatchewan, there is a lesson our governments can give to the federal government. It is not a lesson, of course, that can be provided by the present Progressive Conservative government in Saskatchewan, which started with a balanced budget and now has the highest per capita deficit in the country as a result of its Progressive Conservative ideas.

In 1944 when the first CCF government took power in Canada, Saskatchewan was a bankrupt province and it, I guess, could have decided, had it taken the neo-conservative philosophy of the present Conservative government, to just cut and cut and cut, because after all, it could not afford anything.

In the 20 years that followed, not only did that government move that treasury from one of bankruptcy to one of balanced budgets and surpluses, but it introduced most of the social programs that Canada has come to take for granted. It introduced rural electrification. It introduced telephone systems across the province. It introduced medicare, of course.

It is not critical or necessary that a government says: "Because we do not have any money, we cannot invest in the future". In fact, it is absolutely critical that we do invest in the future and that we do not burden the lowest income Canadians, those Canadians who are least capable of fending for themselves.

There is another way. We can cut those tax loopholes to the rich. We can find other sources of revenue. We can stop government waste and we can make sure that we invest in Canadians.

When faced with children coming to the Minister of Finance with their cheques, the minister must have a rather odd view of the world when his economic policies do not work, and when he thinks that taking money from children is an appropriate way to resolve those deficits. Quite clearly this is a manipulation of those children.

Clearly, children will not understand the policies of the government. They are not in a position to judge which politicians are telling the full story. Actually, I am surprised that the minister did not sell these children Conservative Party memberships while he was receiving their cheques. The move to accept the money offered was really I think also a hypocritical one in the sense that the finance minister has been telling Canadians that the deficit cannot be left to our children to pay for, that we cannot leave this burden on our children in the future.

What is he doing now? Instead of leaving for the children in the future, he is taking from the children in the present. What the Minister of Finance should be telling Canadian children is to save their pennies for education and health care because with all of the slashes to social programs, to health care, and to transfer payments to the provinces, those children are going to need that money in the future to buy the services they so critically need.

It is not hard to find other approaches. It is not hard to look across the world and see other economies dealing with these situations in a different way, economies in countries that have governments which put people first as a deliberate political, social and economic choice, and which do not cut social programs and social spending in the hope that some time in the future things will work out.

What does this government tell those 1 million hungry children who go to school and cannot study because they do not have enough to eat? It tells them: "This is necessary because in the future the country will be better off". That is not the way in which any government should be dealing with its most precious resource, our children and our future. What it should be doing, as I indicated, is investing in them.

I think there are two ways of looking at that investment. Clearly we have to deal with the social, physical and psychological pain that cuts in social programs are imposing on Canadians, but this government does not listen to those arguments requiring compassion. We also can put it in the context of economic terms. As I have mentioned, and as many have mentioned, it simply is not sensible economically to cut into those programs which constitute an investment in our future.

We constantly hear the Prime Minister telling us about the need for a world class education system and at the same time cutting funding to that education system. We can see the consequences across the country. In my own city of Saskatoon, the University of Saskatchewan is now thinking of closing colleges and faculties. The dentistry school is one which it is thinking of closing. The agriculture building which has recently been built may not be opened because there is not enough funding.

What we are doing is cutting off our nose to spite our face. We are cutting off our investment in the future.

While I understand the motives of the children who are seeing the need to pay off the deficit, I think the Minister of Finance needs to look in the mirror in the morning, every morning, carefully and ask himself what he is doing to this country.

Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough West): Mr. Speaker, I listened patiently to the remarks of my friend in connection with this motion. As he and his party know, we in the Liberal Party are sympathetic to the fact that the government is not sympathetic to the people of Canada.

What I am interested in is the alternatives of the NDP. As I said before, it is easy to criticize. It is another thing to come up with alternatives.

• (1310)

The hon. member said that one of the alternatives he would propose would be to scrap the $100,000 capital gains exemption. I would like to explore that for a moment because, to me, that is a startling proposition. I want him to explain it on behalf of his party so that Canadians can know what we are talking about.

Let us look at the ordinary Canadian. Never mind the fat cats, never mind the people who go to $250 lunches, let us talk about ordinary Canadians who struggle to buy a home, perhaps maybe have a cottage if they are lucky, and maybe have a few investments that they try and accumulate in order to be able to have a secure retirement.

As I understand it, the NDP is proposing that there be no capital gains exemption whatsoever. What does that mean? Does that mean that there is going to be no capital gains exemption for a principal residence? Does it mean that when people sell their principal residence in order to retire into a smaller home, they are going to have to pay capital gain on the value of the increase in the property? Is that fair to the ordinary Canadian? Is that what the NDP is going to propose to the people of this country? Is that what it wants Canadians to understand or is it something else?

No, no, no, it is not on the principal residence, but it is on investments in stocks and bonds. The grandmother who has purchased certain blue chip stocks in order to provide for her retirement and has to cash those stocks in order to buy things will have to pay capital gains tax. A meagre $100,000 capital gains exemption, when, for years and years and years, this country had no capital gains tax encouraging the spirit of enterprise and encouraging Canadians to save and provide for their retirement.

What is it exactly that the NDP is proposing? That there be no opportunity whatsoever for people to better themselves in this country? Is it your policy to scrap the $100,000 capital gains tax exemption, have no capital gains tax exemption? Everybody will be paying more taxes then, never mind the rich.

What is the policy?

Mr. Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Mr. Speaker, the member's comments make a pretty stark contrast between those who want to pursue the interest of the privileged and those who do not. The 1.4 million Canadians who are unemployed, the 1 million Canadian

children who live in poverty are not really persuaded by arguments which help those who are already wealthy to buy summer cottages. Those 1.4 million unemployed Canadians and those 1 million Canadian children living in poverty are not moved by arguments which put summer cottages ahead of food on the table.

If the member would like to listen for just a moment, he will know, and if he has paid attention in the past he will know, that in getting rid of the capital gains exemption we would provide for two exemptions. We would not apply it to farmers and we would not apply it to small business. So, to some extent, the member's screaming and yelling are addressed in those two exemptions.

We understand that there are difficulties that small businesses and farmers face. It is a question of the government making a choice, of political parties making a choice. I will stand up every day for poor children having more to eat as opposed to people being able to buy summer cottages.

Mr. René Soetens (Ontario): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member if he could give me a reason why he makes a distinction in his answer. He talked about giving an exemption, in his capital gains formula, to small farmers and small business people and allowing them to have capital gains and, I believe that limit, I do not know if he specified it, could go up to as high as $500,000.

There are many Canadians who do not have that situation of being a small farmer or a small business person. They are people, many of them NDP supporters, who work in companies and earn $30,000, $40,000 or $45,000 a year. They take that money and every year they find they might have $1,000 or $1,500 left over and they want to plan for their retirement.

They buy themselves some stocks in Bell Telephone or some other Canadian company, and as time progresses find that having worked 40 years, having saved a little bit every year, they have managed to accumulate $200,000 or $300,000 they are going to use in their retirement.

If I heard the member correctly, these individuals who have made investments, have made capital gains, are going to be expected to pay tax on their capital gain, but he exempts the small business person and the farmer.

Would he mind telling me why he picks on senior citizens who happen not to have been farmers or small business people to pay capital gains in this country?

Mr. Boudria: That is easy; the NDP are against seniors.

Mr. Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Mr. Speaker, the argument made is that somebody who has $200,000 or $300,000 saved up should not pay taxes on it. That is the point the member is making.

Mr. Wappel: Of course, they should pay taxes.

Mr. Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): I would like this member to go to the nearest food bank in his community—after all, there are hundreds of them across this country—and go to the families in that food bank, go to the children and go to the mothers who are trying to put food on the table, and ask this: "Shouldn't we let people with $200,000 or $300,000 get out of paying tax?" Let him see what those people say.

That is not just a small number of people in this country, there are 1.4 million unemployed—I don't know how many who are indirectly affected—and a million poor kids.

The question is one about priorities, and those arguments simply do not wash with those Canadians who are hurting most.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre H. Vincent (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance): If I may, Mr. Speaker, I should like to put the motion on the record before beginning my remarks. I think it is important for the information of hon. members.

> That this House condemn the government for implementing a debt reduction program which accepts the savings of children but fails to ensure that large, profitable Canadian corporations and wealthy individuals pay their fair share.

Mr. Speaker, I have been here for close to seven years now, but this has to be the first time I see such a mixture of cabbage and oranges in a motion!

Mr. Boudria: A socialist salad!

Mr. Vincent: Enlightening remarks on the part of my colleague from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Mr. Speaker, something new for which I commend him.

I think it is important to go over the events since 1984 to respond to the arguments made by my colleague from Saint-Léonard and the NDP members.

The basic principle in this country is that Canadians do not like paying taxes. I know you do not, you told me so. Nobody likes that. But at the same time Canadians have shown a preference for various programs and they want a country where citizens are properly treated. From that point on, taxes have to be paid and collected.

Earlier today my colleague from Saint-Léonard said that in 117 years the national debt had not increased more than the one we now have in 1990 and which, according to him, can be traced back to 1984.

Mr. Boudria: Well put.

Mr. Vincent: All I can say to him is that the preceding administrations over the 117 years he referred to did not have the unfortunate experience of inheriting a $200 billion debt when they were elected to office. We did, Mr. Speaker. And we are living with it. Since 1984 we have increased public expenditures by only 3 per cent, while provincial legislatures, municipal councils and private sector companies have boosted theirs a lot more than that. We have managed to keep annual increases to 3 per cent, but we did receive much more than that.

• (1320)

In 1984, the federal government was spending $15 billion more annually, on all kinds of programs, than it was collecting revenue. Not 15 million but 15 billion. After six years the federal government is now spending 10 billion less than it collects in revenue. This means a turnover of $25 billion in six years time. That is good management. People will say we raised taxes. Sure, some taxes were raised, but 70 per cent of this $25 billion comes out of cutbacks in the federal government, and only 30 per cent out of tax increases.

And what about these tax increases? Let me explain. Thanks to tax reform, personal income tax for Canadians has gone down. I remember that when I was a tax consultant in Trois-Rivières, we had 10 tax rates. Not one, not two, but ten, the highest being 34 per cent. After tax reform, we now have three tax rates: 17, 26 and 29 per cent. Before, we had the advantage, and the hon. member for Saint-Léonard who is an accountant will confirm this—

Mr. Gagliano: I am listening!

Mr. Vincent: Someone with an income of $100,000 a year had a personal exemption of $3,000, and federal and provincial income tax added up to a tax rate of about 50 per cent. The personal exemption meant that someone with an income of $100,000 was able to save $1,500 a year. However, someone with an income of $10,000 who was paying, let's say 20 per cent income tax, so 20 per cent of $3,000 is $600. The individual with an income of $10,000 saved $600 in taxes and the individual with an income of $100,000 was able to save $1,500, on an annual basis. In 1988 we changed all that and we said there would be one tax credit for everybody. Fair and square: everybody gets the same amount. In fact, this was a tax increase because people with an income of $100,000 who were paying $1,500 less in taxes, are now paying only $1,000 less.

Mr. Speaker, before taxes, if we compare 1984 and today, people are better off. The average salary has gone up from $20,000 to $22,000. The after-tax figure has changed from $18,000 to $19,700, an increase of 8.6 per cent. This means that taxes have gone down as a result of tax reform, no doubt about it.

An hon. member: Tory times!

Mr. Vincent: I hope my hon. colleague has nothing against the 1988 tax cut.

Mr. Boudria: Big deal! After increasing taxes in 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988!

Mr. Vincent: Mr. Speaker, since 1988, the number of Canadians in the $100,000 plus bracket who pay taxes increased by 37 per cent. So, the wealthy individuals not paying their fair, that my colleagues from the New Democratic Party are referring to in their motion, we got them with the tax reform, particularly with the minimum income tax. But we heard no NDPers talk about the minimum tax which, incidentally, was introduced not in 1988 but in 1986. Neither did we hear about the minimum tax imposed on corporations since 1989, Mr. Speaker, or about the cuts in tax shelters: MURBs, limited partnerships, preferred shares, leasing rules. The 30 per cent tax increase I mentioned come from all these

cuts in tax shelters, the restructuring of the tax system to make it fair and some taxes which were increased.

My colleague from Saint-Léonard talked about the GST. He said that low-income earners, the students, the underprivileged and the seniors had to pay the GST. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, they do. However, this government did introduce a tax credit. People were phoning me at my office in Trois-Rivières in December because they were grateful for having received their tax credit cheque before the tax was implemented. The sales tax credit was invented by this government. It is this government, the Prime Minister of Canada and the Minister of Finance who had this clever idea. So, Mr. Speaker, It is not true that the low-income earners are adversely affected by the GST. They have their tax credit, ahead of time, to be sure. That credit is given to nine millions Canadians who, each year, receive at least one cheque, and the Trois-Rivières area includes many of them. In fact, that credit is designed to offset the GST, which is a consumption tax, and that mean that if you are rich and you are buying, you pay the tax; if you are not rich and you are not buying, you don't pay the tax. That basic principle was quite relevantly underlined by my colleague, the President of the Treasury Board, and is already applied in more than 48 countries. That's no news. France applies the system. It is more complicated than ours and it works.

The 1982 tax reform has cut taxes $2.5 billions. So, Canadians pay $2.5 billions less in taxes since the 1982 tax reform, and that amount is paid by businesses who, as I just said, must pay their fair share. Mr. Speaker, let me quote some figures that speak for themselves. The fiscal reform has made it possible to distribute the tax burden among low and middle income Canadians. In 1987, despite the fact that taxpayers with less than $15,000 income accounted for 47.8 per cent of all filers and 15.3 per cent of all earnings, their share of tax revenues was only 2.1 p. 100 of the total. Compared to 1988, they represented 45.2 per cent of all filers while their share of the tax decreased by about two thirds. In contrast with 1987, taxpayers with $ 100,000 income, representing less than 1 per cent of taxfilers, earned 7.2 per cent of all income but were carrying only 13.7 per cent of the tax burden. In 1988, those same taxfilers earning more than $100,000 have seen their taxes increase by 16.7 per cent. I do not like to give too many figures but I think those ones should be mentioned and put on the record to show that this government is efficient and that we have a fair tax system in this country.

True, paying taxes is no fun, but at least the system will be fair from now on. Now, Canadian women and men who earn an income will pay their fair share. And allow me, to answer my colleague from the NDP who says once again that corporations do not pay taxes. This is not true. In Canada, corporations pay their fair share of taxes. He talked about capital gains and I will not come back to that. I think it has already been shown that that argument about capital gains does not hold. He was also talking about the fact that companies are allowed expenses that individuals are not allowed. It is true, Mr. Speaker. It is true that companies are allowed expenses that individuals, that employees are not allowed. I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, that this is normal. Companies must incur certain expenses in the course of their business. So, they are allowed certain expenses, just like unions are.

• (1330)

Mr. Speaker, it is this government once again that cut back on lunches, on automobile expenses. It is this government that said on the issue of meals: there is a part of the meal paid by the company to its employee or to its president that is considered as a personal expense of that individual. That part is no longer tax deductible, but the other part is, because it is a cost of doing business. The individual who pays for his share of the meal, who works for Kruger for example, does is not entitled to any deduction. The owner of Kruger, when he goes to a restaurant with other business people, must pay his own share, it is not tax deductible. This, Mr. Speaker, is an example of fiscal fairness, and I think it disproves what the hon. member for the NDP was saying, that we had done nothing.

He was also talking about dividends. Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of working as a tax lawyer for seven or eight years, and I can tell you that the dividend tax credit is not a gift. It is a tax measure which is part of a whole package. There are two ways for a company to borrow money. It can go to the bank and borrow $100,000 at a rate of 10 per cent and pay an interest of $10,000 a year for it, which is deductible as a business expense. The other way is to go public and to tell the shareholders: "You buy shares for $100,000 and you have a return".

What happens then? After the company pays its taxes, it uses what is left to pay a dividend to its shareholders.

So the company pays dividends to its shareholders from its after-tax earnings. The shareholders are in turn automatically taxed according to their tax rate, but allowance is made for the fact that it is an amount net of tax, that the money has already been taxed when in the hands of the company.

So, the NDP say it is a tax shelter, but that is not true. That money is taxed in one of two ways: either the company chooses to borrow it from a bank or it finds some investors willing to take a chance on its operations.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP is once again talking about the deductibility of interest charges. How could a business possibly function if it cannot take out a loan and deduct the expense incurred on that loan, that is the cost of borrowing money, to improve its machinery, to expand its plant or for some other purpose. It would be unthinkable, in a system like ours, to be unable to deduct the interest charges incurred for operational purposes.

In concluding, Mr. Speaker, I hope that this motion will be defeated, as I am sure it will be. I hope that people on the other side, and particularly the NDP, will stop making comparisons between children—who have a better knowledge of what is going on than the NDP and who are prepared to give whatever little money they have to pay the national debt—and companies or individuals who pay taxes. They are only trying to confuse the Canadian population.

[*English*]

Mr. Geoff Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Trois-Rivières on an excellent contribution to this debate. I would like to make a comment with respect to the motion and to pose a question to him.

This motion was put by the New Democratic Party. It condemns the government for implementing a debt reduction program that fails to ensure that wealthy individuals pay their fair share.

First, it seems to me that it is a little hypocritical of the New Democrats to pose such a motion when the very debt which they speak of is something which they and their cohorts in the Liberal Party inflicted upon this country during the period 1968 to 1984. Twice they had the opportunity to kill off that unholy coalition. They could have done it in the period 1972 to 1974. They could have done it in 1979, but in each case they crawled back in bed with Pierre Trudeau because he was pushing the same kind of socialist policies that they stand for.

The profligate spending that went on during that time period is what left a legacy of some $206 billion to $207 billion of debt in March 1985, the interest on which, as my hon. colleague pointed out, is something that has severely constrained the ability of the government today to respond to the kind of needs that the country has.

It seems to me that there has been a long list of initiatives taken by this government in terms of getting rid of so-called tax loopholes. The SRTC boondoggle was something that the previous government put forward and cost the Treasury of this country $4 billion or $5 billion dollars. This government curtailed that.

It got rid of the thousand dollar interest exemption, the films, the MURBs, the flow-throughs, and the business investment tax credit. It increased the tax rate on taxable capital gains. As my friend points out, it converted the exemptions to credits. It put on high income surcharges, corporate minimum tax, and so on.

At the same time, every one of these initiatives was opposed by the Official Opposition and by the NDP that posed this motion. At the same every move to refine the tax system and to modernize it was opposed by those opposite.

What I find strangest of all is the inconsistency within the New Democratic Party. This motion calls for the government to tax wealthy individuals, that wealthy individuals should be paying their fair share. A year or two ago, this government put forward measures which would result in the taxing back of the family allowance and the old age pension from high income Canadians.

Guess who opposes that move, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Boudria: Who?

Mr. Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia): New Democrats, the very people who want to tax the wealthy and get the rich, really punish them. They

oppose the taxing back of the family allowance and the old age pension from these high income Canadians.

Does my hon. colleague not find that approach on the part of the NDP to be completely hypocritical and completely inconsistent?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre H. Vincent (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments made by my colleague. I worked on the Budget and I must say that when I heard that the seniors earning more than $77,000—excluding Old Age Security pension—should pay back part of that money I thought that the Liberals would like the idea. Those people earn high incomes, Mr. Speaker. In Trois-Rivières, and I think everywhere else in Canada, $77,000 is a fair amount of money. I thought that the NDP would be kneeling to thank us saying that at last, we were taxing without giving hand-outs to people who don't need it. It is as simple as that: we are not giving money to people who don't need it. That income of $77,000 did not include the old age security pension. Therefore I thought that the NDP would get down on their knees to thank us. My colleague was telling me the same thing: finally, the NDP and I are going to agree on one thing. As usual, for more than six years, and this is what is unfortunate here, there has not been one single policy the government has put foward that the Opposition has not been opposed.

Mr. Boudria: No, no.

Mr. Vincent: I am talking in terms of fiscal policies. The NDP and the Lberals have always been against all of them. It is impossible that they should all be wrong. Nevertheles they are against them. My colleague asked me a question, but there is another one that springs to mind. After looking at the so-called loopholes mentioned by the NDP I explained why they are not loopholes. The next question is that not a day goes by without their asking for more money for this or that. Where do they want us to get the money from? That is the question. The question is, where is the money to come from when day in and day out they keep asking for more programs? Every single day they urge the government to spend even more in all sectors. So where do we get the money?

• (1340)

It has been six years, Mr. Speaker, but unfortunately neither the NDP nor the Liberals have been able to answer that question. They did not suggest practical, intelligent and workable solutions likely to make Canada progress. The role of opposition members is to make the country progress, as is the role of government, and the country will not progress unless they can make suggestions. The have none. They do not make any. That is where the problem lies.

[*English*]

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, I would like to continue on the point that was raised by the previous questioner, that is the question of universality as it applies to family allowances and old age pensions.

Perhaps my hon. friend would agree with me that in effect the policies of the Conservatives have done away with universality as it applies to family allowances and old age pensions. For many years Canadians have been very proud of the net of security that applies to those two programs.

Of course, previously pensions and family allowances did go to families where, regardless of their income, there was in effect a tax back, if we can call it that, as people paid income tax on their total income and these items were included within their total taxable income.

The reason why we have always opposed taxing back the total family allowance is that it denies the principle of caring for the next generation of children. It means that those families who happen to have children are the ones that are penalized.

I do not see why myself and other Canadians who do not happen to have children should not be contributing toward the next generation of children. I am very pleased to do this through the family allowance, which is a universal family allowance, and recognizes the importance of all children. Those who happen to have wealthier parents of course will pay a little bit more on their income tax, but we must really reinstate the whole concept of universality.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre H. Vincent (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I do not understand my hon. friend's logic, if there is one. If she feels that all families should get family allowances, I personally feel that only those families who need family allowances

should get them. With all due respect for the Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney could do without family allowances and still raise his children. Former Prime Minister Trudeau could well survive without his Old Age Security pension. That is the point which my hon. friend does not understand. We feel that family allowances and Old Age Security pensions should be paid only to those who need them. That is the whole point and it does not take anything away from its universal character.

For instance, let us take the case of a senior citizen in my riding who this year is getting a $100,000 income; suppose that next year, for whatever reason, he has no income, he would automatically receive every month his Old Age Security Pension cheque. Universality is maintained for the needy and not for the others. I feel it is simple enough. It is not normal for a person earning $300,000 a year to get family allowances, and later an Old Age Security Pension cheque. It's not normal. He does not need the money, while other Canadians really need it. If we really want the needy to continue to receive the money, we have to take it away from those who can do without it.

[*English*]

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity this afternoon to speak in this very important debate.

There are a number of items which should be considered in this motion. First of all, the people to our far left are commenting on the fact that the government has stooped to what we did not even think was possible for it, in terms of how low it could go, by publicizing the fact that children are selling their toys to pay down the Minister of Finance's debt.

The second theme involved is, according to the New Democrats, that corporations can do nothing right. Finally, there is the issue of taxation generally.

In my opinion, there is nothing inherently wrong for two or three people in a family to incorporate their family store, hot dog stand, or what have you. One does not have to report that to some great big socialist over there, who rules on the evil of having an incorporated family business.

To that extent, I am going to part company with our friends to the far left. I happen to think that family businesses, small businesses in particular, although incorporated are not necessarily wealthy. The idea that businesses cannot deduct such things as interest on loans in order to buy inventory to sell in their store, according to New Democrat theology, is not something I agree with. I happen to think those kinds of enterprises should be encouraged by all of us in the House of Commons, including those who are socialists.

Let us start with this proposition that we are discussing, namely children.

I understand that the Government House Leader is seeking the floor.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): I thank my hon. colleague. I would just like to officially designate Monday as an allotted day.

I appreciate your courtesy.

* * *

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S. O. 81—CORPORATE TAXATION

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Blaikie (p. 18859).

Mr. Boudria: Madam Speaker, we will be pleased to speak on supply issues again on Monday. As you know and I think the government has also recognized, there is a lot to talk about in regard to whether or not this Parliament should grant supply to the government. There seems to be that recognition, finally, on the part of the government. We will gladly participate Monday as well as other days, presumably, in order to be able to remind Canadians why this government should be held accountable to an even greater degree than it is right now. We will do our best to do that, until such time as the electors can render the ultimate decision of accountability, which is to turf out the government at the polls the next time.

Let me speak briefly about this issue of fairness in taxation and tax policies generally. First of all, we cannot talk about fairness without talking about the dreaded GST. The dreaded GST is creating tremendous havoc yet. I know the government said it had this science down

perfectly and that everything it would do would be correct and good and proper and virtuous. Well, let me read an excerpt from today's *Ottawa Citizen* which was given to me by my very distinguished and eloquent colleague, the member for Stormont—Dundas.

The member for Stormont—Dundas brought to the attention of the House this morning the issue of cross-border shopping in his area of Cornwall, adjacent to my own constituency of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. I quote from the article:

> In Cornwall alone, the crossings nearly doubled last month to 77,000 from 43,000 in February 1990.

• (1350)

This government has created taxation policies that are such that people are running across the U.S. border to do their shopping. What do those unfair tax policies do to the businesses of Stormont—Dundas, and of Cornwall, which are so well represented by my colleague? What did they do?

What did he do to the good people of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell and other Canadians who own businesses in this country? Now, of course, we have our good old socialist friends governing Ontario. The good old socialists of Ontario, the friends of Peter Kormos, remind me a little bit of a dog that caught the wheel of a car as it was going by. They are asking now: what do we do with it?

The members of the NDP in Ontario protested Sunday shopping. They protested Sunday shopping so loudly and with such virtue and wholesomeness and all that good stuff that the NDP does so well, thinking of course that they would never have to deal with the issue because the courts had decided on it. Lo and behold, a couple of days ago the Supreme Court of Ontario ruled that in fact the government of Ontario—the NDP government now, of course; need we be reminded—had the authority to rule on Sunday shopping.

It was easy to be against Sunday shopping when they knew they would not have to rule on it. But now they are going to have to rule on it and the law that had been disbanded is all of a sudden back in place. At the same time, communities along the Canada-U.S. border on the Canadian side are being affected by this Sunday shopping issue. We are anxiously waiting to see how the friends of Peter Kormos handle this particular question. We shall wait anxiously for probably a few more somersaults, handstands and headstands on the part of silk stocking Bob and his good comrades at Queen's Park. We shall wait and see how to deal with that.

Let us come back to the issue of fair taxation, the GST and other matters. We have the whole issue of fair taxation by the government across the way to contend with. That is no small potatoes.

I have a letter from a constituent of the great riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell that I am going to read to you. Some of the issues he brings to our attention concern the unfairness of the taxation system of the government across the way.

He says in his letter: "If I am at work or home, and I am unfortunate enough to become involved in an accident or suffer a heart attack or other illness which might result in my death, the proceeds of my life insurance policy are not taxable income." Fair and good and proper, in so far as I am concerned. However, let us continue: "If I am at work and become involved in an accident that leaves me disabled for a period of time, and I receive Worker's Compensation benefits, these are not subject to income tax either." Again, that is reasonable.

However, listen to this: "If I am at work or any other place and I am unfortunate enough to suffer a stroke or a heart attack which leaves me disabled but still alive, and I receive disability insurance, it is considered to be taxable and are subject to income tax."

Anyone who thinks that kind of policy is reasonable and fair, has their head screwed on wrong, in my opinion. I wrote to the Minister of Finance about this issue last September. He has not even responded yet. He has not even responded to this very legitimate grievance on the part of a constituent who is trying to obtain redress. I know: "The answer is in the mail."

I have another constituent who corresponded with me recently about another issue involving unfair taxation. I am glad to see that the President of the Treasury Board is here, because perhaps he can note these questions I am asking. I see he is getting out his notebook, he wants to note this. Perhaps he can take note of this question and forwarded it to his boss, the Minister of Finance.

I wrote a letter to the Minister of Finance about an issue that was brought to my attention by another constituent in regard to child custody issues.

As members know, there is such a tax rebate device as the child tax credit. The child tax credit is another very reasonable proposition. It is given pursuant to whichever parent has custody of the child on the last day of the year. I have constituents who are unfortunate enough to have parted company, in other words they are divorced. The child lived with one parent for 11.5 months of the year and then, pursuant to mutual arrangement, moved in with the other parent. Guess which parent gets the child tax credit? The one who kept the child two weeks, not the one who kept the child 11.5 months.

I wrote a letter to the Minister of Finance on this issue. Do you know what his answer was? He said that it would be too complicated to calculate this kind of thing and that is why he does not intend to change it. This is Tory fairness. This is the explanation I get from the Minister of Finance.

I cannot believe that the Minister of Finance, who claims that he can count all the money we need to run the government in Canada, cannot count the child tax credit for my constituent. Perhaps this explains the reason why we are in this much trouble in this country; the Minister of Finance cannot count.

Over the last couple of weeks, I have been receiving phone calls from automobile dealers in Glengarry—Prescott—Russell concerning the GST refund to automobile dealers. Do you know how many automobile dealers have actually received their money back from the GST for inventory? Zero. The government promised us that those funds would be coming back 15 days later.

Mr. Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia): Twenty-one days.

Mr. Boudria: Twenty-one days. Well, what is the difference? It has been close to three months and they have not received one cent. I have not yet found one car dealer who has managed to get the money back. This is Tory fairness. I have to admit it, they are making more businesses in the constituency that I represent go bankrupt because they are hanging on to funds that do not belong to the government; those funds belong to my constituents to operate their businesses and to make them survive.

[*Translation*]

The rate of unemployment in my riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell is 16.6 per cent. Why would we want such unfair policies that cause more pain, suffering and hardshihp to the people of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell?

A moment ago, Madam Speaker, I had the opportunity to discuss with my colleague from Newfoundland, the member for the riding of—

Mr. Mifflin: Bonavista—Trinity—Conception!

Mr. Boudria: —Bonavista—Trinity—Conception, who was telling me that how unfair the unemployment insurance system is. The people of Bonavista—Trinity—Conception, who are so aptly represented in this House, told their member of Parliament, who always listens to them with great interest of course, how unfair it was that the federal government recently stopped contributing to the unemployment insurance fund. So now there is only the taxpayers and the businesses contributing to the fund. Of course, this government helps himself to that fund every now and then, under the guise of grants, to provide training and so on, but have not put anything in for quite some time now.

[*English*]

The parliamentary secretary said in this House that since 1988, taxes were fairer or something like that. I am paraphrasing here. I know that he will stand in his place immediately and correct me if what I said is not quite accurate. I know the Minister of Finance would stand in his place immediately as well, but I do not think they will. I have good reason to believe they will not.

The Conservative members across the way are talking about this fairness in taxation policy. We are in the middle of a recession, and you do not have to be John Maynard Keynes to understand that the middle of a recession is not the time to take money away from the taxpayers, money which they need to stimulate the economy.

• (1400)

Let me tell you what is happening here. A family of four making between $25,000 and $30,000 a year, hardly a rich family— they would not even be considered rich in Glengarry—Prescott—Russell—

An hon. member: Your comrades.

Mr. Boudria: Well, maybe the comrades over there think they are rich but I do not. They are going to have to pay another $162, and that is the combination of increases in UI premiums and increases in the taxes otherwise, the combination of which is $162.

A family making $10,000 a year—even my friends to my left would consider it poor—is going to have to pay $55 a year more in taxes. You would think that at least people at the lower income bracket, such as the ones I have just described, would be getting a break from the people across the way. The tax system is far from being fair.

I received a letter from someone in Vancouver, British Columbia. It arrived on my desk this morning just as I was accumulating data to make this discourse to the House this afternoon. I thought this letter was quite apropos. It says:

> Dear Mr. Boudria:
>
> This letter is to let you know of the effect that the Goods and Services Tax is having on our business.
>
> My wife and I have operated our business since 1982. We have a photography Studio which specializes in Wedding photography. Each year has without exception been better than the previous year—

Note that they started in 1982 so they have been in business for a long time.

> —both in volume of business and in net profits. This year, with the G.S.T. in place we have seen a drastic drop in both of these indicators.

This morning we received new economic indicators, namely the Consumer Price Index increase for the last month and the government across the way will recognize the tremendous effect the goods and services tax has had on inflation.

[*Translation*]

Thus, Madam Speaker, as you can see, the new taxes announced in the Budget are all the more unfair for ordinary Canadians. As you can see, several tax initiatives of the governement opposite are unfair to people from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell and the rest of Canada.

[*English*]

I want to talk a little bit about the issue of the Minister of Finance standing in front of the television cameras with children who had sold their toys in order to pay part of the deficit. I have not yet seen anyone sell a limousine to help pay part off the deficit. Speaking of limousines, I meant the used car lot that is outside the west door of the Parliament Buildings when we leave after a vote at night, namely the ministers' limousines.

Speaking of that, if this government were serious about restraints why are there 40 cabinet ministers to handle the affairs of this nation? In the United States, a country 10 times the size, there are fewer than half the cabinet ministers. With 10 times the population, if they can do the job of running the country with half as many people, and I recognize that Tories are only half as efficient as most of the rest of us, but do you not think they could at least do a little better than they are doing now? Could the government at least show an example? Speaking of selling toys, maybe it could sell some of those big toys, those great big dark-blue toys outside the west door here, chauffeur driven and all.

I say to the government across the way that it needs to preach restraint far better by practising some of it itself. I say to the government that it needs to establish fair taxation policies for families and for everyone else. Numerous letters I have received over the last 12 months are from couples with children who are telling me they are financially disadvantaged because they are married. I have complained many times to the Minister of Finance about that. In regard to taxation there is such a thing as the spousal equivalent exemption, or something like that. What effectively that does is it allows an adult to place a child as a deduction, the same as if it were a spouse, which effectively means that married people cannot do something that two people unmarried and living together can do. In other words, each one of them can claim a different person as being the spousal equivalent.

I do not think there should be policies in this country which discriminate against families. If they are not advantageous to families, well I still do not like it, but at least it is fair game. At the very least, one would think that one should not be worse off for being married in this country and raising a family and so I ask the government for some fairness in that regard.

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member who just spoke on debate. What I like about the hon. member's contribution to this House is that he always has his ear to the grass roots in the riding and across

Canada. He knows the impact of policies created in this House on the average person out there in our ridings.

He talked about the bankruptcies reported in most newspapers yesterday and in *The Financial Post*, John Geddes writes under the heading "Bankruptcies continue to soar":

> Ontario and Newfoundland were hit hardest in February as the recession drove 6,249 businesses and consumers across Canada into bankruptcy, up 68 per cent from a year earlier.
>
> In Ontario, the number of bankruptcies rose to 2,383, more than double the 1,043 in the same month in 1990, statistics by the federal Consumer & Corporate Affairs Department show.
>
> Newfoundland's total also more than doubled in February to 76 bankruptcies from just 30 a year earlier.

The hon. member talked about the bankruptcies in his riding. I would just like to ask him which businesses, which firms are being hit the hardest and how are these people coping? Are they drawing unemployment insurance, just how are they coping when their company goes bankrupt?

Mr. Boudria: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question from my colleague. The bankruptcies have affected the constituency that I represent very severely. It is not just bankruptcies. There are partial and otherwise plant lay-offs as well. For instance, the Ivaco steel mill in L'Orignal, Ontario laid off a number of workers a few weeks ago. Canadian Pacific Forest Product Research Lab in Hawkesbury, a lab which had been there for 80-odd years, formerly known as CIP Research, is now shutting its doors; 62 people in very good jobs, a lot of them scientists and so, on all losing their work.

There have been many lay-offs at textile plants in my riding as well. Plants have been shutting down, plants have been in some cases going out of business. In some places there are just partial lay-offs. A year ago we lost one industry in Hawkesbury, a garment factory known as Canadelle. It manufactures under licence from a company known as Wonder Bra. Some 100 people lost their jobs, as far as I know, all women.

The announcement was in October 1989. The plant closed February 2, 1990. Officials from the Government of Canada met with the people immediately. The local Canadian Employment Centre was there I think the night that they announced the closure or the day after and I was there with it.

• (1410)

To this day, the Program for Older Workers' Assistance—I think it is abbreviated to POWA—for older workers who are losing their jobs; these women who are, many of them, well into their fifties, as of today, March 22, 1991 still do not have an answer as to whether or not they will qualify for the program for older workers assistance. Some 16 months after it was announced the factory was to shut down, 14 months after it did shut down, and I was told yesterday that it would take at least two more months before they will be told whether or not they will get their money.

There is 16.6 per cent unemployment. Grandmothers are not the first people who are going to be rehired, anyway. When there is 16.6 per cent unemployment it makes it that much worse. And that is why there is a program for older workers assistance, which I believe was initiated by the previous Liberal government.

But it is taking so long, 15 or 16 months, to get their money, and to make matters even worse—and I think I am really getting to the centre of the issue raised by my colleague—at the same time as they are having to wait for this, their unemployment insurance benefits have been cut back. Previously they could draw unemployment for a year, so if it took a year to qualify for the program for older workers adjustment, they at least had something else in the meantime. But now they have run out of UIC and are presumably on welfare, or whatever, until they qualify for this assistance.

I could not get an answer from the government as to why someone had goofed and allowed all this time to go by and not provide a positive answer for the employees of Canadelle in Hawkesbury.

This morning I wrote a letter to the Minister of Labour asking for his intervention, personally, and of course I will not have an answer for a little while, but I plead with him to assist those women who were working at Canadelle so that they can get some benefits instead of going on welfare.

Mr. Geoff Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia): I would like to make a comment and put a question to my hon. colleague from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

I think it is a bit ironic that we on this side have to listen to lectures from the Liberal Party on how to manage the economy and how to reduce debt, given that

it is the party which, between 1968 and 1984, over-spent. It has no regard whatever for spending limits. This government in its recent budget has proposed to legislate, for the first time in history, spending limits.

The only regret I have is that it was not done a long time ago. Indeed, had those spending limits been in place back in the late sixties, we would not have the problem and we would not have the need for the motion today.

It was easy back there during the seventies. It was the credit card operation—the Liberals didn't have the guts to face people with the cost of the programs. It was just a matter of shovelling out the vote-getting programs and not worrying about it, we will let the next generation pick up the bills.

Unfortunately, it has come back now, and you can tell that they can't stand to hear it because they know very well that it is the truth.

Take sales tax reform, for example. As far back as 1940 a royal commission suggested that there be sales tax reform. Commissions after that made numerous suggestions, but never, never in all the years that the Liberal Party was in power did it have the backbone to take that initiative.

For example, they oppose in this House any and all measures to reduce expenditures, to curtail programs that are not necessary, oppose every effort to increase revenues.

Mr. Boudria: Let the limousines go.

Mr. Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creak—Assiniboia): That is a clever suggestion. As a matter of fact, I will give the hon. member from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell credit, he has made one good suggestion, he suggests that the limousines go, and indeed that the size of the cabinet be reduced. I heard that, and indeed it is an interesting suggestion.

I would like to give him a chance to redeem himself at this point. He was not here prior to 1984, so of course it is unfair to hold him responsible for the sins of those in his party there before him. The hon. member for Ottawa Vanier was here so he is certainly not without sin.

I want to ask the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell a question. At this point there is still time for him to redeem himself.

Could he at this point put forward one constructive suggestion that we could use to do something about reducing the level of the deficit and curtailing the national debt which his party left to us? At $207 billion in March 1985, the compound interest on that has increased the debt somewhat drastically.

In the last three years of its administration, it over-spent in the everyday programs of government by $16 billion in 1984-85, $14 billion in 1983-84 and $11 billion in 1982-83.

I ask the hon. member to redeem himself. Rather than giving forth an endless litany of complaints about what he perceives is wrong, does he have something constructive to put forward in terms of how to deal with this problem?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. member may want to leave his colleague some time to do it.

Mr. Boudria: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the fact that the member has given me an opportunity to redeem myself, and I say this to the great redeemer across the way: he said that his government is in favour of tax reform. That is a bit like being in favour of virtue. Everyone is in favour of virtue. I am just not in favour of driving the people in my riding out of business. That is the problem I have with what this government has done.

The great redeemer across the way has asked me to provide a constructive idea of how to cut expenditures. Well, I am glad he asked. I was a little curious, so I put in an access to information request to see how much bottled mountain stream water was being purchased for the office of the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. In 1989-90, it was $15,047 worth; in 1990-91, it was $17,759.

I'll drink to that.

Mr. René Soetens (Ontario): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to participate in this debate today.

It used to be a common joke that would be told at neighbourhood gatherings when the parents would get together after the kids had gone to bed and share with each other some of the disconcerting things that their children had done to them that day, memorable events such as using a vacuum cleaner to extract a toothbrush

from the toilet or exhibiting artistic talent with magic markers all over the wall. Some parents would comment: "The best revenge is to live long enough to be a problem to our children".

That is no joke today. We even see bumper stickers with such sayings as: "I'm out spending my kids' inheritance" or "I'm going to live long enough to be a problem to my kids".

That is really a problem for our children, and the revenge we are placing on them is far from sweet. It is very sad and it is very sobering. Our revenge is the national debt, a debt that if we leave unaddressed will be a painful inheritance forced on our children and their children and their children.

Many of us were children in the 20 to 25 years from 1950 to 1973. Madam Speaker, I know that would include you; it certainly includes everybody on this side of the House. We grew up during a period of record economic growth and personal prosperity, and we saw a standard of living virtually double in a single generation in that period of time when we were children. Inflation was less than 3 per cent, interest rates were low, and the federal deficits were small or non-existent. We ran a plus or minus on an annual basis, and the economy was functioning well.

As a result, we grew up with confidence that prosperity and economic growth were normal things. It was almost inevitable that we would have prosperity. Our ability to meet and solve the problems and challenges of these years was only constrained by our creativity to define the solutions and a determination to see them through to their conclusion.

• (1420)

But then from 1974 through to 1984, and I might add even a few years subsequent to that, the way was lost. In these 10 years or so inflation soared. We tried to buy our way out of each and every new problem.

The result was very predictable. The federal deficit jumped at one point to $38 billion and the national debt grew from some $27 billion in 1974 to over $200 billion in 1984 and now to almost $380 billion.

Here we are thinking about the closing years of our careers and watching with concern, even trepidation, as our children are just beginning to assume their roles as adults in the society we are destined to leave them.

It is not simply the size of the debt that ought to concern us. It is the very tiny margin of financial flexibility that we are in fact leaving to our children. They like every generation will have their own challenges to meet, some of them about which we do not even know today as to what possible challenges they might have. At the very least we owe our children the opportunity to invest in the benefits of the prosperity they create and the solutions they apply to the challenges of their time.

Instead, we are on the verge of constraining their creativity and their capacity to meet the future by forcing them to pay for the past. This is not the future this government, this party or I would intend to leave to my children and the children of Canada.

Since the first budget and the first thrown speech back in 1984, our government has been committed to two important principles. The first is to maintain a level of social programs that enables all Canadians, young and old, to participate fully in Canadian society. In some areas of high priority, the government does not hesitate to expand its commitment.

The second is to plan year by year the control of our deficit so that our children's future options will be available to them and will not be curtailed by the need to clear away a legacy of financial irresponsibility.

The Canada Assistance Plan, which has certainly received an awful lot of attention in the last few weeks in the press, in spite of misleading assertions to the contrary remains a major component of Canada's safety net. Over $5.2 billion will have been transferred to the provinces in matching money this year to help finance social assistance payments to individuals in need and social programs of support. This will increase by some 7.3 per cent to over $5.6 billion in this coming year.

True, increases to the three wealthiest provinces, the province of which I am a resident and in which my constituency is located, are capped at 5 per cent; but the open-ended arrangement for the other provinces certainly remains intact.

In excess of $550 million of the CAP expenditures are in fact applied to child welfare services for an estimated 50,000 children in care and another 250,000 served annually through various child welfare protection services provided in their own home or in the community surrounding. These services include information and

referral services, clinical counselling and also homemaker services.

The Family Allowance Program provides a taxable benefit to over 6.6 million children in 3.7 million families. This fiscal year over $2.6 billion will pass through this program to families with children.

The child tax credit, a more targeted benefit program for low and middle income families, represents another $2.2 billion of income supplementation in next year's budget.

I remind hon. members that the government has doubled the maximum value of this program since 1984, in recognition of the importance it plays to low income families with children. A special supplement for low income families with young children under the age of seven has been added to the benefit package.

Despite the deficit, however, the government's commitment to maintaining a sound safety net remains and, in areas of particular priority, it has been enhanced.

There are other important initiatives that represent the government's determination to confront new problems as they come up. In a direct response to the landmark research report on sexual abuse of children by Dr. Badgley and his committee, sponsored by the federal government, a major initiative was begun in 1986. Sexual abuse of children is a horrifying reality of life for some children for many years. I am sure every member in this House would agree that is a terrible situation. It was scarcely mentioned prior to the late 1970s. That is no one's fault; it was just not mentioned. The problem has always existed, as Dr. Badgley's report proved beyond any doubt, but it was simply hidden away beneath fear, disbelief and denial.

Between 1986 and 1990, the federal government committed $25 million to begin addressing this hidden horror. In 1988 the government introduced an additional $40 million over four years to extend the reach to address violence in the family.

The success of these initiatives and the exceptional efforts of provinces, professionals, individuals, including children and adults who came forward to deal openly with their pain, has not been easy for Canadian society to absorb.

The federal government brought forward major improvements in the Criminal Code and Canada Evidence Act to better protect children and ensure that they might be heard in the courts of our land.

Important advances in treatment and prevention were supported through this initiative. A special adviser to the Minister of National Health and Welfare was appointed with a mandate to recommend the next phase of federal action.

Last month, in response to Mr. Rogers' report, the Minister of National Health and Welfare introduced a much enhanced $136 million four-year program to continue the effort of reducing the levels of family violence in Canada.

Over 90 per cent of the special adviser's recommendations in areas of federal jurisdiction will be acted upon in whole or in part over the next four years.

The new family violence initiative will assist with training of judges, physicians, nurses and social workers, whose knowledge and experience are critical in dealing effectively with both victims and offenders.

Treatment to offenders will be provided in all 60 federal correctional institutions.

In consultation with aboriginal communities, 2,000 health care and social workers serving Indian reserves and Inuit communities will be trained, and prevention programs for over 500 communities will be developed with the assistance of aboriginal leaders.

Productive partnership will be forged with community organizations, service groups, unions and business.

This program is more than twice the size of the government's previous effort and stands as confirmation that the federal government has not lost its will to confront and address major social issues of our time.

But let us be clear about the nature and the scope of the issue that lies before us. In the report's opening remarks, Mr. Rogers, the special adviser writes:

> My life has been deeply marked by my experiences of the last two years as Special Adviser to the Minister of National Health and Welfare on the issue of sexual abuse. I have been shocked by the anguish and pain of so many victims and adult survivors. I have also come to understand that this problem is so pervasive that any child could be a victim of sexual abuse, including my own children and grandchildren.

He says in his concluding remarks:

> The changes we need to make in Canada, both at a prevention and public education level, as well in co-ordinated services to those in need, require the concerted and inclusive support of all.

Because the needs of Canadian families are changing, especially due to the increased number of women entering the work force, the government has made important changes in parental benefits. Fifteen weeks of maternity benefits are now available during the period surrounding the birth of a child. Ten additional weeks of parental benefits are now available to natural or adoptive parents. Fathers or mothers can take these benefits or share them between themselves.

Of considerable importance to many working parents is the provision of child care services. Canadians have expressed their wishes to have considerable choice in the child care that they seek for their children.

Through the Canada Assistance Plan, for example, the government is providing a quarter of a billion dollars in support for child care for low income Canadian parents and a further $600 million plus through tax provisions, the child care initiative fund and dependent care allowances for persons on training courses.

We are increasingly aware that marriage breakdown is often the cause of a slide into economic difficulty, even poverty for the spouse that maintains the responsibility for looking after the children. Departing spouses, unfortunately most often fathers, too readily forgo their ongoing financial support of their children. To respond, the government through its Family Orders and Agreements Enforcement Assistance Act is providing for the release of information which can assist in locating those defaulting spouses and the garnishment of pensions, income tax refunds or other federal payments.

• (1430)

There are many specific programs for children and families that are developed by the federal government, usually in consultation or partnership with many fine national or community based voluntary organizations with well-known expertise in issues and services affecting children.

Specifically I would like to reference three that have been successful. These programs were created to provide practical information and guidance to parents about their child's development and their own changing responsibilities to the children. The Post-Partum Parent Support Program is a resource for new mothers. *Nobody is Perfect* is a program that emphasizes the parenting skills for parents of children up to five years, and *Ready or Not* is a resource for parents of children eight to twelve years old.

One final recent initiative by the government is also worthy of mention. It is called CHIRPP, which stands for the Children's Hospital Research Injury and Prevention Program. Its creation was the result of two very basic facts. First, injury is the number one killer of Canadian children, accounting for approximately half of the 5,500 childhood deaths to children under the age of 19. Second, while we knew the number of injuries and the type of injuries, we do not know much about the specific causes of these injuries. CHIRPP is helping to study the causes by monitoring each childhood injury upon entry into a number of selected hospitals.

Detailed interviews are taken from adults and children if possible at the reception desk which seek to determine just how that particular injury occurred, the circumstances and the environment which caused it. The results are computerized within the Department of Health and Welfare. In the near future we hope to have a full analysis and an understanding of the causes as they are indicated.

Perhaps one of the most significant recent events that has occurred with great long-term potential for children in Canada and throughout the word was the September 1990 world summit for children held in New York. Leaders of 70 nations gathered to discuss and adopt a declaration on the survival, protection and development of children.

Canada was one of the six countries that initiated the summit and our Prime Minister was asked by his colleagues to co-chair its proceedings. It was a unique event and certainly a very significant success. The summit was not meant to be the end of interest in children but the catalyst that demonstrates the potential good that can come from attention focused on children.

The potential is real enough. The declaration goes on. It contains a 10-point program which all nations are urged to work toward implementing over the coming decade.

Canada was a major participant in the development of the convention through a federal, provincial and territorial working group. Through the continued effort to complete the required legislative review by the federal, provincial and territorial governments, it is anticipated that Canada will ratify the convention in 1991.

I began by talking about the crushing financial burden we could leave to our children if we do not address the implications of a growing deficit and debt. I am reminded that last year the money Canadians spent on the interest payments to service our national debt exceeded the expenditures on all programs administered by the Department of National Health and Welfare. This includes the national health care programs, the welfare programs, the Old Age Security and family allowance support programs.

Imagine the potential of this amount of money in implementing the 10-point program of the summit's declaration not only here in Canada but for children throughout the world. UNICEF projects that $20 billion of new money per year is needed to achieve the minimum conditions for children in developing countries outlined in that 10-point program. Of that, $7 billion will be needed in the form of international aid from donor countries.

It is a considerable sum, but not as great as our annual deficit. We must seize the problem of our deficit. We must maintain our levels of social investment. It is not easy, and the answers are not simple. But we have begun on the difficult path to improve our legacy to our children. May they at least credit us, finally, with having recognized the problem and carefully planned our way toward its resolution.

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park): Madam Speaker, in his opening remarks the hon. member paid compliments to his party. He said that it had two main goals. One was in its social policy, to maintain a certain level of social programs. The second was in its economic policy, to plan year by year to control our deficit. Again we hear this crying the blues, blaming the Liberals for piling up the public debt.

When the member's party came into office the public debt was $177 billion and now it is running up to $400 billion. I was here from 1979 to 1984. He can blame the Liberals for increasing the public debt up to $177 billion at a time when we were going through world recessions, not Canada-made recessions.

What did his government do with all the money that it collected for selling off Crown corporations? Why didn't that go to reducing the annual deficit further and reducing the public debt? What did his government do with the 33 tax increases that it brought in, in the seven years it has been in power? Could he explain to me today's article in the Toronto *Star* under the heading "Campaign launched to defeat Tories":

> Canadians fed up with Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's "corporate agenda" are launching a grassroots campaign to defeat the government.
>
> "We're no longer zeroing in on one issue like free trade—our goal is to defeat the Tories in the next election before the country is so broken up that we can't shape our own future," Tony Clarke, chairman of the Pro-Canada Network said yesterday.
>
> To that end, the coalition will soon launch a "mass action" campaign—including petitions, advertising and demonstrations—to protest what it says are the de-Canadianizing policies of the government.

Mr. Clarke goes on to say:

> "We believe we have to move quickly or the country will be so changed by the"—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member has been in this House quite some time. I must say I have a tough time seeing the relevance of this newspaper article to the motion before the House.

The hon. member may want to put a question to the hon. member for Ontario who has completed his speech, but I really cannot agree with these types of comments.

Mr. Flis: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, I did begin by pointing out the social and economic policies the member mentioned in his speech. My closing comment is quoting Mr. Clarke where he says:

> "We believe we have to move quickly or the country will be so changed by the government's economic and social policies that we won't be able to save it,"

I would like to hear from the member that if he was out to save the economic and social policies of this country, why this massive campaign to defeat his government?

Mr. Soetens: Madam Speaker, I certainly would like to respond to that. The hon. member started off on a comment that I laid the blame on the 10 years from 1974 to 1984. I also believe that in my comment I said that it carried on through 1989 and 1990 when the debt in fact went up to some $380 billion.

I do not absolve the federal government of the last five years of the financial problem that this country has. I would point out that between 1974 and 1984 the debt of this country increased some eightfold. It only doubled in the time we were here. In either case it is a terrible number, but the fact of the matter is that we are trying to address it.

Further, I would like to respond to the hon. member's comment about all these tax changes. I note that in the election campaigns and in many other opportunities which the Liberals take advantage of they complain about the 33 tax changes and how terrible they are. Of course what we were addressing were loopholes that they had put in place. They consider it terrible that we issued a measure to prevent a variety of schemes of transfer tax losses from non-profitable corporations to profitable ones.

• (1440)

The Liberal Party disagrees with the reduction of a variety of special purpose investment tax credits. It disagrees with an increase in the rate of taxation on capital gains. It disagrees with the introduction of a corporate surtax. It disagrees with the introduction of put-in-use rules to limit the use of deductions where taxable income is not forthcoming. It disagrees with the removal of the inventory allowance. It disagrees with the curtailment of the use of leasing to transfer benefits for accelerated capital consumption allowances, and disagrees with a credible tax on large deposit-taking institutions, most recently the large corporation tax which has been adopted to ensure that all large companies contribute to deficit reduction. The Liberals disagree with literally all of these good steps and then complain about the fact that the government is not spending enough money.

The whole issue of the debate today and the budget we brought down is deficit and debt. We are not about to ignore these problems in our role as government.

Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough West): Madam Speaker, the previous speaker began his remarks by talking about the parties that parents attended without their children to talk about the cute familial antics of their children during the day or during the week. That may very well be.

Obviously the member has not been to one of these parties lately because I have news for him. When the parents get together today without their children to talk about things, what they are doing is asking themselves how in heaven's name they can rid themselves of a government that they thought was going to do something for them when it came to power in 1984 in a landslide election victory.

They talk about the fact that when they take little Billy, or little Susan, to have his or her hair cut they now have to pay tax on that hair cut. When they want to go to a children's store to buy a children's book they have to pay tax. When they want to take that child to one of the few movies that a parent can take a child to today, without worrying about obscene language or anything else, they have to pay tax on that. That does not affect the rich. That affects the poor. That affects the lower income Canadian. That is what those people are talking about today.

The member went on to talk about the terrible deficit, and indeed it is terrible, and to his credit he admitted, and I believe his words were that it went on some years beyond 1984, as indeed it has. He suggested that his government is attempting to deal with it.

What Canadians are asking at these little parties he referred to is how the government is attempting to deal with it. We have had his finance minister for seven years and one economic statement make predictions that time and time again have been completely wrong. Throughout this time they are not tax changes but tax increases that we are talking about.

Lower income Canadians are paying more tax today than they did in 1984 and higher income Canadians are paying less tax than they did in 1984. Those are the facts. What is this government doing to try and help those people with children who are struggling in today's society, trying to reduce a deficit that is $30 billion after six years of alleged tough times under the Tories when we have had a strong economy? What in heaven's name,

they ask at these parties the member referred to, is going on and how can we get rid of this government?

I ask the member how much tax is too much tax? How many times are you going to tax the Canadian people in an attempt to pay down the deficit when after six and a half years all you have done is double it?

Mr. Soetens: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's question. His riding is very close to mine and I presume economically we confront very similar bases and issues.

I can tell you what happens in my riding at those parties I attend which are obviously different than the parties he attends in his riding. In my riding they do talk about the fact that they have to pay tax on books that they never had to pay before. They have to pay sales tax on the magazines. They have to pay sales tax on the clothing, and they have to pay sales tax on some things, hair cuts, that they never had to before.

They talk about that in my riding, and I am sure they talk about it in his riding, however, in my riding what they also say is: "You know, this is a fair tax, because everybody pays." We in our riding, much like his riding where there are many high income Canadians, also say: "Thank goodness that the government saw the light to put in place a sales tax credit for those low income Canadians who are impacted by the GST".

In my riding the people say that is a fair tax. In his riding, unfortunately, I guess they forget about mentioning that low income credit, and that is probably because in his riding nobody receives that kind of credit because it is a very well-to-do riding.

* * *

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I think you will find unanimous consent in the House for the following motion:

> That notwithstanding any Standing Order on Monday the House meet at 1 o'clock p.m. and proceed to the business of supply.

I think there is unanimous consent for this motion.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Madam Speaker, the government has no objection to the motion. There was an attempt to have discussions and we could not, unfortunately, get all the parties together. We have no objection to using the hour between one and two o'clock for Government Orders on Monday. If the opposition feels there might be good use of that time between one and two o'clock for some other purposes we would stand ready on Monday to agree to another motion at that point which might precede it.

At this point I am agreeing with the motion proposed by my colleague across the House.

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Saskatoon—Humboldt): I am sorry but I did not hear the motion. What motion is being put before the House? I could not hear it.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The motion was:

> That notwithstanding any Standing Order, on Monday the House meet at one o'clock p.m. and proceed to the business of supply.

It would add an hour of debate. The House has heard the motion. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

* * *

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S. O. 81—CORPORATE TAXATION

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Blaikie (p. 18859).

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Saskatoon—Humboldt): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak for a few minutes on this motion because it does give me an opportunity to talk about some of the issues which have been brought up in the debate in the last hour or two.

The motion states very specifically that rather than try and unload the deficit by having children subsidize part of it, that we should do it, as the motion says, through programs which accept the savings of children but fail to ensure that large profitable Canadian corporations and wealthy individuals pay their fair share.

Today we have had a number of members state that we in the New Democratic Party do not recognize who is wealthy and who is not wealthy. It is very interesting to note that if a survey was taken of the people of Canada who are members of the three political parties, it would show that the highest earning group in Canada are the New Democrats. We are always told that we represent the poorer people of the country, and we do, but we do that out of principle. We have become over the last few years the highest earners as far as the membership in the three parties is concerned.

I guess it proves that the people of intelligence who take a look at the issues, take responsibility for what is Canada and what makes Canada work, support the kinds of policies that we in the New Democratic Party have espoused over the years.

• (1450)

More than espousing, we have made them part of the fabric of Canada. Consequently, people say: "Yes. Regardless of how it affects us taxation–wise, we are quite willing to support that kind of policy."

We also know that over the past few years, because of the structure of the atmosphere under which businesses and farmers have had to work to take advantage of the protection that has been placed through corporations, a lot of us have decided it is worth while to accept the corporate structure.

It does protect us from the government and from other corporations. Consequently, we do so. Most of those corporations, which we do not consider wealthy as defined in this motion, are owned and operated by the same people. That kind of corporation is not much different than a small business that is not incorporated.

Consequently, it is not going to be affected by major taxation differences in the same sense that we are talking about in this particular motion.

We have indicated many times across the country that we think one of the changes should be on capital gains. In our policy, we eliminate certain groups from having to pay capital gains.

The aim of our policy is not to take the capital gains of that farmer who has spent his life building up a farm that he thinks will be worth while when he finally does retire and can use the gain to keep him in retirement.

The same kind of approach has to be recognized in small business, which is quite often a family operation. Everybody's time and effort is put into the building of that business. Farmers probably do not have retirement plans, although they need them. We have exempted those people from capital gains.

We are aiming at those unearned capital gains which are part of speculations within share sales. The purchasing and selling of homes other than one's principal home or cottage at high prices are unearned capital gains. They are speculative gains.

There is not a great deal of sweat or effort. When we say that capital gains should be taxed in some way, we are talking about the kinds of capital gains which are almost unearned. They are speculative gains.

Farmers and small businesses, also, do not have the protection that wage earners have. One of the questions by one of the members in opposition was: What about the wage earner who does gather a lot of money, makes an investment and then can sell it at a higher price?

Most of those people are quite willing to pay capital gains on what they gain in that speculative process. During the period in which they were earning the money to put a payment down on that cottage, extra home or extra investment, they were protected by unemployment insurance which no farmer or small business has.

If one owns a business or farm, one does not have unemployment insurance to fall back on in those days when one does not get a crop or when business is really bad.

There seems to be a very bad recognition of what is meant by regressive and progressive taxation.

Progressive taxation means that if you earn enough money to have a good living and something extra besides, you should be taxed a little more on that extra than the person who just earns enough to survive. Any suggestion that the same amount of taxation should be paid across the board is a regressive sort of approach. Progressive taxation, in contrast is tax which takes an increasing percentage of the earnings of an individual.

The GST is a regressive tax, because if you spend $1,000 on goods and services, you are going to pay 7 per cent on that $1,000. That means you are paying 7 per cent of your earnings to the GST. However, if you earn three or four times that much and you only spend half of it on goods and services, you are going to be taxed only 3–1/2 per cent on your total earnings. In other words, the person earning more is paying a smaller percentage than the person earning less.

That is regressive taxation. That is what we have been working against.

There have been suggestions made a couple of times today that because we are against the taxing of family allowance and the taxing of old age security, we are flip–flopping in the sense that they say that is tax against the rich and that we should agree with it because we are always saying that we should tax the rich.

We have to recognize that the thresholds established both in the case of the family allowance and the old age security taxes are such that now, and certainly within a few years, will be so low that a person earning a moderate income is going to have to pay more. In each of these cases we have to look at the unfairness. If one person earns $10,000 and part of it comes from the old age security or family allowance, and another person earns $10,000 and none of it comes from those, the first person will pay more taxes. It is unfair.

If the taxable portion of the salary of a person who is getting the senior citizen's allowance or the family allowance is the same as a person who is not, the former will be taxed more than the latter.

I could go on and tell of a number of things that we as New Democrats think should be put in place.

In the last budget the government had a number of choices. For instance, it could have increased the funding for social services. Instead of that, it cut the funding by $340,000 to the provinces but it did not cut very expensive tax deductions.

The record of the government over a long time shows very specifically that the choices which would have helped the poor groups of people in this country have not been made. The choices made were those choices which allow the higher level of incomes to retain those earnings.

[*Translation*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: It being three o'clock, it is my duty to inform the House that pursuant to Standing Order 81(17), the proceedings on the motion have expired.

Therefore, this House stands adjourned until next Monday at one o'clock, pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

The House adjourned at 3 p.m.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, March 25, 1991

The House met at 1 p.m.

Prayers

[*Translation*]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

TABLING OF ANNUAL REPORT OF COMMISSIONER OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the Table the annual report of the Commissioner of Official Languages for the calendar year 1990, pursuant to section 66 of the Official Languages Act.

[*English*]

Accordingly, pursuant to Standing Order 108(4)(a), this document is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Joint Committee on Official Languages.

Since today is the final allotted day for the supply period ending March 26, 1991, the House will go through the usual procedures to consider and dispose of supply bills.

In view of recent practices, do hon. members agree that the bills be distributed now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY S. O. 81—CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal) moved:

That this House call upon the government as a matter of priority to ensure that the CBC be strengthened as an instrument of national identity providing local, regional, and national services to all Canadians.

• (1310)

She said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to the motion which you have just put before this House:

That this House call upon the government as a matter of priority to ensure that the CBC be strengthened as an instrument of national identity providing local, regional, and national services to all Canadians.

This debate today is as much about Canada as it is about the CBC. I would suggest to you that it is a debate of serious national proportions, given the particular atmosphere that prevails across this land and the sensitivity that is being show or the lack of sensitivity that is being expressed in parts of our country.

The Prime Minister has called for national unity. I am quite delighted to see that he has even used the term national unity, since he wanted it expunged from the language of the Broadcasting Act. What could have been a more sensitive tool than the question of national unity through the Canadian broadcasting system, and particularly the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

He called as well for dialogue among Canadians, but a right now a lot of that dialogue has been one-shot deals, such as through the Spicer commission.

I would suggest that the most effective communication and communication vehicle we have in place across this land, infrastructure put in place and paid for by Canadians, is that of Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, better known as Radio-Canada CBC. It has its place and station identification from coast to coast to coast in English and in French: in the north, in the east, in the west, in the small urban communities, in the small rural communities across this land, in radio and TV as well as internationally. It certainly is a key medium of expression for all Canadians.

I would say that this debate today is about the kind of country we want and the kind of national institutions we

on this side of the House believe are fundamental. They are the fundamental infrastructure that binds and links Canadians. It is the highway of today that we were so proud of many years back, whether it is the Trans-Canada Highway or the laying of the last spike in the railway. I just hope we have not split the heart of this nation by laying the last spike of destruction into our Canadian national broadcasting system.

We see and hear all around us about the need to build bridges in this country and the fact that it is a pressing need. How better to communicate with each other than through radio and television?

Mr. Speaker, you are a communicator. You were in the media. You are a man who knows the power of words, the power of expression, the fact that you can reach the minds and hearts of our countrymen, country women, children and folks across this land. We can be folksy. We can be esoteric. We can be pragmatic. We can go to the heart of the matter and do it through news and information, but what better way than through entertainment, than with a smile, through poking a little fun at each other.

All the different cultures that surround us and enrich us become the tapestry which is the basis of our society, whether black, brown, yellow or white. Whatever the language, that language, that culture, that way of life, becomes part of what is the distinctive Canada we have been trying to build. We have been trying to say that we are tolerant. We have been trying to say that we are a wonderful country. And what do we do? The medium that best expresses who we are and what we are, we cut its throat.

When Mr. Veilleux, the president of CBC, said the other day that we are killing this communication vehicle through the back door, strangling it through budget cuts, he was saying it as it is and calling the shot.

I appeared before the CRTC with 12 of my colleagues. We made three hours of presentation before the CRTC indicating that we could ill afford not to pay for this particular service, that we could ill afford to cut this service. If the president, the chairman of the board and the board of the CBC really were concerned for this country, were really carrying out the mandate of the National Broadcasting Act, which we just finished revising, they would have looked at it. They would have tried to make changes. They would have cut where there was duplication. They would have cut more and perhaps revised more. In the end they would have realized that we could not realize a proper French and English, multiracial, multicultural broadcasting corporation serving the three coasts of Canada. They would have resigned if they had had any kind of good conscience. This minister, they knew, never went and pleaded the cause for Radio-Canada CBC before the Treasury Board. I do not know what he said to his cabinet colleagues but, if he told them the truth, then the whole cabinet should resign.

What is happening with Radio-Canada and Radio Canada International, which I know is one of your interests, Mr. Speaker, is an utter disgrace. It is an absolute disgraces that the parliamentary channel might be privatized. It belongs to the people of this land.

I do not understand the priorities of this government. I do not understand. Even though we are in a budgetary crisis, even though we have financial concerns, and all of us share those concerns, there is still a matter of choice and a matter of priority. That priority right now is keeping this country going. That priority right now is affecting the kind of place and space for all Canadians regardless of their mother tongue, regardless of their colour, regardless of their race, regardless of their creed.

The new bill which this government has not even bothered to gazette brings in some very important new features. It bring in the whole question of the Official Languages Act. The 1968 bill took place before the Official Languages Act became part of this country. It came into force in 1969. It took place before employment equity and all the safeguards around section 15, the non-discriminatory clause, came into effect in 1982 in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

We have ignored the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We have ignored the Official Languages Act. We have ignored the new Broadcasting Act which says use independent producers, make sure that we use our creative talents through artistic expression, through entertainment, and what do we have? We have a mock CNN and a mock *Newsworld*, and a great big Media Watch or I should say meteorological station which is going to tell us the big weather news and give us the big sports news.

However, what is happening in small towns? What is happening in the regions? Canada is more than just a province. That is the way the CBC has seen it, just as a province. We have 10 provinces and a distinct territory, but we do not happen to have some distinctions, let us say, in Ontario.

Let me take Quebec first. We have no distinctions in Quebec?

[*Translation*]

—the Eastern Townships, the Outaouais, the Gaspé and the North Shore all have very specific identities. And you can't reflect those from Montreal and Quebec City alone. That won't work. The people of Rimouski, Matane and Sept-Îles where you cut regional programming and left a tremendous void are not pleased with what your colleagues on the other side of this House have done. It is totally unacceptable.

[*English*]

If we move into Ontario, are they trying to tell me that the northern part of Ontario looks like Toronto or looks like the Ottawa region? When we are driving along the 417 from Montreal to Ottawa or from any other part of this province such as the 401 to Toronto, or from the other provinces, we should find out about the weather and the traffic control. With this government's options and the way things are going, there are going to be more people on the 401. The point is that we cannot possibly entertain the suggestion that the province of Ontario has two spots that will reflect its entire personality: Ottawa and Toronto.

I suppose Windsor does not count. It got lost among our five large lakes of which we should be very proud. We forgot them. We just left them to languish with no voice either public or private in the Windsor area.

Then we go out to the prairies, and on the French side what do we have?

[*Translation*]

Don't we have a responsibility to reflect the specific culture of Francophones outside Quebec, their view of society, for their own benefit and the benefit of all Canadians? Hardly. We are cutting right and left. We cut *Génies en herbe*; *Ce soir dimanche*; *Actualités régionales*; *Le lien*. Cuts are being made all over Canada. In Vancouver, and Regina, in the official language, the language of minorities outside Quebec. Do you think that is fair? Do you think that makes sense? Do you think it's a good idea? Do you want to pursue this policy and expect to have a Canada for everyone, a united Canada from coast to coast? This is madness, Mr. Speaker, and it is intolerable!

• (1320)

[*English*]

I started out to say that this is what this country is all about, why Canada needs to be protected from this government that brought in a recession. On the back of that recession, it is now saying that it has to cut one of the major infrastructures that link this country; Radio-Canada, the CBC. I am saying that this is not the way we are to go about structuring our country.

The issues basically are: Do the airwaves belong to the public? Do they belong to us and are we holding that trust for the public here in this House, whether it is the public or the private sector, or do they belong to the board of directors? Do we expect the private sector to do the job of the public sector, because after all, they are a business? The public sector, in this instance is a business, but it is more than a business. It is not the ordinary business of the country, it is the special business of the country. It involves the talent of this country.

We live next to a wonderful neighbour, a giant, my American cousins. They are experts in the technique of communication. They have found the way to globalize entertainment, to show a portrait of a society that is not ours, but is amusing and entertaining. But, is that all there is to life, American entertainment, American sitcoms and an American way of seeing the world? Is there not a Canadian vision we wish to promote out there? If there is a Canadian vision how, in a communicating society, because that is what we are in, can we show it if we do not support both the Canadian Council and Radio-Canada?

We cannot allow the board of directors to take over the issue of the airwaves. It belongs to the public. Does the CRTC regulate public broadcasting in Canada or does that responsibility lie with the CBC as a self-regulating board? That is a very serious question and it needs to be addressed in a very serious manner. Are the laws of Canada, namely the Broadcasting Act, either the 1968 act or, if this government ever gets around to gazetting the 1990 act, to be respected as they reflect the wishes of Parliament, or can they be changed, as I said, through the backdoor, through government allocations?

Fourth, are the local, regional and national broadcasters and broadcasting to be interpreted as provincial? What happened to local and regional that is in the bill? Since when are the regions provinces? That is the way the board has seen them.

Fifth, the mandate of the new act includes, and I think I outlined the fact, the parliamentary will as expressed through the Official Languages Act and through the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I would suggest that the revisions presented by the board of directors, its president and its chairman, must be reviewed by Parliament. It is a matter of priority and the CBC should so direct following its hearings. It is a very disquieting moment in the history of our country.

I noted a very interesting comment which the President of the CBC, Mr. Veilleux made. The day he appeared before the CRTC, he was outlining his vision of a restructured CBC. In particular, he talked about his vision, which he translated into a programming agenda. He outlined five key elements. The first one is enough to make one stop: "A CBC that offers strong national services which are rooted in the regions of the country." The question is, if one looks at the programming what did he mean by the word "regions" and what can we possibly think he meant by the word "local"? Did he know that it was in the bill? Did the members of that board know it was in the bill?

He then goes on to mention the whole question of a mirror. I thought it was a very interesting quote he used, which I would like to bring to your attention. He says:

> What the CBC is trying to do in English and French television is replace a mirror with a window.

Instead of replacing the mirror with a window, he should have said he was replacing it with a slammed-shut window because I would like to know how the window is going to be open in so many places across this land. You tell me how the window is open in Windsor; you tell me how it in open in Matane; you tell me how it is open in Sept Iles; you tell me how it is open in Windsor. Mr. Veilleux should go back to his board and tell them to reopen the window he thought was opening—because he didn't open it. It needs to be smashed open, if that is his vision.

I would like to know how Calgary TV viewers are going to be served by Edmonton. I would like to know whether it is better to have a one-hour show that is going to include Edmonton and Calgary, instead of the two hours they presently have.

I would like to suggest that Mr. Veilleux go back to the drawing board, and so does the CBC.

First of all, I was in Newfoundland where we just left them floating out in the sea. We have cut so much in Newfoundland and Labrador, but I am sure my colleagues will talk about that. But let us look at Moncton. Programs like *Tele-Debate*, *Tele-Débat*, *La Revue*, *Spec Art* have already been cut. As I said, *Génies en herbe* and *Musicologie*—I mean, we don't have to know anything about music. After all, if we listen to the news we will know everything, we will be so well informed—we will be ignoramuses in this world.

I would say that they are not going to review *Les Jeux d'Acadie*. Is it not important that people in Prince Edward Island and the rest of Canada can have a sense of profound joy as they look at our youth who are involved in sports, who are showing competence and the potential to become international figures in the world of sport? But, no, we cut that out because it is not important.

Mr. Speaker, all regional programs have been cut except news. Well, I don't know if you agree with me, but I think Canadians are more than news junkies; I think Canadians are interested in a variety of entertainment, so that they can see themselves and find out who they are.

As I move along I would like to point out to you that our party believes that Canada is more than its regions, that Canada is rooted in the realities of its small communities, their singers and performers, their values, their stories. It is the fact that Newfoundland is more than an outport and the west is more than a wheat field. It is more than just the local focus, but the local focus feeds into the regional, which becomes part of the national, and it is how you build a star system. It is how you get to know the Simards of this world, how you get to know the Ann Murrays of this world. It is a way in which you can feel that you belong.

I think Al Johnson said it best when he said; "The public broadcasting service, to have to reconcile itself to being a network service, would be a little like saying let us have a Canada without the provinces".

I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that that speaks reams for the vision of my colleagues across the floor.

One of the things that we can ill-afford to do is not promote this vision of Canada. In a time of great financial restraint such as now, in a time when, yes, we must be addressing the deficit, we also have to remember there is a future. If we want to have a sense of belonging, a sense of participation, a sense of peoplehood, a sense of nation, and be prepared to pay for our public broadcaster, then we have to have it rooted in the local community. We have to have a sense of belonging so that our hearts and our minds, of our children and of our public, will be prepared to pay and to continue paying for this excellent service that is the envy of the world, Mr. Speaker.

I only have a minute left. There were a few people I had wanted to bring to your attention. I am afraid that time is of the essence, but I want to point out that—

[*Translation*]

—Canada's diversity, its magnificent geography, its many languages and cultures, and current political events that are so important to us, are so many reasons why we need a strong Pan-Canadian voice. Therefore, we believe that the CBC must continue to play its public interest role, in other words, to help communicate to Canadians a national spirit, a national awareness that will give them a sense of pride and develop a sense of national unity.

• (1330)

[*English*]

I would say to you that in a real sense, television is to 20th century Canada what the railway was to the 19th. Its visual productions are the medium that allows thousands of Canadians to hear and see themselves.

If I may, I would like to close with a quote from the former Ambassador of Canada to the United States, Mr. Allan Gotlieb, because I believe as he was negotiating the free trade agreement he recognized culture. He said this, and with this I will close: "The communications revolution and the emergence of the homogenizing universal software make the role of the state in fostering the cultural life of a nation more important, far more important than ever before in history. The principal challenge for the state today in the cultural sphere is to foster the creation of the content that is carried on those electronic systems and on video screens. The spectacular growth of the homogenized universal software has made this one of the primary national tasks of our time".

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to what was said by the hon. member for Mount Royal. We are very much aware of her competence in this area. I read in her motion, and I quote:

—providing local, regional and national services to all Canadians.

She has been working on this matter for several months, and she has had an interest in communications for many years. I would like to ask her the following question, and I would appreciate a sincere answer: Did you get or did you have access to all the details on CBC expenditures, including the salaries of all journalists, members of the board of directors, employees, overtime, and especially spending on coverage of national events, and spending per station? When we talk about $1.4 billion annually, this means that the corporation is entirely free to spend $1.4 billion without being accountable to Parliament. And even that is easy. Every year I receive a nice annual report with a glossy cover and a couple of thousand dollars—just a financial report. But in municipalities, like my own town of Val-d'Or or Matane, Gaspé or Sept-Îles, every month residents can check expenditures by their elected representatives and the municipality.

My question is this: Did the hon. member, since she has contacts at the CBC, obtain all the details, not just what it says in the Estimates but details that are confidential, including all expenditures and salaries? Did you have access to that list?

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, I doubt even the president of the CBC would have all those figures. This is a huge corporation, with a French and an English section, television and radio and of course the parliamentary channel, and there is also the international service. It is impossible to have all the data. In fact, I even considered asking for a royal commission to to examine CBC spending.

There are about 40 unions and groups involved, and there are certainly items where we might have a few questions. However, that is not the issue today. The CBC has been cut practically to the bone. If we look at the cuts that have been made since 1984, we get a total of more than $300 million—closer to $400 million, in current dollars.

Mr. Moore: What about the other programs?

Mrs. Finestone: I beg your pardon?

Mr. Saint-Julien: The other programs?

Mrs. Finestone: A lot of programs were cut. A lot of cuts were made, and I am sure some were made in your part of the country.

Mr. Saint-Julien: No, we don't have radio.

Mrs. Finestone: You certainly do have radio, and in fact, people hear you often enough on the airwaves. I heard you myself when I was up there. The question is rather —I won't go into all the details, like counting the flowers in the rug. I am not going to get into that. The important thing is—

Mr. Saint-Julien: That is what is so expensive!

Mrs. Finestone: Well, who knows. Mr. Mulroney might make you a member of the board of directors, and you could take the books and do your own scrutiny. Meanwhile, we have an administrator who used to be at Treasury Board and who knows how to read the books. He knows how to cut and where to cut, and as the CBC boss, he said they could no longer afford to make cuts and at the same time expect the Corporation to satisfy the criteria set forth in the bill. And that is what counts. You are changing the mandate of the CBC, behind the scenes, behind closed doors, the same as you tried to do in other areas, and we know that won't work.

[*English*]

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to compliment my colleague, the hon. member for Mount Royal, for the motion that is before the House today. It is an extremely important motion.

I would like to ask her a question about some of the comments she made in presenting this motion with regard to Radio-Canada International. As the member well knows, some time ago the Prime Minister—perhaps March 16—said: "I guarantee that Radio-Canada International will survive."

We find out on Friday that the budget for RCI was cut from $20 million to $13.5 million. We find that the staff of 193 have been decimated to a level of 100 staff and the number of languages broadcast has been reduced from 14 to five. When you really start to look at it, Mr. Speaker, the cuts go much deeper than that. The number of producing hours are reduced from 233 to 65.

I would like to ask the member, in light of these very significant and substantial cuts that now face Radio-Canada International, what does she think of the Prime Minister's promise to keep it alive?

Mrs. Finestone: Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me say how sad I think it is, particularly in the evolving world of the new democracies and the hope for application of democratic principles which we, as Canadians, like to think we apply.

It is very sad that these countries that listen to us internationally will now not hear our voice. I guess it is another way of seeing how the Prime Minister's word is his bond.

Mr. Dennis Mills (Broadview—Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to compliment my colleague on her passionate, pointed speech.

I would like to ask her a very short but specific question. I was always under the impression that when people came before the CRTC, whether it was Global Television or CTV, they set forward a list of criteria they would meet. I think specifically of *Much Music*. They came before the CRTC and said: "We are going to have a national standard. We will be heard in every part of the country. It will be non-stop, et cetera, et cetera."

My question to my colleague is this. How is it that the CBC can make all of these changes which is cutting it out of regions with reduced programming almost as if it had some kind of special status before the CRTC? Does the regulator of this country not have as its responsibility the jurisdictional mandate to make sure that national standards are maintained?

• (1340)

Or can these politically appointed entrepreneurs for some unknown reason thwart this CRTC mandate? I know for certain that the private sector broadcasters would not get away with it.

I would like to know from my hon. colleague how it is that the CBC has special status.

Mrs. Finestone: I thank my hon. colleague from Toronto for that question. It is one of the prime questions and it is one of the issues at stake here.

Can the CBC continue to collect advertising revenue when it is not present in the community, when it cannot help the local businessman so that he can prosper along the way? Can it prevent stations from being changed, as Windsor and Rimouski have asked? Is the promise of performance and the licensing mechanism strictly for the private sector and not true for the public sector?

I suggest that the member's question is a very pertinent one, as was the one of my colleague on Radio-Canada International. Can the CBC be master of its destiny and be the only voice for the public airwaves which are mandated and cared for by laws passed by this House?

I don't know. My view is no, and I think the CRTC should so say.

Mr. Lee Richardson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Mount Royal for her motion today seeking that the CBC be strengthened as an instrument of national identity. However, I regret that she seems unaware of the fact that this strengthening process has already begun. It is under way through efforts of this government in introducing and the passage of Bill C-40, which the hon. member assisted in committee and which will be proclaimed shortly.

In fact, there is no need for this motion.

Indeed, the hon. member's energies would best assist the broadcasting system if she were to recognize that this government is working to preserve Canada's entire broadcasting system, both the public and private, and that only through renewed sensitivity to public environments and needs will broadcasters be able to assure all Canadians of their own unique structure for communications.

Perhaps some background would be helpful for members.

Let me remind the hon. member of the government's support of the CBC mandate. In a speech of the Minister of Communications of January 31, 1990 when he addressed the Legislative Committee on Bill C-40, he said:

> I have frequently said that this Crown corporation must be the cornerstone for expression of our cultural reality. It is in this spirit that we tabled before the Parliament of Canada this broadcasting bill, which, for the first time, gives the CBC a mandate to contribute more actively to cultural expression and to the exchange of the various forms it can take. The CBC must distinguish itself from private broadcasters. This is also the first time we have taken a legislative route to ask the CBC to reflect not on our unity alone, but on our cultural identity.

The minister addresses this issue directly, from the beginning. Nor has the position of this government changed. The broadcasting bill which this House has deliberated on and passed specifies a mandate to rejuvenate the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and which clarifies its responsibilities with respect to Canadian, regional and cultural programming needs.

For the first time, this mandate includes specific references to the important role that the CBC has in reflecting Canada, in providing English and French programming services, in meeting the needs of official language minorities, in reflecting Canadian society in all its aspects, in actively contributing to the flow and exchange of cultural expression and, in these ways, contributing to a shared Canadian consciousness and identity.

Certain critics have lamented the removal of the phrase "national unity" from the CBC's mandate, yet there can be no doubt that the objectives which are cited here will indeed contribute to Canadian unity.

The Minister of Communications, speaking before this House on the occasion of the third reading of Bill C-40 on December 4, 1990, asks:

> How can there be unity without the flow and exchange of cultural expression in English, and in French, among all component parts in Canada, as foreseen by this bill. And how can there be unity without a shared awareness of Canadian identity?

Let me turn now to the generous support given the CBC by this government. Yes, much is expected of this corporation; however, despite cries to the contrary from certain quarters, it should be recognized that a great deal has also been given and is being given to the CBC to meet these objectives.

Excluding advertising and miscellaneous revenues, the corporation has benefited from more than $1 billion in Main and Supplementary Estimates for the fiscal year 1990–91. These sums include an additional amount of some $45 million that was just announced on March 5, to help the CBC meet extraordinary costs involved, including cash–outs and severance obligations involved in its restructuring.

Now to the process of this rejuvenating. The board of directors of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation were only meeting their responsibilities when they decided in December 1990 to live within the environment that affects all other areas of the public and private sector. They took the necessary steps to meet the corporation's original mandate, as well as its new one. They knew, as do we, that at no time did these mandates suggest the corporation should expand into the provision of services at a local community level.

Gérard Veilleux, the chairman of the board, said before the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture and in a number of other statements that the corporation's self–defined mandate to support local programming placed network news and variety programming, the essence of a national broadcaster, at risk.

This review of priorities, enforced by circumstances rather than by politicians, has given the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation an opportunity for rejuvenation, allowing it to grow as a distinctive, as well as a central, element of the Canadian broadcasting system.

Like the private sector in times of restraint and, perhaps, the recession we are in, the CBC will build on strengths. Let us look at the CBC television.

The regrettable crisis in the Middle East this year showed us how important the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation can be in providing Canadians with a distinctive view of world events through *The National, The Journal, Le Téléjournal* and *Le Point*, as well as in radio newsgathering.

If the Iraqi war was the making, on a world–wide basis, of the CNN network, it was also a significant stimulus to CBC's *Newsworld* with Canadian English–speaking audiences. This hour by hour coverage of the Iraqi war, plus the earlier Canadian crisis at Oka, have had the effect of developing a morning audience for *Newsworld*. Consequently, the CBC intends to broadcast two hours of *Newsworld* live, daily as a morning public affairs show on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's main national network. This new service will provide English–speaking Canadians with a new choice for their morning television news.

While news has been a popular development of English programming, weekly feature programming also has gained audiences in both French and in English.

We are talking about building on strengths. Immense prime time audiences are being drawn by *L'Héritage, Un Signe de Feu* and by the series *Les Filles de Caleb*, among other French language television programs. I am told that the last program of *Les Filles de Caleb* had a viewing audience of over 4 million people. On the English side, *Road to Avonlea* can truthfully be described as a runaway blockbuster. The series *Street Legal* and *Degrassi High* also demonstrate that Canadian productions can have substantial audiences, not only here, but abroad as well.

The public resources which are being provided to the corporation both directly and indirectly are more than adequate to permit the continuation and burgeoning of a distinct Canadian television.

As to the other responsibilities which the corporation took on and which it now finds onerous, such as the provision of the Parliamentary channel, the will and the opportunity exists for this valuable service to be provided on a continuing basis.

• (1350)

Arrangements were announced only a few days ago to maintain this program through the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation for a short term until new arrangements can be agreed upon. An offer is, at this moment, out to the public for an expression of interest in providing ongoing coverage of our deliberations in this place.

Perhaps from this will emerge a new, even more stimulating channel reflective of the considerable work done by legislators and regulators not only in Ottawa, but throughout the country.

Let us look at CBC Radio. From the very beginning of public broadcasting when it was the only technology available, radio has been a keystone of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Our public stereo and monaural broadcast channels have become the envy of much of the world. and rightly so. It can be said without contradiction that the programming developed for English and French language radio services are uniquely Canadian in tone and have provided an important link in our cultural infrastructure.

The CBC has recently enhanced the quality of these services in many communities by making them available on new FM frequencies. For their part the stereo networks provide Canadian listeners with an alternative music selection, as well as foreground programming and theatre.

Partly because radio is a less expensive medium than television, it has been virtually unaffected by the measures announced by the CBC board. That CBC Radio is vulnerable to economic circumstances, as reflected in future budgets; is a fact; however, the goodwill of Parliament toward continued support of these valuable services can be in no doubt.

The hon. member mentioned in her address the Northern Services. We would be remiss if we were not to recognize at this time the importance of the CBC Northern Services. They bring radio and television programming to the Yukon and the Northwest Territories and to the northern regions of Quebec in seven native languages as well as in English and French. This service and other regional programming already scheduled or in planning will ensure that all Canadians are in communication with mainstream thought as well as in having the opportunity to meet each other.

In closing, this government recognizes the role played by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation within the larger framework of the Canadian broadcasting system. We have clearly supported this public broadcaster and have every intention to continue to do so. As the same time we require it to act within its mandate as defined by Parliament and to plan responsibly within the resources that this Parliament provides after much thought and deliberation.

We do not come to such decisions lightly or capriciously. In appointing persons of the high quality whom we now see serving on the board of directors of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, we place confidence in their administrative decisions and are firm in our belief that they will be innovative and faithful stewards of this public trust.

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to publicly welcome the member for Calgary Southeast, replacing the member for Edmonton Southwest. May he have, and may we have, as enjoyable a tenure on that committee as was enjoyed with the other member. I wish him good luck in his new challenging task.

I would hope that the member from Calgary will have some effective answers for his constituents as they see their voice cut and Edmonton taking over their role. I do not think he is going to have a happy day and it is not going to be a happy birthday that they are going to be wishing him.

I would like to also make the observation that the measure of the Canadian broadcasting system, the CBC, is not measured in the same way by this side of the House as it is by the other side of the House. Prime time, mass audience rating is certainly not the only yardstick of measure. We all rejoice in the successes that have been achieved by CBC. We all know that it is the CBC performers, the CBC news anchors, the CBC level of excellence that has raised the level of broadcasting in both the private and public sector, whether it is the educational sector or the private sector. That does not replace the place that small narrow casting interests have for the Canadian public broadcaster which the private sector should not and cannot afford to do. I find it extremely interesting, and I hope that the parliamentary secretary is very comfortable with the fact, that there are tenders out for the parliamentary channel. I am sure the Canadian public is just thrilled that the private sector can then start to call the shots on which parliamentarians they would like to focus on and which standing committees they would like to hear from. It will be extremely difficult and it is a conflict of interest. I think that is an absolute disgrace. I cannot believe he would even mention it.

I would like to ask the member, while he has got an answer, it would seem, from the nodding of his head with respect to Calgary and Edmonton, tell me how I can answer my constituents and the anglophones, 800,000 of them in Montreal, whose only news service and only

information is going to come either from what David Halton happens to think is important or Wendy Mesley or perhaps Peter Mansbridge, but there will be no particular broadcaster responsible for reporting to English-speaking Quebecers on what is going on through the voice of their parliamentarians here on Parliament Hill. Does he think it is fair that 800,000 of us have no voice out of this Hill?

Mr. Richardson: Mr. Speaker, I would not want the hon. member to think for a moment that the people in Montreal never pay any attention to her. I have always been impressed with her contributions to the committee. I also want to thank her for mentioning my predecessor as parliamentary secretary, the hon. member for Edmonton Southwest. I, too, will strive to fill those shoes. He did a remarkable job as I know that the member was pleased to comment on.

With regard to the parliamentary channel mentioned by the hon. member for Mount Royal, I think that that is a matter that is yet to be seen. I think it is a rather hypothetical suggestion for the member to suggest that the service will be different in any way than it is now. Obviously, there is some regulation over the use of the cameras in the House today, and the hon. member can be assured that some similar format will be followed whatever the course of the parliamentary channel in the House.

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, I know that my colleague on the government side is new to his position as parliamentary secretary, but, with all due respect, the argument that the member had tried to put forward that the CBC is actually being strengthened, that its mandate is actually being revitalized, is just a little beyond credibility.

We have to look at the fact that we are losing 150 hours of programming. We are closing three regional stations and reducing the operations in the remaining eight regional stations. We have turfed 1,100 people in the CBC out on the street and there is a $108 million shortfall. We have just finished emancipating Radio Canada International. You have cut its staff from 193 to 100. You have slashed its budget and reduced its international programming from 14 languages to 5. You have got another $50 million funding shortfall in the next fiscal year. That is going to translate into another 500 to 600 jobs.

How this member can say that they are strengthening the CBC is simply beyond me.

Mr. Richardson: Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome the hon. member in his new role as a critic of this portfolio. He may, in the course of his acquisition of knowledge in the portfolio, look at Bill C–40, which was passed by this Parliament and has yet to receive Royal Assent. He will note in the mandate of Bill C–40 just what the mandate of the CBC is in fact. We are talking here about a rejuvenation of CBC; allowing the CBC, with the new board of directors, is moving in this direction in addressing its mandate.

As I said in my remarks, its mandate has not concluded many of the services that the hon. member speaks of. What we are talking about here is doing what it does well in addressing its mandate given the resources at a time of restraint that the private sector, as well, is facing. We will just see to what extent they are able to do that.

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 31

• (1400)

[*English*]

CITIZENS' FORUM ON CANADA'S FUTURE

Hon. Alan Redway (Don Valley East): Mr. Speaker, if you have ever attended a meeting of the Citizens' Forum on Canada's Future as I have, you will know that Canadians are hopping mad at us, the federal politicians.

They want members of Parliament to reflect their constituents' views. They are fed up with party discipline and cabinet solidarity. Some want a referendum. Others want fixed election dates and direct election of the Prime Minister. All want changes to the Senate.

If many of these changes were put in place, our government would resemble the American republican system more than our traditional British parliamentary system.

Essentially, however, Canadians want a system of government in which their concerns and not ours are debated in public and not behind closed doors. It sounds to me very much like our present municipal council system, and that seems to work.

SOLAR ENERGY

Mr. David Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast): Mr. Speaker, increased environmental concerns on the use of conventional fuels and the need for natural resources conservation are prompting a search for environmentally sensitive energy technologies. In a country that wants both more energy and a cleaner environment, renewable energy resources have both excellent potential and are capable of adding significantly to our energy security.

Tomorrow the Solar Energy Society of Canada and the Liberal Party will host an exposition of solar energy technology on Parliament Hill from 11 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. in Room 200 of the West Block. I would like to invite all members of this hon. House to attend this event.

By and large Canadians still seem to be quite uninformed about solar energy technologies. Some of them even mistakenly believe that solar energy is not feasible in Canada because of our climate and our geography.

I hope that the exposition tomorrow will help us to evaluate existing technologies for harnessing the sun better and to understand the size of the challenge of ensuring an adequate, safe energy supply for the future.

* * *

[*Translation*]

TRIBUTE TO GUY LAFLEUR

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, for several days the sports section in *La Presse* published letters from admirers of hockey hero Guy Lafleur who was about to retire. Here is one from Mr. Robert Marsolais of Joliette, who says:

> Leclerc, Richard, Vigneault, Lafleur —these are only a few of those heroes with whom an entire people spontaneously identifies.
>
> Intensity, determination, perseverance, generosity and professionalism —These words distill the essence of the career of the "blond devil".
>
> Gaze, speech and aim are equally direct. But above all, the man we admire for what he is and what he represents remains simple and unaffected.
>
> Thank you, Guy, for giving us some unforgettable moments and for letting us vent some heatfelt emotions.
>
> Another career beckons. We hope it will bring fulfilment for you, Lise and all your loved ones.

Mr. Speaker, the Quebec caucus of the Conservative Party salutes Guy Lafleur and says: Thank you!

* * *

[*English*]

JAMES BAY II

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, James Bay II is the largest hydroelectric project ever conceived in the history of North America, and the clear-cutting for the flooding has begun without environmental impact evaluation.

Twenty years ago the James Bay Development Corporation of Quebec launched its scheme to restrain or divert all the major rivers of James Bay and northern Quebec, creating a gigantic series of dams, dikes, and reservoirs.

Premier Bourassa then as now made it clear that the purpose was to provide power to the United States. Cost estimates for James Bay I rose from $1 billion when it began to over $24 billion for its completion in 1996.

The real costs to the Cree, to the Inuit, and to Canada's environment are devastating. Once the land is flooded it is lost forever. Mercury laden fish, drowned caribou, ruined habitat for the Beluga whales and for hundreds of other species, and flooding from the two phases of 26,000 square kilometres, 2 per cent of the entire province of Quebec, six times as much land flooded by this project as is protected in all of its provincial and national parks combined.

The federal and provincial governments are playing a treacherous game in allowing this project to proceed in bits and pieces without an over-all environmental assessment. Even worse, the alternatives to this project are being purposely hidden from Canadians and Quebecers.

* * *

MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY ACT

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester): Mr. Speaker, under the terms of the free trade agreement with the United States for the first time American cars can be imported to Canada for resale. Now that American cars have begun coming to Canada, it has become clear that U.S. standards are not at all the same as Canadian

standards in areas of safety, emissions, language and metric measure.

Departmental officials are struggling with how to address this issue but the answer is very clear: there can be only one set of standards and they must be met in exactly the same way by both domestic and imported cars.

To do otherwise will have a very detrimental effect to Canadian consumers and to the Canadian manufacturing industry, as well as having an inconsistent and confusing set of safety regulations.

I strongly urge the Minister of Transport to demand that the Motor Vehicle Safety Act be applied equally and fairly to both domestic and imported vehicles in exactly the same manner.

* * *

RADIO CANADA INTERNATIONAL

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean): Mr. Speaker, in 1945 the CBC's overseas broadcasting arm, Radio Canada International, was founded.

The federal government has again shown its myopic approach by its decimating cuts to Radio Canada International. Canadians living abroad and persons living under repressive regimes are being denied what is for many their only touchstone with home and Canada.

At a time when the British, French and Americans are increasing their international broadcasting services for the purposes of furthering trade, human rights and foreign policy issues, our government has decided to sit idly by as $8 million, 100 jobs and at least six language services are slashed out of RCI, a 50 per cent cut.

The PMO said it was embarrassed that RCI employees would announce these cuts to the world. This government should be more than embarrassed. This is just another example of government's short-sightedness in its domestic and foreign policy.

* * *

FORESTRY

Mr. Dave Worthy (Cariboo—Chilcotin): Mr. Speaker, the forest industry is vital to Canada. Our nation's forests are a renewable resource.

While in the past we have not always been the best of stewards, we have recently seen real change in attitudes and practices.

Unfortunately among the chorus of critics there are some who have ignored this progress and seem intent on damaging Canada's largest industry. It has gone so far that some even advocate foreign boycotts of Canadian products.

This destructive sentiment was seen in a recent German TV program which was unfairly critical of the B.C. forest industry. The use of partial information and half-truths has resulted in a biased perception of our forestry practices.

Certainly, when it comes to something so important to Canadians, we should be able to count on a certain degree of fairness, accuracy, and possibly even some sense of loyalty from other Canadians.

* * *

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of a distinguished constituent, Mr. Wayne Meyer. For 25 years he was dedicated to his work and contributed to the building of the British Columbia economy.

Then as a result of a compassionate and humanitarian gesture for his ailing father, he found himself in need of unemployment insurance for a short period but was denied support.

He appealed the decision and eventually sought justice before the Office of the Empire and in June 1990 Mr. Meyer had his case adjudicated.

Nine months have passed. Yet the judge who heard the case has yet to respond. Here is a man who through no fault of his own was in need of UI support, was denied support, appealed to the Empire, and yet had to wait for a decision while he is forced to live in near poverty.

I urge the judge to render a decision as soon as possible to end this travesty of justice.

[*Translation*]

• (1410)

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Jean-Guy Guilbault (Drummond): Mr. Speaker, Agriculture Canada and the Quebec Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food recently agreed to make the Gross Revenue Income Plan available to the Quebec grain farmers for the 1991-1992 crop year.

This plan which, from the very beginning, called upon the cooperation of the farmers as well as the federal and provincial governments in the Agri-Food Review, clearly shows that, if we work together in a genuine partnership, we can make things better for the producers.

Quebec's participation to the Income Stabilization Plan for grain farmers is vital for the farmers as a permanent and efficient source of support they can count on.

Mr. Speaker, even the UPA applauded to this new trilateral agreement.

* * *

[*English*]

FISHERIES

Mr. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans makes a big deal out of consulting fishermen in Atlantic Canada. However, the fishermen see things differently.

The vase majority of lobster fishermen in Prince Edward Island told the minister that they wanted no part in the increase of minimum size of lobsters they catch. A large majority of those who responded to the survey conducted by DFO said that they wanted lobster sizes to remain at two and a half inches. Instead of listening to the fishermen, the minister is ignoring them, determined to increase the sizes in zones 24 and 26A.

The scientific evidence proves that the increases do nothing to protect the stocks. As well, the increases will lower the catches and will take money out of the pockets of fishermen and plant workers. I urge the minister to cancel the increases today.

GOVERNMENT BONDS

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, Canada is one of the few developed countries that still pays investment brokers non-negotiated fees to sell government bonds. These handouts cost Canadian taxpayers $20 million to $60 million a year.

The minister of state said the other day that this practice has been going on for decades. It may have been the practice for decades, but the government cannot justify continuing the practice while at the same time taking money from children.

The individual taxpayer is subsidizing the lifestyle of a few hundred Bay Street sharks who cart their fees away in wheel-barrows.

Is it not ironic to see that the very same people who warn us against the deficit are precisely those who thrive on it?

The finance minister, a former executive vice-president at Dominion Securities, is dancing with Bay Street wolves while Canadian taxpayers are being shaved. He has yet to learn to say no to his friends on Bay Street.

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CANADA POST

Mr. Jerry Pickard (Essex—Kent): Mr. Speaker, many Canadian weekly newspapers face extinction. This government is introducing regulations that would cause Canadian newspaper mailing rates to jump as high as 1,000 per cent or 10 times their present costs.

Last December, Canada Post first gazetted the proposed regulations. The weekly newspapers had no time to react, no opportunity to plan. Subscriptions for 1991 were already sold. Newspaper publishers have cited increases in the thousands of dollars: $5,000, $10,000, up to $30,000 and more.

The local press is important to Canadians. It is another institution being attacked by this government. Newspapers in small towns and rural Canada are asking not for a handout, but just a fair fighting chance.

If postal rates need to rise, they should be phased in over long periods of time. Let us work with Canadians, not against them.

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INDEPENDENCE OF GREECE

Mr. Marcel Prud'homme (Saint-Denis): Mr. Speaker, on March 25, 1821 the independence of Greece was officially proclaimed by Archbishop Germanos of Patras over the Ottoman Empire.

This last weekend all over the world we were celebrating this great day. In my city of Montreal thousands and thousands of people of all origins participated in this great event, as did people in Toronto.

My party, the Liberal Party, of Canada and I would like to offer these hard working proud Canadians our sincere best wishes. They chose to come to Canada. Many of them I know personally and they live in my constituency of Saint-Denis.

[*Translation*]

Yesterday, while celebrating this event, thousands of them reminded us that there is still a country torn apart by internal divisions, and that is Cyprus. They unanimously asked for the immediate implementation of the UN resolutions regarding Cyprus.

[*English*]

As Michael Paidoussis was saying yesterday and as reported in *The Gazette* of Montreal today: "We see everything that is happening in Kuwait, forcing Iraq to abide by UN resolutions and yet the problem in Cyprus remains unresolved".

Zito i Hellas. Zito o Canadas.

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TRANSPORT

Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, Canadians and indeed those in my constituency of Hamilton West are greeting with a great deal of speculation and suspicion the agenda of the Minister of Transport.

The Minister of Transport is about to embark on negotiations concerning an open skies concept between Canada and the United States.

He is to embark on what may be in the Minister of Transport's opinion a well meaning idea, but the problem that Canadians have with the Minister of Transport is that the only bargaining chip he has in his hand is the accessibility of the United States and its air carriers to being carriers in Canada.

A system of cabotage within Canada is of great concern to Canadian travellers because it is going to cost them more.

U.S. Air, the seventh largest air carrier, a small one at that compared to other air carriers, is twice the size of Air Canada and Canadian combined. The carriers are concerned. They want to have their input.

We hope the Minister of Transport will at least give them the courtesy of listening.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*English*]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. It concerns the incredible weekend statements made by the Minister of Finance in which he blames the attitudes of Canadians for the current malaise gripping this country.

Has the Deputy Prime Minister considered that the malaise gripping this country is not caused by Canadian attitudes but rather by government policies?

I refer him specifically to the report tabled an hour ago by the Commissioner of Official Languages who has this to say about the government's broadcasting policy:

> Canadian identity, we fear, cannot be promoted by showing "Dallas" and "L.A. Law" in English and French. The CBC must have a strong national and regional presence. Regional programming has been slashed to such a point that it may never recover—In terms of broadcasting, the people who live outside the largest metropolitan areas have been made second-class citizens.

Does the Deputy Prime Minister agree with the assessment of the Commissioner of Official Languages that in fact his government's broadcasting policies are creating second-class citizens?

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Of course not, Mr Speaker. The Commissioner of Official Languages presented his report today at noon. I have not yet had a chance to read it all, but on glancing through it, he also

says many positive things about the action of the government.

When we deal with official languages and the environment in which we live in Canada, it is always a very delicate area to work in.

The commissioner also said that when we take everything into account, the balance sheet is most positive. We can rest assured that this government is fully committed to this policy and will continue to act in an efficient manner to make sure that the best possible policies are being implemented.

With respect to the CBC, many days of hearings last week provided the managers of CBC with occasion to explain their decision to reorganize their programming within the budget allocated.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, I find it incredible that the Prime Minister and his government should be blaming Canadians and their attitudes for the present malaise gripping this country.

Today, the Commissioner of Official Languages criticized the policies of a government that applied the GST to books. He also criticized the cutbacks at the CBC which made people outside our urban centres, and I quote, "second class citizens". Doesn't the minister understand that his government's policies, not the attitudes of Canadians, are undermining Canadian unity?

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, when the Commissioner of Official Languages starts commenting on Canada's tax system, he may be somewhat "over-extended".

I may remind the interim Leader of the Opposition that this reform was discussed at length in the House and that the government explained its reasons for introducing the tax. This reform is vital to an exporting country like Canada. It was absolutely necessary. Even opposition members have, over the years, acknowledged the need for removing the former federal sales tax which was disastrous for our exports. The standard of living and the quality of life of Canadians depend on our exports.

It was not just an obligation. It was a duty. And until now, no government had the courage to take this step. We did, and we are proud of it, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, a tax on books is not going to do much for Canadian unity and Canadian identity.

I have this question for the minister: Since he just said that the Commissioner of Official Languages says many positive things about the government, I would like to ask him why, on the very day the government received the report on official languages, it is cutting Treasury Board's budget with respect to official languages to the tune of 22 per cent. Why is the minister killing the jobs of people who are supposed to preserve bilingualism at the federal level?

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, when we hear the kind of comments made by the interim Leader of the Official Opposition, we are astonished at their factual content, which is absolutely incorrect!

Last year, expenditures on official languages within government increased by 9.5 per cent, although all other budgets were cut. Next year, there will be an increase of 4.5 per cent, while other expenditures are being reduced. As far as human resources are concerned, this year we prepared regulations which were published in this week's *Gazette*. We worked very hard for two years, and during the comming months, we will consider how best to manage this sector.

However, I repeat that the government intends to keep managing this sector effectively.

• (1420)

[*English*]

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, there is nothing, absolutely nothing, wrong with Canadians' attitudes towards official languages. As a matter of fact, in this report we find that four out of five Canadians accept official bilingualism and that three out of four parents want their children to learn the second language, in this case the other official language.

What is at stake here is the leadership this government is giving to this whole question. I want to ask the minister this, since the report today tabled is quite critical of his department. Mr. Speaker, I will read from page 56:

Efforts to promote the identity and linguistic and cultural integrity of Canada.

Results this year; insufficient, inconclusive efforts.

Harmonization of commitments to official languages and multiculturalism policies.

Results of the government; insufficient effort.

Constitutional formula to develop and reduce imbalances to improve services in the minority language services. Government position; not yet stated.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister to tell us why today, in his own department, there is talk of cutting 22 per cent of those people directly responsible for the program evaluation branch? Why is the minister cutting 15 people out of a job at this time?

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): I would like to repeat what I have said already, Mr. Speaker, we are increasing the budget for this particular department.

As for the commitment of this government and of the Prime Minister, I would like to quote a statement he made saying that bilingualism is an advantage and an asset for this country and that even with its imperfections, and we all recognize that there are some, it serves Canada well. He said that it will always be a challenge. A great deal of success has been achieved and, as is clearly shown in the very report you are quoting, of course it is not perfect. But I would remind the hon. gentleman that his own party had been in power for decades and we were all striving in our own way to improve it.

We introduced a new bill last year, we have introduced a whole new set of regulations that were discussed and debated in this House and in committee, and which are now in front of the public. We have made arrangements with many departments for special arrangements to manage this difficult area, and we are making good progress in the areas declared officially bilingual.

In 1984 when we came in there were 35 per cent bilingual jobs; there are now 70 per cent bilingual people in those particular management jobs.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I want to put a supplementary. In his annual report the commissioner also refers to the question of the language of work and to another important question, equitable participation. I want to deal with the regulations designed to favour the actual use of French or English as a working language in federal government departments and agencies. The findings of the commissioner's study show that nothing has been done yet. A study of environments favourable to the use of the working language has been made, but the results have not yet been made public.

So here is my question. True enough, we were given regulations concerning the language of service. But we have absolutely nothing, the government has quite simply refused to tell the Canadian Parliament just where the government stands on the issue of language of work and equitable participation. Now I ask the minister when are we going to have regulations on the language of work?

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, I remember quite well that a few months ago in this House the hon. member asked me to produce or publish these rather difficult and complex regulations which enable all Canadians to have as much access as possible to services in their mother tongue anywhere in Canada. We did work very hard. I continued the work which my predecessor had begun. I believe we came out with excellent regulations which drew praise from both sides of the House, I would say almost from three sides of the House. We did a good job and we are continuing this work at the departmental level.

With respect to the language of work, outside if you will, I believe the official language is already precise enough. As far as I know there has been no major problem. Should one ever arise we would be glad to deal with it at the appropriate time and place.

* * *

[*English*]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, my question comes from the speech which the Minister of Finance gave this past weekend. It was a speech in which he told Ontario Conservatives that we could lose this country.

I think the minister is right. Our unity and the faith our people have in each other are very much at the breaking point. That is why this government must change its economic direction.

I want to ask this government if it will work for Canada's survival by ending its tax breaks to the rich, by giving more support to training and to research and, above all, by getting Canadians back to work in Quebec and all across the rest of this country? That is what we need to make this country survive. Will this government give us that commitment.

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, I continue to be amazed at the contradictions I hear from members of that particular party. For one week, day after day, they get up in the House and tell us that we must do something because a lot of companies are going into bankruptcy. They then turn around and say: "You should increase the taxes on these companies because it is most unfair". I would like to know exactly where they stand.

It is a fact that many of our companies are in difficulty. It is by providing them with the proper environment and by bringing down the interest rates that we can help them to salvage their companies and get on with their programs. It is not by sheer magic.

The opposition and the NDP seem to think that by pressing a button we can change the course of events. Canada, like all countries, is living in the real world. We have to provide a competitive environment, put our own house in order and reduce the interest rates and then we can get on with the job.

Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, what this country needs is a lower dollar, a lower set of interest rates and the hundreds of thousands of people who would be back to work as a consequence of those kinds of policies.

[*Translation*]

I have another question for the government. Mr. D'Iberville Fortier released his report today. He discussed the climate of uncertainty surrounding the future of the official languages. He said that some people are playing with dynamite.

Is the government willing to confirm unequivocally that our linguistic duality is a fundamental characteristic of this country? Will it provide the required leadership in this field for the future?

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raised many issues in his question. He mentioned in particular the need for lower interest rates and lower dollar.

I would like to remind him that we are indeed pursuing these objectives, but that the only good way to achieve this is by harmonizing the fiscal policy with the monetary policy. As regards official languages, I think the hon. member should have no doubt about it. This government is totally committed to official languages. If we were not, why would we have increased spendings by 9.5 per cent in that sector last year, when we were cutting back everywhere else? How can one claim a lack of interest on the part of this government?

Next year, while our overall spendings will be reduced by 3 per cent, spendings in that sector will increase by over 4 per cent. I think the figures are eloquent. As regards our commitment, you will find in today's *Gazette* I think the important draft regulations we are submitting to the Canadian people. That is unequivocal. A few months ago, we introduced a new legislation on the subject. Our commitment is unequivocal. I cannot for the life of me understand why the hon. member is so concerned. I can assure him that we are indeed committed not only to maintain but to improve this policy.

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• (1430)

[*English*]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Prime Minister, I would like to address my question to the Deputy Prime Minister.

Recently the Prime Minister promised to save Radio Canada International, but despite his assurances, RCI's budget has just been axed, its staff decimated and the number of languages broadcast slashed from 14 to 5. Incredibly, we will no longer be able to tune to RCI programming in Canada's two official languages.

I would like to ask the Deputy Prime Minister this question. At a time when the government can find $14 million for a glitzy ad campaign to sell the GST; at a time when it can afford $1 million plus for its budget propaganda leaflet, why can the Prime Minister and this government not find the $7 million to keep open our only newslink to the rest of the world? Or is this just another example of another broken promise by this Prime Minister?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has assured all Canadians that Canada will continue to have an international shortwave service. The government has been searching for new funds to retain a Canadian international shortwave service. That is being done right now.

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[*Translation*]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, the Commissioner of Official Languages has tabled a huge but most interesting report. His major concern as a result of the cuts in funding to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation will be an erosion of official language communities. At the same time is the government not undermining our Canadian identity when it is already shaky? Is it not dealing a serious blow to one of the essential characteristics of our country? My question is this: Is the government prepared to allocate the necessary funds for the maintenance and enhancement of programs for Francophones outside Quebec? Yes or no?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Mr. Speaker, the Chairman stated a month ago that he felt total receipts of $1.4 billion was adequate. I can tell you honestly that I watch the CBC. There are a great many programs which I appreciate highly, but it is the responsibility of the CBC and its managers to determine how they could provide a high quality service to all Canadians, and I am sure they will.

[*English*]

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the Canadian citizens paying their taxes in Windsor, Rimouski, Seven Islands, Matane—

[*Translation*]

—would be very pleased with the Minister's reply.

[*English*]

Mr. Epp: In Winnipeg we do not want it any more.

Mrs. Finestone: Is that so?

Mr. Speaker, given that the CBC President Veilleux has said that a further $50 million shortfall is looming and more serious cuts are ahead this year if more money is not forthcoming to protect what we now have left of the CBC, will someone, on behalf of the absent minister, assure Canadians that more money will be found for the CBC so that additional services are not cut and more jobs, more than the 1,100 right now, are not lost. Yes or no.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, I should like to remind the hon. member that one of the reasons why the government is compelled today to ask every one to tighten their belts is that before we assumed power, the generous Liberal government was spending $1.33 for every dollar Canadian taxpayers were sending to Ottawa.

Mrs. Finestone: It costs 11 cents for the CBC.

Mr. Loiselle: Much as we would like to spend—as politicians, we would rather spend more—Canadian taxpayers just cannot afford it.

Therefore, we have asked the CBC—by the way, we have increased its budget from $900 million to $1 billion and something—

Mrs. Finestone: No, $300 million.

Mr. Loiselle: ..we have asked the CBC to operate within its budget. Should exceptional requests be made, we would consider them on an individual basis.

[*English*]

NATIONAL UNITY

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Deputy Prime Minister.

Last weekend at a Conservative policy conference the Minister of Finance in effect reprimanded Canadians for their negative attitudes and told them: "Don't worry. Just be happy." That is quite a view coming from the architect of the very policies that are tearing this country's economy apart.

At that Conservative conference, the Minister of Finance praised the resolutions of the conference which he said would strengthen the country.

I want to ask the Deputy Prime Minister about some of these resolutions. Does he think that eliminating funding for multiculturalism will strengthen the country? Does he think that creating user fees for medicare will strengthen the country?

Tell us just which of these resolutions the government agrees with. Does he admit that it is this government's negative policies that are creating negative attitudes on the part of Canadians.

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I think what the hon. member would find encouraging is that 800 Conservatives took the time off from a very busy weekend to talk about the future of the country, and about policies for the future.

While this was going on, the Liberal Party of B.C. was trying to find a way to extricate itself from the federal Liberal Party. Quite a difference; quite a contrast.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, what surprised Canadians was that they could still find 800 people who would call themselves Conservatives and come out in public to have a meeting.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): I want to ask the Deputy Prime Minister if he will take a look at the report of the Official Languages Commissioner which was tabled earlier today and see what he says about another negative policy of this government, the GST, and its effect on books.

The Official Languages Commissioner says:

> The federal government should consider setting up a task force or other mechanisms to evaluate and report quickly on the linguistic and cultural dislocations created by application of the GST and proposed compensatory measures.

Will the Deputy Prime Minister admit that the government was wrong in applying the GST on books and on the economy, and set up this task force today?

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, from the beginning, we tried to explain to the opposition, which was not very inclined to listen, that this reform had a certain number of characteristics.

We wanted the GST to be widely based. We wanted it to create, by removing the old sales tax on companies, manufacturers and others, a more competitive Canada thereby creating more money for people to buy books.

Second, for Canadians who have the lowest incomes, we set aside what is, in a GST or value added tax country—there are 48 of them—the most generous system to make sure that these people would be in a better position to spend afterwards than they were before. It is up to them whether or not to buy books.

The disaster which was forecast before GST reform has not happened.

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• (1440)

SOFTWOOD LUMBER INDUSTRY

Mr. Brian L. Gardiner (Prince George—Bulkley Valley): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. The softwood lumber tariff memorandum of understanding signed by this government with the United States has been blamed for the loss of thousands of forestry jobs as well as selling out Canada's ability to make our own forest policy, particularly when it comes to questions like stumpage.

The minister of trade has said he would consult with the provinces to try and get a consensus on how to scrap the MOU.

My question to the Deputy Prime Minister is: Does the government have agreement from the major lumber producing provinces and the maritime premiers to go to Washington and scrap the MOU?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I can only advise the hon. member that those consultations are ongoing. Obviously there are major concerns about this issue and there are some differences of opinion as regards eastern and western industries. Hopefully we will be able to arrive at a consensus and a common position which we can take as a negotiating position with regard to this important issue with the United States.

Mr. Brian L. Gardiner (Prince George—Bulkley Valley): Mr. Speaker, under the memorandum of understanding, section 5 of the agreement that this government signed with the United States, the Government of Canada commits and will agree to impose a new tariff if any of the provinces reduce the stumpage that they levy on their forests.

Has the government been approached by any provinces to reduce their stumpage and is it still the position of the government that it will impose a new tariff if that is done?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I am not precisely sure about the state of the negotiations at the present time. Obviously these and all other matters will be considered as part of the consultation process, but I can assure the hon. member that the position of the government is that we want to deal with this issue and because it is something that involves very directly the provinces, it is important to have provincial concurrence. That is what we are seeking and when we do, we will be in the position to make a solid case before the United States.

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ATLANTIC CANADA OPPORTUNITIES AGENCY

Mrs. Coline Campbell (South West Nova): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for ACOA.

Since the closing of ADIL, which was given assistance one year and closed the next year, and is operating now only until the summer, can the minister tell the House whether or not he has caused an investigation in to what went wrong in the year that the money was given to ADIL?

Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, I would be very pleased to brief my colleague on this matter, but I want to tell her that as is the case with other enterprises in Atlantic Canada, our agency attempts to be helpful and do the most that we can to ensure that these enterprises have every chance of success where the jobs are badly needed.

Mrs. Coline Campbell (South West Nova): Mr. Speaker, the minister knows I asked this question in committee and as far as I know, I have not received an answer.

My supplementary is for the same minister. I wonder if the minister is aware of how many businesses have closed or gone into bankruptcy in Nova Scotia since the start of the ACOA plan. If he knows the number, would he please tell us, and if not would he table it in the House, as well as tabling what investigation went on for ADIL?.

Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, I can tell my colleague, who seems to be far more interested in the negative than the positive in these things, that whatever businesses have run into difficulty have been a very miniscule number compared to the businesses that have succeeded and they have created and maintained many thousands of jobs in Atlantic Canada.

If she wishes to have this kind of information which, I guess, more properly should be requested through a question on the Order Paper, I will make certain that she gets some background data.

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RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Mr. David Berger (Saint-Henri—Westmount): Mr. Speaker, My question is for the Minister for Science.

The president of the National Research Council acknowledged last week that the council is hurting badly, that it lacks the resources to adequately support industrial R and D, and that its most popular program with the private sector, the Industrial Research Assistance Program, has been starved for funds by this government.

When will the government recognize that the well-being and jobs of Canadians depends on investing in industrial research and development and adequately support industrial R and D through the National Research Council?

Hon. William C. Winegard (Minister for Science): Mr. Speaker, the National Research Council is but one instrument to support industrial research in this country.

The government has a very large number of programs: the Strategic Technologies Program, the sector campaigns and many others. These are all designed to promote, encourage and lever funding from the private sector for more research. That is exactly what we are trying to do.

Mr. David Berger (Saint-Henri—Westmount): Mr. Speaker, all of those programs have been cut by this government.

[*Translation*]

In fact, the president of the National Research Council has acknowledged that the value of contributions to the IRAP Program has dropped more than 20 per cent in the past six years. Seven years ago, the Prime Minister promised to create hundreds of thousands of jobs through investment in research and development, and to increase sales by several billion dollars each year.

That is exactly what the NRC's Industrial Research Assistance Program is doing. Will the minister make a commitment to invest in research and development and give the National Research Council the resources it needs to create jobs and increase sales of Canadian companies, which is exactly what the Prime Minister promised seven years ago?

[*English*]

Hon. William C. Winegard (Minister for Science): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, there are two facets to the IRAP program. The first and, indeed, it may turn out to be the most important facet, is the network that has spread from one end of this country to the other in terms of the industrial strength.

With respect to the IRAP grants, they have continued to go up. In fact, in the last year, I do not know if the hon. member is aware of this or not, but the IRAP funding was not completely used and that is an important factor.

We are committed to IRAP. We believe it to be a very important program. We have no intention of letting it decrease. We have every intention of supporting it. In fact, we have asked if they would please provide us with a new five year plan, for the first time, for the whole IRAP network system.

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ENTERPRISE CAPE BRETON

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Minister responsible for Enterprise Cape Breton.

The Brait report points out that 88 per cent of all financial assistance provided by Enterprise Cape Breton went to companies which were funded in excess of $1 million and that 71 per cent of those failed to produce jobs for Cape Bretoners.

My question to the minister is quite simple. He said last year that he would acknowledge any mistakes. I want, today, to hear him say that he is responsible for that abundant record of mistakes at Enterprise Cape Breton.

Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows that any minister is responsible for what goes on in his department. He also knows that in the last year or so there have been considerable changes made with respect to ACOA. He also, in fairness I think, would want me to put on the record that Mr. Brait, who did an arm's length, very impartial report, said that he was very impressed with the number of small enterprises that were created and the fact that this augured well for the future.

It is true that this or that mistake has tended to be highlighted but, basically, Mr. Brait pointed out that nearly $500 million of additional investment was levered out of Enterprise Cape Breton. He pointed out that there were nearly 2,000 jobs created, although he also pointed out that there was some exaggeration in the number of jobs created.

If I may, I would like to quote briefly to my colleague, what a former member of Parliament from Cape Breton of his party, the Rev. Andy Hogan said about regional development, which is worth noting: "With regard to regional economics, it is time for everyone in this House, who does not accept some of the conventional wisdom

about what can be done to get behind the whole program of regional expansion, to see what can be done. We can and will be partisan in other environments, but we must not just talk, we must ensure that regions and sub-regions of Canada have the opportunity to survive in the future." That is what this government is determined to do. I would hope that deep down, my hon. colleague's thinking on this issue is not shallow.

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Mr. Speaker, I trust you have noted that Brait indicated that those projects with which the minister had nothing directly to do with are the ones that were successful and, in fact, only 900 jobs were produced. The failures are specifically those jobs that the minister had to sign off on. I am asking this minister whether he will take responsibility for the failures that he specifically approved and act accordingly.

• (1450)

Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, I have already indicated to my colleague that I am well aware of the responsibilities and that I have indicated this in the past. He may in his trite way say that these large projects are not something that should be encouraged. I would remind him, where would we be in Nova Scotia for example without Michelin Tire?

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MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY ACT

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. As usual, I am a little confused and perhaps he can clarify something for me.

Although all the laws and regulations of the Motor Vehicle Safety Act are enforced on the Canadian auto industry, the Department of Transport does not enforce some of the regulations on U.S. imported vehicles, in effect creating two sets of rules. This creates a decided advantage for U.S. imports and a confusing set of safety standards.

My question is: Will the minister correct the situation and enforce the Motor Vehicle Safety Act on U.S. imports exactly as it is enforced on Canadian vehicles or change the rules for both imports and domestic vehicles so there is only one set of rules for all to follow?

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I know of no incidents such as my hon. friend refers to. The Motor Vehicle Safety Act prohibits the importation of vehicles that do not meet Canadian standards. Transport Canada has been advising individuals and companies to this effect for more than a year. As a matter of fact a leaflet with these requirements has been prepared and has been given wide distribution to associations and customs sites.

If my hon. friend has any specific examples, I would be pleased to look into them.

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester): Mr. Speaker, I do have a specific example. It is the example of odometers. There is a very clear rule that even I can understand that says that cars imported into Canada must have metric odometers. It is my understanding that that rule is not being enforced. Perhaps the minister could clarify that.

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, what I said to my hon. friend was that if he could bring me a specific example where a car has been imported to that effect, we will look into it.

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JUSTICE

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton—The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. On Friday, I asked about the tragic case of Linda MacDonald who was brainwashed without her consent in 1963. The Solicitor General said that he could not respond because the case is before the courts.

The minister will know that although a statement of claim was issued four years ago, there is a hold on the matter to allow the minister to review the allegations of negligence by the government and to hopefully, after 28 years, offer Mrs. MacDonald some compensation.

Will the government please stop delaying on this matter and offer Mrs. MacDonald the compensation she so richly deserves?

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is quite correct that with regard to the statement of claim, it was agreed between the parties that pending discussions the case would not be proceeded with.

My predecessor, the Minister for International Trade, when he was Minister of Justice, commissioned a report on the facts surrounding Ms. MacDonald's case. That report took a year and the conclusion of that report was that the Government of Canada bears no responsibility for those events at the Allan Memorial Institute.

At the request of Ms. MacDonald's current solicitor, Mr. Berger, I reviewed the submissions again and we heard out his suggestions that perhaps the Cooper report, which had been commissioned by my predecessor was not complete. With respect, and with regret I am afraid, I cannot subscribe to Mr. Berger's view of those facts and we have now made the decision to proceed with the case before the courts.

I have been continuing to review the case, and it would be helpful if litigation could be avoided, but I think it is important to make it very clear that there is a distinction between a terrible situation which resulted in very significant detriment to a Canadian for which we have great sympathy and the concern about legal liability on behalf of the Government of Canada.

With respect, I cannot accept the analysis that finds legal liability by the Government of Canada. Whether a court takes a different view is of course up to the court.

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton—The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, the minister's predecessor, the now Minister for International Trade, did not have the benefit of the case of Orlikow et al. *v.* the CIA, which produced a lot of important testimony. Also, the minister in her reply said that the government was not guilty of any impropriety. Well, no impropriety has ever been alleged. The allegations have been negligence against the government. And the allegations are also that without her consent what happened was contrary to the Nuremberg Code and contrary to the UN covenant on civil and political rights.

It is a travesty, Mr. Speaker. Will the government look at this matter again? Will the government take some real action in this matter, and will the government not punish this woman for being a victim?

An hon. member: Hear, hear!

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, with respect, the government is not punishing that woman for being a victim. Ms. MacDonald's case, I think, raises some very serious concerns.

The question that I as Minister of Justice for the Government of Canada have to be concerned with is the question of what is the legal liability of the Government of Canada because the acceptance of liability has implications for a great many other things the government does. I am sure my hon. friend will respect that and will appreciate that.

I compliment him on the care and the detail with which he repeats the submissions made by Mr. Berger, which, with respect, were carefully reviewed by the department. I continue to look at the file. I am not in the position to indicate what I would proceed to do.

I would like to invite the hon. member, if he would care, to have a more thorough briefing from my department. We would be very pleased to give it to him.

* * *

TORONTO RAILWAY LANDS

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): My question is of the Minister of Transport who is ultimately responsible for the 81 hectares of land in downtown Toronto known as the railway lands, owned by Canadians and held in trust by Canadian National Railways and ultimately by the minister himself.

In view of the strong possibility that decisions will be made on the future of these very valuable lands by the city of Toronto and by Canadian National without holding public hearings, will the minister give today his undertaking that he will ensure there will be a proper public consultation process before decisions on the disposition of these valuable railway lands is made?

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Transport): I am sure my hon. friend will know that there has been a great deal of controversy surrounding these particular lands and a great deal of discussion about them.

CN in its dealings with public lands endeavours to abide by the planning process at all times, and I have no reason to believe that it would not do so in this instance.

Tributes

REVENUE CANADA

Mr. Rey Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North): My question is for the Minister of National Revenue.

In 1985 Ottawa began offering retail kitchen cabinet makers in Canada a 33 per cent discount on the manufacturers' sales tax. This discount was withdrawn from Manitoba makers in October 1986, but continued to be applied in other provinces. Imperial Cabinet Company of Winnipeg alone, in my constituency, has suffered over $82,000 in refunds due.

Will the minister admit that his department made a terrible mistake, and tell this House today that he will at once rectify this mistake and direct his department to refund all Manitoba businesses concerned?

Hon. Otto Jelinek (Minister of National Revenue): No, Mr. Speaker, I certainly cannot admit that there was a mistake. I would suggest to the hon. member that instead of believing a newspaper report that he should check into the facts before making inappropriate and inaccurate accusations of this sort.

The fact is that the discount applies only to regular lines of furniture and the manufacturers must have published price lists for those lines. The manufacturers mentioned in the *Free Press* article to which the hon. member refers to do not meet these qualifications.

May I at the same time, Mr. Speaker, say that we are delighted with the number of FST rebates that have taken place. In fact, to date we have completed some 41,000 claims—on time, on schedule—representing nearly half a billion dollars.

* * *

INDIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. Robert E. Skelly (Comox—Alberni): Later today Justice Allan Cawley will release his report on aboriginal justice in Alberta. He has apparently levied the charge of judicial and political tyranny against the justice system and its treatment of native people—like Wilson Nepoose of Hobbema, who was convicted of murder in May 1987.

My question is to the Minister of Justice. By now she has received a letter from Alberta Attorney General Ken Rostad indicating that Mr. Nepoose may have been wrongly convicted, based on false evidence coerced by the RCMP from a Crown witness. Mr. Rostad has asked the minister to order the case reheard under section 690 of the Criminal Code, the same section used in the Donald Marshall case.

• (1500)

When will the minister act to order a new hearing so that Wilson Nepoose who has been in prison for the last five years, since July 1986, can be released on bail pending a new trial?

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, on the application under section 690, I am advised that my department has received some correspondence from Mr. Nepoose's counsel. His application will be dealt with as expeditiously as possible.

I think the hon. member will appreciate that the allegations have to be put forward and investigated to be dealt with as expeditiously as possible.

Mr. Speaker: Before we move on to some other things which I think hon. members would want to stay for, we have been getting into the habit of putting supplemental questions which really have no reference whatsoever to the principal question.

I want to remind hon. members of the following quotation from Beauchesne's:

> Although there may be no debate on an answer, further questions, as may be necessary for the elucidation of the answers that have been given, within due limits, may be addressed to a Minister. The extent to which supplementary questions may be asked is in the discretion of the Speaker.

I would ask hon. members to keep that in mind.

We are being asked for a few minutes to pay tributes.

* * *

[*Translation*]

TRIBUTE TO THE LATE HON. LEON BALCER

Mr. Denis Pronovost (Saint-Maurice): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to join all my colleagues in the House of Commons in paying tribute to the Hon. Léon Balcer who died this weekend at the age of 73. Mr. Balcer was a member of this House and a cabinet minister for many years. He was first elected member of Parliament for Trois-Rivières in 1949. He served his constituents in the electoral district of Trois-Rivières for six consecutive terms, which at the time was a record for a member from Quebec elected to the House of Commons.

Mr. Balcer also served as a minister under the late John Diefenbaker, from 1957 to 1965. He held the post of Solicitor General of Canada, was a member of the Treasury Board and, towards the end of his career, was Minister of Transport. Mr. Balcer finished his political career as an independent member in the House and subsequently tried to start a career in provincial politics which unfortunately proved unsuccessful.

Mr. Balcer also served as a naval officer during World War II on the *Annan*, one of the ships that helped hunt down German submarines, and he felt he learned a great deal from this experience.

The former member for Trois-Rivières and minister and member of the Privy Council was a man of great dedication, so much so that he had earned the respect of all his constituents, whatever their political stripe.

This weekend, in the Trois-Rivières newspaper *Le Nouvelliste*, journalist Jacques Laberge wrote that Mr. Balcer would be remembered as a member of Parliament who served the interests of his riding with loyalty and dedication. I am sure that all members of this House will join me today in offering our sincere condolences to all the people who knew Mr. Balcer and especially the members of his family.

Mr. Marcel Prud'homme (Saint-Denis): Mr. Speaker, I knew the hon. Léon Balcer well. My esteemed colleague Mr. Gray and I sat in the House with him. We both recall one of the great moments of his life, among others, when he moved to put a stop to the endless debates on the Canadian flag. It was thanks to him that that very trying debate finally came to an end.

We know as well that he had a very active political career. I remember that he had led the Conservative forces against me during my first electoral campaign back in February 1964. Unlike some other instances, this had resulted in a great friendship between us, while the contrary would normally be expected to occur.

We extend our heart-felt condolences to his family, for we know that Mr. Léon Balcer was a great gentleman, the kind of politician we see ever more rarely. He had a sense of his country, a sense of history, a deep-seated sense of what Canada was and of his place as French-speaking Léon Balcer both in the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada and in this House, and we are grateful to him for greats memories. He accomplished a lot more than a number of members can ever expect to do in their lifetime. He was a member of this House in very trying times. He had earned the respect of all his colleagues and of the Right Hon. Louis St. Laurent.

I am sorry I did not have more time to prepare for this tribute we are paying him today. Still, in these few words, on behalf of my party and of my colleague Mr. Gray who also knew him well and who is the senior member of the House of Commons, I want to offer our most sincere condolences to his family.

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, I cannot say that I knew Leon Balcer as a person or as a member of Parliament. But when I was young I used to be interested in what was happening on Parliament Hill and I considered Mr. Balcer as one of the most straight forward and honest members of Parliament and ministers of the Diefenbaker Governement. I cannot believe that Mr. Balcer passed away. It is not easy to sum up the work of such a member of Parliament who sat for so long in the House of Commons. But I would like to say in the name of my party that it is also very painful for us to have heard of his death. It is important to mention his contribution to our country.

[*English*]

Léon Balcer was someone who was well regarded in many parts of this country, not just in his own province of Quebec but in many parts of the rest of Canada, for the contributions which he made as a cabinet minister, for his capacity to work hard for his people from Trois-Rivières, and for his capacity to demonstrate independence, to demonstrate integrity, and to demonstrate to the people of this country what the life and contribution of an excellent member of Parliament can mean for all of us.

• (1510)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, as the minister from Quebec region 04, represented by Leon Balcer at the time, and especially as a personal friend of Mr. Balcer, I rise in the House today to pay tribute to him and to offer, on behalf of the government, our sincere condolences to his family and to all who knew him during the years he served in this House and served his country.

He was a remarkable man with a great sense of duty. When we consider his record in the House and the fact that he was re-elected six times, as my colleague pointed out earlier, we see not only a serious politician but also an individual who, I believe, deserves to be better known. I say this first of all because of his dedication to his constituents. This was apparent throughout his career and well afterwards. There was his sincere commitment to politics as a man who believed in the causes he espoused. He had great personal dignity and earned the support of his constituents by the way he represented them in this House.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, his friendship. Léon Balcer was a good friend, without affectation, sincere, open and dedicated. As a friend, Mr. Speaker, I mourn his loss, but I will always have fond memories of a good friend, Léon Balcer.

* * *

THE LATE PAULINE VANIER

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, it is a sad comment that one of the rare occasions that brings unanimity to this House is when we pay tribute to those who have passed on. On behalf of the government and, I am sure, on behalf of all members of this House, I would like to pay tribute to Pauline Vanier, the wife of one of Canada's governor generals, of a general with a brilliant career and of a Canadian ambassador.

I had the pleasure of meeting him more than 40 years ago on my first trip to France when I, a young Quebecer, marched up to the embassy and asked to meet the ambassador, and so, I had that privilege. I was very impressed. General Vanier's military career had instilled in him a certain rigour which some called rigidity—and great strength of character and discipline which, in turn, he expected of those around him. I think his wife provided an additional dimension because she was, which was unusual even then, not only a remarkable wife but also a remarkable woman as such, with many admirable qualities and also very efficient. In each of the difficult roles her husband was asked to play, she was at his side, and I think she made Canadians take pride in their representative, especially as their head of State.

She was an inspiration to her husband and to all Canadians who met her, and she presided over the destinies of this country at a time when it was making its mark in history. On behalf of the government I wish to express our sincere condolences to all her children and other members of her family.

Mrs. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, a great lady has passed away. With the death of Pauline Vanier, last Saturday, we certainly lost the last member of a real princely couple. We all know the work done by Mr. Georges P. Vanier as Governor General. We also know the work he accomplished with the 22nd Regiment which was known as Vandoo across the country. But we know also that in the Vanier family, Mrs. Vanier gave women an opportunity for fullfilment.

The Canadian Encyclopedia describes the work that Mrs. Vanier accomplished for our poor, our youth and our families. It was not only the work of her husband, but hers, as a person. She was chancelor at the University of Ottawa. She was also a powerful force in the establishment of the Vanier Institute of the Family and everybody across Canada knows that it was Mrs. Vanier who encouraged her son to create the Arche community, which gives hope to those who lost it.

With a family as highly regarded as the Vanier family, we realize that it was the mother, the wife and the woman who was able in all circumstances to give the support that was needed, but it is also true that now—

[*English*]

With the death of Pauline Vanier, we have lost part of a great Canadian family. We have also lost a women who, through her own inspiration, has left a monument to her family that will outlive any of her children, or grandchildren, or great-grandchildren.

Of course her work as Chancellor of the University of Ottawa was extremely well known. Less well known was the influence that she played in the life of her son and the establishment of l'Arche homes for those who really need the help.

Most particular, where I personally have a great respect for the Vanier family was in the work that she did in establishing the Vanier Institute for the Family. The family is a changing institution and even today as we speak the Vanier Institute is able to be on the cutting edge of social reform. At a time when the country is

crying out for support of the new family, not just the traditional family, Madam Vanier has made the study of new families, the study of social policy, and in particular the assistance for those who really need it one of her life goals.

Of course she will be missed by her children and her grandchildren, but she will also be missed by all of those who feel that it is the responsibility of someone in public life to help, to support, and to provide inspiration to those who cannot help themselves. Indeed that has been the hallmark of the life of the Vanier family, and the person behind that great hallmark was indeed Madam Vanier.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, all Canadians were saddened to learn of the passing of Madam Vanier. Madam Vanier had a long and distinguished career, both a career of her own and in support of her husband Georges.

I am sure all of us can think back to many, many occasions when as a family the two of them represented some of the finer aspects of Canadian society and what Canada meant to so many people both here and abroad.

I remember on a number of occasions in discussions with both Madam Vanier and Georges Vanier being enlightened in terms of their view of what our country was and what it could be.

We recognize that Madam Vanier was a very dedicated person in terms of a variety of pursuits. Canada is a better place because of her efforts. She was a person of considerable character. I think the model that she provided for so many Canadians was nothing short of outstanding.

As a family the Vaniers had a long and distinguished career, both of them.

Today our hearts and our thoughts go out to her family on this very sad day.

Mr. Speaker: I thank all hon. members for the tributes that have been paid both to a former colleague of ours and a distinguished Canadian, and to Madam Vanier who was for many years an inspiration to all of us.

Speaker's Ruling

PRIVILEGE

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING—SPEAKER'S RULING

Mr. Speaker: I must now advise the House with respect to a question of privilege which was raised on Thursday, March 21, by the House leader of the Official Opposition, the hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond, concerning the government advertisements which appeared in newspapers on March 16, 1991 relating to budget highlights.

The advertisement in question entitled "Canada's Plan for Economic Recovery" describes an eight-page newsletter which will be sent to every household explaining important highlights of the 1991 budget recently presented by the Minister of Finance.

The newsletter itself described economic initiatives taken by the government regarding inflation, the national debt, and interest rates. It also describes the government's plan to control expenditures to reduce the deficit, noting among other matters that legislation will be introduced to establish the debt servicing reduction fund.

I might say that on a number of occasions in the document the suggestion is made that legislation will be introduced.

• (1520)

In his presentation, the hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond argued that by placing the advertisements in newspapers across the country the Minister of Finance acted as if the House had already passed the budget. He went on to suggest that the ad misrepresented the budget document tabled in the House and made several references to the ruling of October 10, 1989 concerning the advertisement on the goods and services tax.

[*Translation*]

In support of these arguments, the house leader for the New Democratic Party, the hon. member for Kamloops, rose to claim that not only were the advertisements contemptuous and misleading, but they also prejudiced the decision of the House on the budget.

[*English*]

In reply, the hon. Minister of Finance stated that he had followed the directions of the Chair as laid down in the ruling of October 10, 1989. He argued that the advertising had made it clear that these were budget

proposals and quoted from the brief note in the newsletter he himself signed: "This budget proposes far-reaching initiatives." He then went on to argue that, contrary to the contention of the hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond, the advertisements accurately represented the 1991 budget document tabled in the House.

The interventions on March 21 touch on three major issues: whether the newsletter misrepresents the budget document; whether, in sponsoring this advertising the Minister of Finance acted as if the House had already passed the budget; and whether the advertisement will prejudice a future decision of the House.

On the first question, that is, whether the newsletter misrepresents the budget document, the Chair really has no role to play since it is clearly a dispute as to fact. The hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond and the hon. Minister of Finance have different views on the government's economic initiatives and on the manner in which the newsletter presents those initiatives. The Chair can only conclude that the disagreement between the two hon. members is a matter of debate which could more properly be addressed in another forum. It is, with respect, not a question of privilege.

Another issue raised concerned the actions of the minister in authorizing these advertisements, and whether or not he was acting as if the House had already passed the budget motion.

To the information of all hon. members and the viewing public, on February 26 at the beginning of his budget speech, the Minister of Finance moved a motion reading: "That this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government." Following this, the rules of the House establish that there is a six-day debate ending with the decision on whether or not the government's budgetary policy has the support of the House. In the present case, a decision has not yet been taken. There are two days remaining in the budget debate.

The hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond contends that the minister should have waited until a decision of the House was taken on this motion before the advertisements were made. The minister replied that the newsletter was intended to satisfy the needs of Canadians to understand what was being proposed in the complex budget documents. The newsletter was careful to explain that these were proposals and that legislation would soon be introduced.

The Chair has to conclude that prima facie there is no breach of privilege or contempt of the House in this regard since the minister was careful in respecting the role of the House in these matters and indicated in the newsletter that these were proposals.

[*Translation*]

Another issue raised by the hon. member for Kamloops was that these advertisements prejudiced the decision that the House is to take. I would refer all hon. members to the ruling of October 10, 1989, at page 4460 of *Hansard*:

"The House and its committees do not work in a vacuum. Members are constantly aware of outside factors and pressures. Since no threats or bribes have been made, it is difficult to see how the work of the House has been prejudiced or which specific privilege has been breached."

[*English*]

I cannot see how these advertisements can prejudice the decision which the House will take on the budget motion. The purpose of the newsletter was to disseminate information and the Chair is satisfied that it did so in full respect of the authority of this House.

I want to thank the hon. Minister of Finance, and the hon. member for Kamloops for their contributions on the matter raised, as I said earlier, succinctly by the hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond. After carefully reviewing the material itself and having considered all the arguments presented, I must conclude, however, prima facie, there is no breach of privilege.

* * *

POINT OF ORDER

COMMENTS DURING QUESTION PERIOD

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, during Question Period the member for Comox—Alberni asked me a question about an application by Mr. Nepoose. I indicated that material had been received in my department. I am advised that that is not correct. A telephone communication has been received indicating the documents will be arriving in my department, probably tomorrow. I just wanted to correct that. An application has not been received for relief under section 690 of the Criminal Code.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

SEVENTH REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT

Hon. David MacDonald (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Environment entitled *Out of Balance: The Risks of Irreversible Climate Change*.

I would like to say that by now practically every Canadian has heard of the greenhouse effect. To respond to its threat will require many years, perhaps several decades of strong action by the world as a whole, and Canada needs to be a leading country in such efforts.

It would be easy to be pessimistic, easy to decide the effort cannot succeed. But we have to act. Global warming is a severe threat to both Canada and to the planet. We in Canada have contributed much more than our share in creating the problem.

The committee's report shows that we have a way to become very much a part of the solution. I believe this third report dealing with global warming and climate change will go a long way toward that.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests the government to table a comprehensive response to this report.

ELEVENTH REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Mr. Don Blenkarn (Mississauga South): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 11th report of the Standing Committee on Finance in relation to Bill C–83, an act to revise and amend the law governing federal loan and trust companies and to provide for related and consequential matters, with many amendments.

Mr. Speaker, may I say we have had extensive public hearings. This report represents the pilot bill dealing with the reform of financial institutions, and hopefully those reforms can be completed during this calendar year.

[*Editor's Note: See today's Votes and Proceedings.*]

PETITIONS

COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise under the provisions of the Standing Orders to present a number of petitions to the House today. These petitions, I might add, are from many areas throughout British Columbia: Surrey, North Vancouver, Langley, Delta, Burnaby, Cloverdale, Vernon, Saanich, Victoria, Mission, Sechelt, Abbotsford and many other communities. All of the petitions urge the Minister of Communications to oppose UNITEL's bid to compete with Canada's telephone companies in long distance communication services.

The petitioners are urging the minister to consult with all of the affected parties, specifically those citizens residing outside Canada's urban areas, whom they believe will be impacted very severely by this form of deregulation. Last, they urge the minister to hold local hearings in communities throughout British Columbia before deciding the fate of Canada's long distance telecommunication system.

CANADA POST

Mr. Réginald Bélair (Cochrane—Superior): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition under Standing Order 36 on behalf of the residents of my riding of Cochrane—Superior, more specifically the township of Terrace Bay.

The 624 petitioners are strongly opposed to the proposed sale by Public Works Canada of the Government of Canada building in Terrace Bay and the possible closure of the Terrace Bay post office. The loss of the post office would greatly reduce the quality of postal service in their community and would seriously impair communication for business and residents in the area. The post office building has evolved to the point where it is considered to be the hub of activity for the township. Its elimination would result in a reduction in the quality of life in the area.

• (1530)

The petitioners humbly pray and call upon the Parliament to stop the proposed sale of the Government of Canada building in Terrace Bay, Ontario.

Mr. Ray Funk (Prince Albert—Churchill River): Mr. Speaker, it is my duty and honour to present two petitions. One is signed by petitioners from my own constituency, from Albertville, Shellbrook, Meath Park, Paddockwood and Prince Albert, as well as people from Brandon, Manitoba.

These people are protesting the attack by the Conservatives on their rural way of life in Canada, including the abandonment of VIA Rail, abandonment of small rail lines, neglect of forestry and fisheries, cuts to the CBC and so on. Most particularly, they are requesting that Parliament support Canada's rural way of life and support the maintenance of rural post offices and postal services. They ask Parliament to reject the Conservative agenda of cutbacks and closures.

URANIUM MINING

Mr. Ray Funk (Prince Albert—Churchill River): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is signed by a large number of Canadians, including those from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Lakefield, Toronto, Kitchener and Ottawa, Ontario and Hull, Quebec.

These people take note of the spill of two million litres of contaminated radioactive waste water at Wollaston Lake in November 1989. They note that the monitoring systems had not been properly inspected by AECB.

Therefore, they are calling for an immediate comprehensive public inquiry into uranium mining in Saskatchewan and northern Canada. They hope as well that an EARP panel be convened immediately to look into the new uranium mine at Eagle Point close to Wollaston Lake.

[*Translation*]

CANADA POST

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, it is my duty to table five petitions on behalf of constituents of my riding of Ottawa-Vanier. The undersigned now avail themselves of their ancient and undoubted right to present a grievance common to your petitioners, in the certain assurance that your honourable House will therefor provide a remedy.

These petitions deal with the decision Canada Post made to close down postal station no. 23, located on Rideau Street, which is part of my riding in Ottawa. In the view of these petitioners, it will inconvenience all customers and it will be especially hard on the senior citizens who live nearby to be deprived of an essential service they have been enjoying for a long time.

The undersigned, Mr. Speaker, ask for this decision to be reconsidered and call upon this House to order Canada Post to reconsider its decision to close postal station no. 23, in hope that it will remain open.

[*English*]

COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Jack Whittaker (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise under Standing Order 36 to present a petition on behalf of a number of rural British Columbians.

These Canadians believe that there should be a full consultation among all parties affected by any changes in the local and long distance service relationship with the CRTC hearings on UNITEL. The UNITEL bid must be integrated with the development of over-all Canadian telecommunications policy. They are urging Parliament to urge the Minister of Communications to hold local hearings in every community before deciding the fate of Canada's telecommunications system.

* * *

STARRED QUESTIONS

(Questions answered orally are indicated by an asterisk.)

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I will be answering Starred Question No. 451 in the name of Mr. Fee today.

[*Text*]

ORDER PAPER QUESTIONS

Question No. 451—**Mr. Fee:**

For the last 12 months, what has been the approximate costs of researching and answering Order Paper questions in (a) person-days (b) actual disbursement (c) other costs?

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): The time required to prepare answers to questions on the Order Paper forms part of the regular duties of those concerned and as such is not recorded separately.

However, selected questions have shown that the estimated cost in time to prepare and produce answers to *ministerial questions* (one respondent) varies from approximately $100 to $8,000.

To name a few: Question No. 62 in the name of Mr. Plamondon was $8,000; No. 229 in the name of Mr. Comuzzi was $8,000; No. 288 in the name of Mr. Caccia was $3,500; No. 305 in the name of Mrs. Gaffney was $2,500; No. 341 in the name of Mr. Saint-Julien was $2,500; No. 393 in the name of Mr. McGuire was $500.

It can be said that the cost of answering most of the following shared questions—that is, all departments and agencies—would exceed the maximum cost, $8,000, of answering ministerial questions. There are several examples which I will not read, questions such as No. 34 from Mr. Wappel and No. 470 in the name of Mr. Boudria.

[*English*]

I ask, Mr. Speaker, that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

Mr. Milliken: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We have just witnessed the most partisan approach to the answering of questions that I have seen in this House for a long time.

For months and months the parliamentary secretary has stood up on questions that are starred in the Order Paper and said that he would like the answer printed in *Hansard* as though read. Often there has been no excuse that the answer was too long. Indeed, one of mine was extremely short the other day on the cost of royal commissions—it was three figures—and he had it printed in *Hansard* rather than reading the answer out in this House.

Today he gives a long-winded answer complaining about the costs of the questions. It was a question asked by one of his own backbenchers. I find it quite shocking that he would take such a partisan approach to the answering of questions in this House.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, first I wish to indicate to my friend that I did not in any way complain about the costs. The reason for reading that particular answer into *Hansard* is that all members of the House, being very conscious of costs to the Canadian taxpayer, want to be sure that everyone hears those answers and I think, like me might be very shocked that several of those questions cost $8,000 and others would cost more than that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Shall the remaining questions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S. O. 81—CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mrs. Finestone (p. 18913).

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate this afternoon. The motion that my colleague from Mount Royal has put before the House is a very appropriate motion. As we know, it deals with the current situation which the CBC faces with the severe financial cutbacks and is a question that must address the future of this corporation in Canada and the future role that it plays in building a unique Canadian identity.

The CBC is an institution with a troubled future. Over the last decade, chronic reductions in the level of funding have left the CBC virtually impoverished and unable to provide for Canadians the truly national presence that is its mandate. The mandate stretches back to the creation of the CBC in 1932 as the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission. A crucial element of

this mandate was the recognition of the need to foster a sense of national community and to be able to act as an instrument or a tool which allows Canadians a sense of self. Yet today, Canada remains a nation that is virtually awash in foreign culture.

That is why the preservation of the uniqueness of our Canadian way of life has meant that special consideration has to be given to our cultural industries and to our tools of communication, such as public broadcasting through the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Unfortunately over the last seven years, the actions of the federal government which have been committed to implementing a U.S. style market-driven economy, have seriously reduced the CBC's allocation of resources and hence its ability to adequately fulfil its public mandate. If we go back and look at the budgetary allocations to the CBC, since 1984, when inflation is taken into consideration, we find that expenditures in real dollar allocations to the CBC have been reduced by hundreds of millions of dollars.

• (1540)

There is also in place now a plan to cut back another $140 million from the CBC's operation expenditures over the next four years.

Few organizations can be expected to operate properly when they have this kind of a financial broad axe hanging over its head. That is exactly what this government is expecting of the CBC; to make do with less by either cutting services, which it has already had to do, or to make up the losses by relying more and more on a commercial revenue base, as the CBC has also had to do. This kind of chronic underfunding by the federal government has forced the CBC to rely increasingly on commercial revenues.

In looking at the current situation, approximately 30 per cent of the CBC's revenues are gained through increased reliance on the marketplace. That has seriously compromised the corporation's ability to develop the kind of unique Canadian programming and the unique Canadian broadcasting that is required to have this corporation act as a tool of national unity and an instrument of national identity.

Such reliance on commercial revenues has already, and I submit will continue, to blur the distinction between public broadcasting on the one hand and private broadcasting on the other. Hence, it will continue to blur the distinction of the essence of the CBC. This is not a criticism of CBC management. It is just a reality of the marketplace. It is what is going to happen when you have to rely more and more on commercial revenues. You will have to mimic our U.S. partners, American programming, which has a greater revenue base, attracts more advertising revenue. When you start to mimic that you lose your sense of identity, as the CBC is already beginning to do.

Faced with these fiscal restraints, few options are available to the CBC. Through this gradual submersion into the commercial marketplace, the quintessential Canadian identity of the CBC is being lost. It is being subverted and it is losing its mandate, as I said, to act as an essential tool of nation building.

Soon, if things continue the way they have, all that will remain for this government will be to sell off the pieces to the highest bidder.

Back in 1929 the Aird royal commission on broadcasting at that time concluded that if broadcasting was going to be commercial then it was going to be American. If broadcasting was going to be Canadian, then it was going to have to be public. Back then, Graham Spry, the founder of the Canadian Radio League probably phrased it best when he said, in referring to Canadian broadcasting: "It will either be the state or the United States". I submit that the latter may very well be the consequence for the CBC if we continue with this chronic erosion of public funding.

To their credit, the management of the CBC has tried to make the best out of what is essentially an intolerable situation. Despite the onerous cuts they have presented to the CRTC, the $108 million funding shortfall, and the fact that they have had to slash and basically throw 1,100 workers on to the street, the CBC has simply tried to rationalize as best it can how to operate with this significant reduction in funding levels.

I mentioned the sacrifice of 1,100 jobs, the severing of over 140 local programs, many of which are distinguished examples of what is best about the CBC. Although I disagree with their actions, I understand exactly why they have had to do it. It has been an act that has been brought about, I submit, by a government that is essentially committed to the demise of public broadcasting in Canada.

Mr. Veilleux's choices were brutal as president of the CBC. But what options did he have? In an effort to keep the CBC alive his actions, although necessary, have only served to emasculate the CBC and to facilitate this government's agenda.

The government has tried to hide from it, has tried to hide behind the argument that it has nothing to do with the CBC cuts. That was a board decision. That was a decision of the management of the CBC. The fact remains that those decisions would never have been made if the government had not left the corporation twisting in the wind to the tune of $108 million.

I talked with Mr. Veilleux. I talked with Mr. Watson. I asked them: "How many times did you try to see the Minister of Communications and meet with him to discuss this problem?" Their answer was that the Minister of Communications was invisible, that he would not meet with them, that he never offered them a minute of time in discussing the impact of throwing 1,100 people out in the street and reducing the operations in its 11 regional broadcast centres. The minister would not even take the time of day to meet with the management of the CBC. The government is simply trying to abdicate its responsibility in terms of allowing this corporation to do the job that it is through legislation mandated to do.

The CBC's choices, necessary, unfortunate, tragic, simply reflect the economic dynamics of the day. As Mr. Veilleux pointed out recently in the submission to the CRTC, Canadian society is changing and so must the CBC. The fact is that the choices that the CBC was forced to make reflect new values in our Canadian society. They reflect the neo-conservative market-driven values that have been the hallmark of this administration right from the free trade agreement through the GST and onward. I submit to you, Sir, that those market-driven, social Darwinian values are not reflective of the needs, or the wants or desires, of the Canadian people.

Under the Broadcasting Act which is still empowered, still in force until the royal proclamation of Bill C-40, the CBC may in fact be considered to be in violation of sections of that act. I refer to the revised statutes and this is what it says in referring to the CBC: "The National Broadcasting Service should be extended to all parts of Canada, should be in French and English serving the special needs of the various geographic regions" and last, "should contribute to the development, national unity, and provide for a continuing expression of Canadian identity".

The action that the CBC board has had to take in light of the refusal of this government to fund it adequately is that it is no longer able to meet the requirements that are laid out in that legislation. At a time when Canada is a nation at a crossroads, a nation, I submit, with an uncertain future, for this government to unravel and to dismantle what is essentially a critical tool of nation building through our public broadcasting system is absolute heresy.

• (1550)

It makes no sense whatsoever. That is why the restructuring of the CBC services have to be closely examined and revisited. We are doing that now in the submissions that are being made even today at the CRTC hearings.

I would like to applaud the efforts of the CRTC in going ahead to hold those public hearings even though it is admitted that it really does not have any power to force the CBC to change its course of action.

As the federal regulatory agency, I think it does have the ability to send a very strong and unequivocal message to this government, a message that I think and hope will reflect the extent of the public concerned and the outrage that is being presented at the CRTC hearings as we speak in the House today.

The president of the CBC, Mr. Veilleux, was adamant that the management of the CBC would not be responsible for the next round of cuts, which already loom before us; the necessity of cutting yet another $50 million to $60 million and the necessity of cutting yet another 500 to 600 jobs.

He served notice that he and the chairman-designate, Patrick Watson, are no longer willing to serve as scapegoats for this administration.

Earlier in the week at the same hearings, Mr. Veilleux stated that with future funding cuts, the CBC would no longer be able to maintain its mandate. He warned, very clearly, that it would be up to Parliament to decide on the future of Canadian broadcasting. That sounds very much, to me, like a threat of resignation.

Perhaps that is exactly what this government needs in order that it wake up and smell the coffee, in order that it begin to understand the serious nature of these funding reductions that it has visited upon the CBC.

Chairman-designate Patrick Watson just the other day was commenting on the public comments that the Prime Minister had made in relation to the CBC.

In an article here in *The Toronto Star*, Mr. Watson is saying that the Prime Minister is playing games with the people of Canada in a way that expresses a lofty kind of contempt for all those people who have lost jobs and all those communities that have had service taken away from them. There is even contempt for the process that is going on here in front of the CRTC.

I do not think it is worthy of a Prime Minister. I do not think the management of the CBC is willing to take any more in response to this government's mandate of dismantling and emasculating Canadian public broadcasting. I want to say to you, Mr. Speaker, that all areas of Canada are concerned about the effects of the cutbacks in the CBC.

I have a letter that arrived in my office today from the office of the Leader of the New Democratic Party in Nova Scotia. It is addressed to the CBC management, and signed by the Leader of the Nova Scotia New Democratic Party, Alexa McDonough. She says: "I am writing with regard to the proposal for a nightly English TV news magazine which was presented to the corporation at the opening of this week's CRTC hearings."

She goes on to talk about the concern of the loss of local broadcasting, and she says: "At the root of many policy disasters in this region is the failure of those in Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal to hear the men and women who catch and process our fish, who tend our wood lots and who work in our pulp mills, who grow our food and who care for our land. It is absurd to imagine that a nightly news magazine program produced in Toronto, regardless of how many maritime reporters it employed could satisfactorily replace *Land and Sea*", which, of course is one of the local programs that was axed in the round of cuts.

She goes on to warn that the people in this region properly expect that their public television network can and will serve our environment and the people who rely upon our vital resource industries.

That message is coming through loud and clear from Nova Scotia, the Atlantic provinces, Newfoundland, the Yukon, British Columbia, through our prairie provinces. Canadians are upset and angry with the cutbacks this government has visited upon the CBC.

I want to point out that this government is not the only one that should be blamed for the erosion of CBC funding, because it began some time ago. In fact, our Liberal colleagues made the initial round of cuts way back in 1978. They started the ball rolling by cutting back $78 million, which at that time amounted to 12 per cent of the CBC's budget for 1979-80.

I can go on, Mr. Speaker. We look at 1984 when this government first came to power, we see a reduction of $85 million. In 1985 a reduction of $45 million. In 1986 another $48 million. In 1989 we find, phasing over the next few years, a $140 million funding shortfall.

This leaves the CBC with essentially no choice in the matter. If it cannot make up the revenues through government-allocated expenditures, then it has to rely more on the commercial revenues that will shift its focus away from truly Canadian programming to the more Americanized type of programming. These shows, although granted they are popular—and I am sure all of us watch them from time to time—we have to also remember that these shows do not mirror the Canada which we are trying to present and develop in terms of its distinctive Canadian identify.

We have seen the closures of the three stations at Goose Bay, Matane and Toronto, and the reduction of eight other stations to operating essentially as news bureaus.

We have seen a $12 million cut to network TV and only this weekend —and we were discussing this earlier in the House today—the cutting of funds for Radio Canada International. I think it is an absolute disgrace that this government would allow an institution, Radio Canada International, which basically serves as Canada's voice to the world, being completely disassembled by the reduced funding at this level.

Mr. Speaker, I see you are indicating that my time is up. I had much more to add to the debates, but perhaps I will have an opportunity to do so during the questions that follow. I thank you for your time today.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague from the New Democratic Party who just spoke. He said it was a management decision and that Mr. Veilleux would not be responsible for the next cuts. But one could wonder about spendings before 1984. I remember that in 1985 or 1986 the CBC bought a sailboat to cross the Atlantic from Saint-Malo to Quebec City. I think Joël Le Bigot sailed it. In any case, it sank. That was an expenditure. How much did the boat cost the taxpayers? Two, three hundred thousand dollars? Is that our mandate, to by boats for the Saint-Malo—Quebec City race? That is food for thought.

I would like to ask you a question, you who are a champion of labour rights—I too was a union leader, by the way. Did Mr. Veilleux, the president of the CBC, before proceeding to make cuts like those made by GM, ask his employees to reopen their collective agreement as the government of Quebec and the government of Canada did a few years ago? Did he? I do not think so.

I have another question for the hon. member, Mr. Speaker. What did your Party do when Radio-Québec shut down stations in Eastern Quebec? What did the Liberals do when the government of Quebec forced Radio-Québec to shut down stations? Nothing. On the financial aspect, we do not have access to the CBC's internal documents. So, we do not know what expenses are involved, how much was spent on national or provincial events. We would like to have access to these documents to try and find an answer to the problem.

My main question is this: Did you contact Mr. Veilleux, the president of the CBC, to find out if he asked the employees to reopen their collective agreement?

• (1600)

[*English*]

Mr. MacWilliam: Mr. Speaker, the government member has asked whether I would like to see Mr. Veilleux replaced. The answer is that I am not pointing the finger at Mr. Veilleux. I think he has been made a scapegoat for the agenda of this government.

If anybody is to be got rid of, I would hope that it would be our Prime Minister rather than Mr. Veilleux, because he is the one behind these Draconian cuts that are going to dismantle this corporation.

The member wants to talk about fiscal responsibility. He submits that it is fiscally responsible to carve $108 million out of the budget for the CBC. He submits that it is responsible to throw 1,100 people out on the street. He submits that it is responsible to close 11 regional stations.

The government has already had to give $45 million for the decommissioning costs. It is estimated that another $25 million will be required. It is going to cost the people of Canada, the taxpayers of Canada, $70 million in order to save $108 million.

The member says that is fiscal responsibility. I think it is madness.

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is doing such a nice job in this critic area with me. I really appreciate the work he has put in and the collaboration on many occasions. However, there are times when I certainly do not agree with the stance taken.

I am curious, though. I heard him supporting the CBC board and Mr. Veilleux. I understand a sense of sympathy and even a sense of empathy for the role that they had to play, but I am curious to know if he would agree with the following thought. Since they could not meet the public trust and develop the sense of public support for the proposition which they indicated themselves was a destruction of the role of the CBC, how would the hon. member respond to the thought that they should have resigned to have made the point?

Mr. MacWilliam: Mr. Speaker, I just want to revisit the argument I made earlier: Mr. Veilleux and Mr. Watson, both relatively new to their positions, should not be the ones who are solely targeted.

They are not without blame, I submit that. I certainly do not agree with the direction that they have taken. I am not defending them but simply rationalizing the process when I say that I think they have tried to make the best of what essentially was an intolerable situation. They have indicated very clearly that should they be forced to make another round of cuts, should they have to take that kind of action, which the government seems

wont for them to do, they will reach the point of no return in terms of their own ability to continue to serve.

I agree with my colleague that they have said very clearly the CBC will no longer be able to fulfil its mandate if these cuts are made. I submit that the CBC is already incapable of adequately fulfilling its mandate.

They are not without blame, but I want to refocus the cross-hairs on the appropriate target, that is the Prime Minister this government that is hell-bent for election on the demise of public broadcasting in Canada.

Mr. Ray Funk (Prince Albert—Churchill River): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to ask my colleague a question with regard to the very excellent remarks that he made.

Many people are perhaps not aware that CBC coverage in fact had never been able to keep up with the mandate provided to it by Parliament.

For instance, in my constituency of Prince Albert—Churchill River, there are thousands of people who do not receive any kind of Saskatchewan television news coverage. There is no Saskatchewan station on cable systems or rebroadcast systems in many northern Saskatchewan communities. Those people certainly cannot follow the debate on public issues within that province nor see cultural or entertainments shows originating in that province, even though they are supposed to be a part of it. They already feel very isolated, and this just increases the feelings of isolation.

Second, with the closure of the Saskatoon station, it means that those northern communities in my constituency that did receive some CBC coverage through cable or whatever, are now reliant on a CBC signal out of Regina, and northern Saskatchewan news is never covered by that CBC station in Regina. It just does not have the resources to do it.

Virtually half the province is without CBC coverage. Is that the kind of thing we can expect more of? Are northern Canadians just the vanguard?

Mr. MacWilliam: Mr. Speaker, my colleague presents a very valid argument, the essence of which is very clear. When they move away from local broadcasting and centralize the operations with essentially one bureau in each of what they call the regions, which really are the provinces, there is no way the CBC can adequately reflect the values of individual communities within those regions.

For example, we have the situation in Windsor. Windsor is very much like some isolated communities in the northern territories. They are isolated in terms of their geography. Now they have basically lost their only Canadian voice, they feel isolated from the larger community of Canada.

The fact is that in Windsor they are essentially awash in American culture. Over 90 per cent of the programming that comes in is American. The only Canadian signal coming in as a local signal was the CBC outlet in Windsor. Now that has been closed their community values are reflected not through a local station, but through a Toronto broadcast.

Whether it be Windsor in the province of Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta or British Columbia where the majority of the population on the coast has very different values and views than some of our interior communities, it is impossible for the CBC to reflect those various community values appropriately.

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte): Mr. Speaker, I will speak for 10 minutes and split the time with a colleague for 10 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Does the House agree with the suggestion of the hon. member.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Tobin: I am pleased to participate in debate on the motion of the member for Mount Royal which reads:

> That this House call upon the government as a matter of priority to ensure that the CBC be strengthened as an instrument of national identity providing local, regional, and national services to all Canadians.

May I say in speaking to the motion of the member for Mount Royal that the member has certainly done her colleagues in the the Official Opposition, in the Liberal Party, proud. I believe she has provided a tremendous service to all Canadians concerned about the future of the CBC in the way she has consistently represented them and this issue for such a long period of time in Parliament, in committee and before the CRTC.

The very fact that the member found it necessary today to move this motion really speaks volumes about what is happening in Canada. The motion calls upon the government to ensure that the CBC be strengthened as an instrument of national identity providing local, regional, and national service to all Canadians. The Broadcast Act, both the 1968 act and the new act not yet proclaimed, provide exactly that the CBC ought to have a mandate to provide national, regional, and local service.

• (1610)

I am quoting directly from the new act. The words are exactly the same in the old act. They indicate that "the CBC reflect Canada and its regions to national and regional audiences while serving the special needs of those regions". What do the words "special needs"? Who are those special people? What are their special circumstances?

The member who spoke before me talked about Windsor. I agree that Windsor is in a particular situation where its needs are indeed special and important. It is almost isolated, surrounded by that great neighbour of ours, the United States of America. Its connection with the rest of Canada is tenuous, but it is certainly difficult to maintain, particularly when we see the close-down of the CBC station in Windsor.

What about Goose Bay, Labrador, represented by my friend, the member for Labrador? He is the first member for Labrador. An historic position of trust is held by Mr. Rompkey. My friend from Labrador has eloquently told us before the CRTC of the position of the people in Goose Bay, in Churchill Falls, and in Labrador West who occupy a huge sparsely populated land mass and have lost their only vehicle to speak directly to their fellow Newfoundlanders and fellow Canadians. In speaking as he has with such eloquence, the member has reminded us of the special plight of all northern Canadians who need every possible vehicle to speak to their fellow Canadians.

I represent the town of Corner Brook which lost its local station. However, it is not just Corner Brook that has lost a local station. Corner Brook serves an area of some 600 or 700 miles of coast line stretching from Port aux Basques in the south to St. Anthony in the north. It is 600 or 700 miles as the crow flies, in a straight line, but it covers thousands of miles of coast line and hundreds of small isolated communities for whom the CBC is not a luxury. It is not a selection on the channel. It is not a question of taking out the remote and flicking around until something grabs their attention. The CBC is how they find out whether or not they should go out and fish today. It tells them whether the weather is any good, whether they might catch fish or drown in a storm. It is that fundamental. There are no other stations.

The CBC is the only opportunity to speak of the potential and the problems of the people who live in those communities, the people who harvest the sea, who live off the land, who do not wake up in the morning and find six metal boxes containing six national newspapers on their sidewalks, who do not walk down to the drug store and pick up variety of magazines, who do not turn on the radio and go through a selection of Am-FM channels. These are people who turn on their radio and turn on their television and connect to the CBC because the CBC has a mandate to serve them.

The private sector is not there. The private sector is never going to be there, nor should it. There is not a buck to be made. There is not an advertising dollar to be picked up and banked. That is why Parliament mandated the CBC to serve Canadians no matter where they live, no matter what their circumstance.

The greatest irony of all is if we look at the history of the institution. Where did it come from? The notion or the idea of the CBC was born almost 60 years ago. Prime Minister R. B. Bennett, in the middle of the Great Depression in 1931, brought in the Broadcast Act. He understood in the middle of a depression, at a time when the fabric that normally holds a country together is strained, frayed and torn and when the country is having its heart ripped out by the Great Depression, that he needed another instrument to pull this country back together. He envisaged the CBC, and it was born in the Great Depression of 1931.

In the recession of 1991, what does this Conservative Prime Minister do, this inheritor of R. B. Bennett's mandate? Does he understand the need to pull the country together when the ties that bind are strained?

Mr. Pagtakhan: No.

Mr. Tobin: No, Mr. Speaker. He pulls out a huge pair of fiscal scissors and he severs the last remaining strands of the fabric of this country. He cuts off and isolates the people of Corner Brook, St. Anthony, Coxes Cove, La Scie, White Bay and Hampden. He cuts adrift the people of Windsor. He completely severs the people of Labrador. He closes down Calgary, and he says it is all done in the name of fiscal responsibility.

This issue is not going away. It is not just about the 11 television stations, the 150 local programs, the 1,100 staff that have been brutally, mindlessly and stupidly cut adrift. That is not what it is about. It is about a visceral understanding deep in the gut of this country that our institutions are being melted down and are vanishing just as the snow vanishes in the spring. Canadians know that if they do not hold on, if they do not stand up now and stop this meltdown of the institutions that define Canada, then Canada will surely follow the fate of the CBC, VIA Rail, Air Canada, and all the other national services that have disappeared.

I come from Newfoundland. I know my province is not as wealthy as some others. I do not envy those who have greater opportunity than mine. I know that we will never be as wealthy as some others, but I have always know that in some ways, in some areas, notwithstanding the disparity of resources, as a Canadian I was equal to any other Canadian.

I have always known that our health care system was there, giving us a measure of equality. I am not sure whether that will be there in a few years. I have always known that in my retirement I would have the dignity of a Canada pension. If all else failed, my country provided that. I have always known that my children and I would have access to quality education; at least I used to think that. I have always known that I could speak to my fellow Canadian. Even though I lived on an island province 19 miles away from the mainland of of Canada, on the east coast of Canada, through the most vicious storm and the thickest fog our voice could cut and be heard because we had a vehicle called the CBC.

We oppose what is happening to the CBC. We believe the CRTC now must be the voice of the people of Canada who do not have the privilege of standing in this Chamber to be heard. The CRTC must say no, just as the people of Canada are saying no to the meltdown of this country. The sooner that Mr. Veilleux and Mr. Watson, who orchestrated the assassination in the dead of night of 1,100 employees and 11 stations, leave the CBC, the sooner the CBC can be better served by new management.

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, I always enjoy listening to my colleague from Newfoundland. He speaks with great passion, great eloquence and makes a lot of sense.

The kind of passion that we have just heard enunciated in the Chamber by the member from Newfoundland is the very kind of passion that we are seeing pouring forth in support of the CBC by groups that are coming to the CRTC hearings from one end of Canada to the other. People are coming of their own goodwill and expense to defend this institution of public broadcasting and to tell the CRTC in no uncertain terms that it has to do whatever it can to turn this government in its tracks and stop the kind of bludgeoning that is taking place to this institution. Let us stop the kind of emancipation that is taking place and the dismantling of a broadcasting system that is more than a broadcasting system. It is very much, in every part, a tool to help Canadians understand themselves, a tool to help us listen to our own Canadian voices.

• (1620)

I want to ask the member, because he touched very briefly on one aspect of the CBC that I think is extremely important, and that is in our international role. As the member knows, Radio Canada International has had a severe reduction in its funding in the latest round of cuts to the CBC. As a result of that, we have almost another 100 people thrown out on the street. This government loves to throw them out on the street. We have a reduction of foreign programming from 14 languages down to 5.

I just want to ask the member to perhaps reflect on what that is going to do to Canada's international reputation and Canada's voice in the world at large.

Mr. Tobin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his question because this is an area that I touched upon only very quickly.

Let me just say that one would be tempted to suspect that just as the United States, all too frequently in the last year or two, appears to speak for Canada when it comes to foreign policy and, all too often, the Prime Minister, appears to be a bare echo of the Bush league that has been launched south of the border—

Mrs. Campbell (Vancouver Centre): Your inferiority complex is showing.

Mr. Tobin: —one really has to wonder whether or not the policy of the Minister of Justice, who is speaking across the way, is that Radio Canada International need not exist in the nine languages that are being cut out because the Voice of America is there. Of course, as long as this government is in power, whatever the Voice of America says we can just say ditto for Radio Canada International. One would presume that would be the policy of the Minister of Justice. She is now making some rather unintelligent noises from her seat, obviously finally discovering, after several hours of debate, some pangs of conscience bothering her in great measure.

I have one other comment for the member. I find it ironic that the former chairman of the CRTC, Mr. Keith Spicer, is now heading up a citizens' forum trying to find out what makes this country sick, angry and upset and what would pull it back together. I want to tell the remaining members of the CRTC, the commissioners now there, that they have within their grasp the ability to excite this country, to turn this country on, to inspire this country in ways that Keith Spicer can only dream about. They can do that by showing the people of Canada that the airwaves truly belong to the people. They do not belong to the NDP, Liberals, Tories, governments or oppositions; they do not belong to the CBC, CTV nor Global. They belong to the people. And the people, somewhere, have a regulator who works for the people, regulating the people's airwaves.

The CRTC can make a statement about Canada, in spite of all the doom and gloom and negative predictions about our future, that shows the people of Canada the system can work. The regulator is there and the integrity of the people on their airwaves can be maintained by simply saying no to the arrogance of the government, the Minister of Justice and the CBC.

Hon. William Rompkey (Labrador): Mr. Speaker, it might be appropriate to start a discussion on the CBC with a piece of poetry. The lines that I have in mind are from *The Merchant of Venice* where Shylock says: "You take my house when you take the prop that sustains my house". There are scholars in the House who will correct me if I am wrong, but my recollection is that is what he says: "You take my house when you take the prop that sustains my house."

It is appropriate because that is exactly what the CBC is. It is the prop that sustains our house. It is appropriate to use a little poetry because we should not underestimate the contribution of the CBC to the arts in this country. Gordon Pinsent, who is a famous Canadian actor now and a famous international actor, came from my province. Would he be where he is today had it not been for the CBC? Would shows like *Codco* be on the air? Would troops like the Mummers have grown up? Would drama reflecting the soul of my province be as alive as it is today without the CBC? The answer is clearly no.

That is why it is appropriate to start the discussion with that particular quotation. It seems to me it is the prop that sustains this House. The government may do away with the railway. We never had a railway in Labrador so we are not going to miss it. The government may do away with Petro-Canada, but we will find other oil companies to develop the oil and the gas off our coasts. The government may do away with the post office, and that will make a difference to us. It will make it tough for us, but we will survive. We will be the same as we are without the post office.

But when you tamper with the CBC, you tamper with the last fundamental unifying force in this country. The CBC is the way we talk to each other. The CBC is the way we communicate. This government is responsible for tampering with, and starting to dismantle by atrophy, the last unifying force in this country.

Mr. Watson tells us that he uses this occasion of a budget cut to create a new vision for the CBC. His vision is a window, a regional window whereby Canadians talk to each other. They see through that window and they talk to each other. That is Mr. Watson's new vision. Mr. Watson robs us of our window in the north in order to create his new regional vision.

That is exactly what the CBC was. It was a window that reflected us to ourselves, that told us about each other, a way we talked to each other at the local level. It was also a window through which we expressed ourselves to the rest of Canada and hopefully to the world, but certainly to the rest of Canada.

In creating his new window, he has robbed us of what made us unique, that unique possibility for expression and communication because, as my hon. friend from Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte has said so eloquently: "There is no option for us". The private sector does not exist in Labrador. There are no private stations. Why? Because there is no market for them. There is no money to be made.

All the signals we get are from satellites. All the signals we get are sitcoms from the United States and elsewhere. There is no other local vehicle except the CBC.

In the north it is important now that we be able to talk back to the south, to those signals that come to us from the south. If we do not, we are going to be inundated by those signals, swamped by those signals and whatever culture and whatever identity we have will be submerged and eventually destroyed unless we have some way of talking back.

If you think, Mr. Speaker, there are solitudes in this country, and that they are east and west, and that they are French and English, I will tell you about other solitudes. They are north and south. The north believes that the south does not understand what it is all about, that it is on the margin, that it is not important, that it is out there and not really fundamentally part of this country. At a time in the history of this country when there are forces at work tearing us apart, it is essential more so than ever before that we have a local means of making our voice heard in this national debate.

That is what the CBC is all about. If the 30,000 people I represent were here today, they would say the same thing. Not just me; the mayor of Fermont, which is our sister community across the border in Quebec, was at the CRTC hearing the morning before I was there. He said exactly the same thing. If the mayor of Sept-Iles was here, he would say the same thing.

It does not really matter. We are not unique in Labrador except that we are part of the north, except that we are on the margin, except that we need that voice, the voice that CBC was for us. That is why this is so important. We have depended on the CBC.

Let me give credit where credit is due. The CBC, certainly as far as radio is concerned, has been a unifying factor and has reflected our local reality. We cannot say the same for CBC television.

• (1630)

I understand that camera crews have been on the coast of Labrador doing set pieces: a piece on alcoholism, another piece that can be shown at any time that they can slip in for 10 or 15 minutes to reflect that particular part of Canada. But that is not the local day-to-day reality of the Labrador coast. It is the difference between the play-by-play of Bob Cole and the Hot Stove League between periods.

We want the local day-by-day reality reflected in this country now, and that is what CBC region has not done up to now. The track record is not there for us. My people in Labrador know more about what is going on in the St. John's city council than they do about the Goose Bay town council or the Labrador City town council.

The stations at Goose Bay and Labrador City reflected that local reality, created a way whereby people could talk to each other and created a way whereby those Canadians could talk to their counterparts in the south in this debate.

The money saved is minimal. The jobs lost are minimal compared to the importance of those stations to us. As my colleague from Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte has said, it is now up to the CRTC as the final court of appeal in the country to recognize the reality of those local stations. As our colleague from Winnipeg said so eloquently and so passionately the other day, the regional vision of Mr. Watson is not going to reach deep into the roots of this country, is not going to reflect the heart and soul of rural Canada, of small town Canada, of northern Canada. Only those local stations could do that.

It is now up to the CRTC, and I hope that this House will reflect it, up to the CRTC to rule that we must not tamper with what is the last and greatest unifying force in this country. We can only hope, and the people who I represent can only hope that the CRTC will recognize that and rule accordingly. If they do not we will have lost out in this great national debate.

Mr. Benno Friesen (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, as I think my friend will agree, one of the delights of living in a democratic country like Canada is that if a manufacturer manufactures an item, it is his privilege to do it, but it is also the privilege of a customer not to buy it if he does not want to.

It is the privilege of a broadcaster to broadcast but it is not an obligation on the part of the citizen to listen to that broadcast. So I find it strange that while we have a—

Mr. Kilgour: We know that, Benno.

Mr. Friesen: I hear the member for Edmonton Southeast mumbling there, and I suspect he is a pretty good supporter of public broadcasting in the United States, maybe more so than he is of the CBC.

Here we have PBS broadcasting from New York State and, as I understand it, fully 40 per cent of their revenue comes from listeners in Ontario. I find it passing strange that the listeners in Ontario seem to be more interested in supporting PBS than they are in supporting some of the broadcasters in Canada.

When I watch the ratings of stations in the city of Vancouver I find that in the evening news the private broadcaster has about 75 per cent of the viewing audience while the remaining 25 per cent is split between the CBC and the other private broadcasters.

I would like to ask the member who just spoke how he can make such an emotional speech about the CBC unifying the country. That could surely only be true if people are watching. But if they are more interested in supporting the PBS in certain areas, and more interested in watching the other channels, then how can that be a unifying effect for the country?

Second, when they do watch CBC I would like to ask you how it could be that watching *Hill Street Blues,* on CBC or *L.A. Law,* or any of the other American shows on Canadian television, via the CBC, is a unifying effect for the country?

Finally, I would ask him how he could justify the cost of broadcasting through the CBC which is far higher, and I hesitate to use the proportions, than private broadcasting? How can he justify that in the support of the public broadcaster?

Mr. Rompkey: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member had been listening, he would have heard both in the remarks of my colleague from Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte and in my own, the essential fundamental point that there is no option for us.

We do not have the luxury of watching other stations. We have the luxury of watching satellite signals, but we do not have the luxury of expressing ourselves or talking among ourselves through private stations.

It exists in Ontario and Quebec. It probably exists in British Columbia, but it does not exist where we live. Let us understand that it is a fundamental point. Do not let that escape you. If you take that away, you take away something that cannot be replaced, because it does not exist in the private sector.

It could be that my colleagues across the way want to privatize the CBC. I do not know. Let them say that. I hope they will be honest enough in this debate, if that is part of their agenda, as they have been with other institutions in this country.

I happen to believe that, for us, where I live, in the past, now and in the future the only option for us with regard to local television and expressing our voice nationally is the CBC. That is it. There is no other game in town.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, I understand what my friend says about the difficulty of getting a diversity of broadcasting in the regions where he lives.

Is he suggesting that we should forgo the broadcasting of the public system in cities like Toronto and Vancouver, and simply concentrate on the regions?

Mr. Rompkey: All we are asking for, Mr. Speaker, is some fairness in the system.

I cannot pretend to speak for Ontario, British Columbia, Quebec, or any other part of the country. If a public broadcasting system is important in this country—as I believe it is, was and will continue to be—of 25 million or 26 million people spread out over 5,000 or 6,000 miles and if public broadcasting is important as a vehicle to communicate among each other, then it is fair to have access to it from Labrador and other parts of my province. That is what I am saying.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Resuming debate. The Hon. Member for Saint-Maurice.

Mr. Denis Pronovost (Saint-Maurice): Mr. Speaker, I jotted down some rules because I wanted to speak to this motion moved by the Hon. Member for Mount Royal.

I could not leave unanswered the absurd statements made by the Hon. Member for Labrador as well as the Hon. Member for Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte. When listening to the Hon. Member for Labrador, one gets the impression that people in Newfoundland and Labrador have no access to television service in this country. Such is not the case, Mr. Speaker, because on the basis of the statistics in our possession, which by the way are available to any one, 99 per cent of the people in Labrador and Newfoundland own a television set. Well, if 99 per cent of people in Newfoundland and Labrador have their own television sets, Mr. Speaker, they must certainly watch television programming. It is quite untrue and unacceptable to be told today in the House that Newfoundlanders are at a disadvantage by comparison with other Canadians.

We understand that it is this Parliament's duty to provide free and equal access without charge to all Canadians, even those in some remote areas. We understand that. However, Mr. Speaker, our colleagues from Newfoundland are telling us they are at a disadvantage in comparison with other Canadians as far as television programming is concerned. Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the statistics compiled by the CBC, it is strange to see that nowadays in Newfoundland, not only in St. John's, but throughout the province, and even in small municipalities, 64 per cent of households have cable TV. That figure is pretty considerable. Besides the basic service everyone—that is 99 per cent of the people—can get with an antenna, 64 per cent of households in that province also have cable TV. That is more than in Prince Edward Island, where only 48 per cent have cable TV, than in New Brunswick, and even than in Quebec with 59 per cent.

So if the hon. member for Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte thought he could move us to tears today, he was dead wrong, Mr. Speaker, because with these options, he has access to all the TV stations and radio channels the people in Newfoundland, just like people all over Canada, can choose from.

• (1640)

Mr. Speaker, in this debate proposed by the hon. member for Mount Royal, her colleagues in the Liberal Party and also to some extent in the New Democratic Party have painted a picture which is all black. They tried to tell us that the last chance to save Canadian unity was to add to the $1.4 billion we already give to the CBC.

However, when you look at the figures, and we must, Mr. Speaker, since we need to back up what we say. One should not throw words which have more to do with paranoia than anything else. There is a lot of paranoia in the opposition, but arguments must be based on facts.

The hon. member told us a while ago that the last instrument to save national unity was the CBC. Watching "The National" and "The Journal" was the thing to do. If we don't watch those, Canada can't be saved. Then, Mr. Speaker, what could my friend from Labrador say about the TV watching habits of English-speaking Canadians.

Let us look, for example, at the results of the latest poll conducted by BBM, in the Fall of 1988, on the TV watching habits of English-speaking Canadians. Some 25.8 per cent of their viewing-time was devoted to the English Canadian network CTV; 26 per cent, to English Canadian independant stations; 28 per cent, to the American broadcasting stations, and 18 per cent, to the English CBC.

Mr. Speaker, does that mean, according to what the Liberal members are saying, that for 82 per cent of the time spent watching TV in English Canada, people do not contribute to the national unity? That would mean that most of the time, 82 per cent of the time people in Vancouver, in Montreal or in Saint John's watch an English broadcasting station other than CBC and they are not contributing to the national unity.

I think we have been presented with a false debate today and I find most regrettable that attempts are being made now to make political propaganda or partisan politics out of the current situation of the CBC. It is a fact that we have had to make the best of past mistakes for which we were not responsible. In 1984, our government inherited a debt that all of us, as Canadians, will have to pay for a long time to come.

That problem cannot be settled in 5, 6, 7 or 10 years. We have taken actions that will allow for a gradual reduction of our national debt over the next several years. However, one important thing must be said to the Canadian population. This year alone, Canadian taxpayers across the land will spend 1.4 billion dollars to allow CBC to maintain its radio and television services in French and in English.

It is, a considerable amount of money. As for me, what makes me angry when I hear Liberal members in particular speak on this matter, it is that we have the impression that in Canada there is only Radio-Canada and the CBC. What about the rest? How many times have liberal members stood in the House to speak of the problems plaguing private television stations in Canada, Mr. Speaker?

In my constituency of Shawinigan, people can listen every day to programs on their radio or television, a fact which contradicts what our colleagues opposite say, that our radio and television in Canada is pityful, of poor quality, and that it is not diversified.

Shawinigan is a town of 23,000 inhabitants. A small town similar to others across the country. Every day, the people of Shawinigan can tune in 29 FM radio stations, on cable, in French and English. Not bad for a small town of 23,000. And when they have had enough of radio, because people in Quebec listen to 15 hours of radio weekly, they switch to their favorite hobby, television. Quebecers watch 27 hours of television per week; half the time, they watch programs on CBC. But if the people of Shawinigan or other small towns in Canada can tune in to 29 radio stations on cable—

Mr. Speaker, the people of Shawinigan can also tune in to a grand total of 33 TV stations, a pretty fair choice I would suggest.

I wish one NDP or one Liberal member on the other side of this House would point to one country in the world with a small population of 27 million as we are in Canada, including 7 million in Quebec, where TV viewers and radio listeners have access to such a wide variety of means of communications.

Last November, Mr. Speaker, I went to Belgium, which happens to be a fairly important country in Europe. I turned on the TV and began searching for stations. As I just said a moment ago, cable TV in Shawinigan enables the wiewer to choose among 33 stations, a good selection. As people are wont to do, I began zapping to locate other stations. Well, I got the two stations in Belgium, the RTBF1 network and the RTBF2 network.

Now over to France, Mr. Speaker. Switch on the TV. In terms of population, France is bigger than either Quebec or Canada. You turn on the TV and get Antenne 1, there are three basic stations plus a private station. Four all told.

Mr. Speaker, the CBC alone has 1,600 antennas from coast to coast for French and English TV and radio broadcasting.

These media provide us with information services that are second to none. Of course the CBC network is not the only choice we have to get the good and the bad news. To inform us of all the radio broadcasting services available to us.

The private sector plays an extremely important role in this area. For instance, in the province of Quebec, there is the TVA network which broadcasts a whole series of very high quality public affairs programs.

The Members of the Opposition, either the NDP or the Liberal Party, refer to the service provided by the CBC as though it was the end of the world. The reality is quite different.

In my region, there are three private television broadcasting stations, namely, the *Quatre Saisons* network affiliate, the CBC affiliate and the TVA network affiliate which, at 6 o'clock, provide us with news bulletins. The news bulletins are prepared by the private sector, something the people in my area do not complain about.

In my own region, we never had a CBC news bulletin telling us that at the corner of the fourth street where the station is located in Shawinigan, there was a traffic jam. I suggest that this type of service can very well be provided by local radio or television stations which belong to the private sector.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, all Hon. Members agree—we clearly said so when dealing with Bill C-40 with which I was very actively involved by moving a number of amendments—that the CBC has a vital and very important role to play.

Mr. Speaker, the government is well aware of that. That is why we raise through taxes in my riding and the whole country a considerable amount of money which is used for only part of our broadcasting system. For the CBC, which is just one element in our system, we raise $1.4 billion in Canada.

I think that that is enough. I find it strange that on just about any matter the Liberals always think we should spend more. We do not spend enough money for this, we should spend more for that, and so on.

I feel, and I say it again because it is important, that $1.4 billion annually is a reasonable amount of money. It is enough and, Mr. Speaker, considering the economic situation, the CBC has a duty to spend this money wisely, because I think those people in the CBC tower on Dorchester in Montreal—excuse me, on René Lévesque Boulevard—should remember one thing: They are spending taxpayers' money.

The other issue, Mr. Speaker, is that the CBC is competing unfairly with the private sector, especially in Quebec but also in English Canada.

In recent years, the CBC's market share of commercials has increased at the expense of the private sector. The Minister of Communications, Mr. Masse, made a surprise statement here in the House, indicating quite clearly that perhaps the whole principle should be reviewed— Perhaps the hon. member for the New Democratic Party would care to hear me out— So the whole principle should be reviewed, and perhaps one way would be to remove commercials altogether.

• (1650)

The motion put forward by my colleague, the Minister of Communications, is an idea that we should be looking at together because, right now, the private sector of Canada, which creates jobs, Mr. Speaker, is going through very difficult times. I would like to hear the NDP and liberal members talk to us more often about the problems faced by private television broadcasting in Canada, they certainly can talk to us about CBC, but they should also mention all the other broadcasters in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to talk very briefly about RCI, our short wave international service. Many Canadians do not know exactly what it is. RCI is Canada's voice abroad which allows millions of listeners in Europe, in Asia, in Africa and in the Middle East to hear from Canada. We expect that the government will soon tell us what it intends to do exactly with this service. The Opposition has already mentioned some further cuts. It is possible, Mr. Speaker, that there may be some cuts. I will probably be the first one to regret it because I think the Canadian government must provide an international short wave service through RCI which is accessible to the largest possible number of people throughout the world.

However, Mr Speaker, we must also acknowledge the fact that Canada is not the only country in the world reviewing its policy with regard to short wave radio service. Radio–Australia is in the process of doing so and so are Radio–Denmark, Radio–Sweden, Radio–Finland. Radio–4 in Belgium is cutting its short wave international service level and is even thinking of doing away with it altogether. RSA, the voice of South Africa, has cut the bulk of its services in French and in English to North America. Radio–Prague, in Czechoslovakia, is in the process of redefining its services as a whole. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because, unfortunately, shortwaves are no longer the modern way of communicating.

Of course, I really think we must keep some shortwave services. Russia, for example. For my part, I wholeheartedly wish the government will maintain our service in the Russian language, because there is one thing we must aknowledge, Radio–Canada International is not listened by only a few hundred listeners in the Soviet Union. In fact, Radio Canada International has a higher rating in the Soviet Union than the CBC here in Canada, which shows how important that service is to us.

Last year, Mr. Speaker, 7,460,000 Soviet citizens listened to Radio Canada International. I believe it is a useful service, and I ask the Secretary of State for External Affairs to maintain Russian language broadcasting which represent a very important part of RCI's activities. According to a 1987 survey, Mr. Speaker, Radio Canada International had 16 millions listeners around the world. Maybe, in a few days, we will not be able to serve all the international community. However, considering the importance of the Russian broadcasting for the Soviet Union, I really wish it be maintained.

Also, Mr. Speaker, we must recognize that the CBC International German broadcasting for West Germany and East Germany is listened to by only 50 000 people. I wonder why we are still providing this service. If there is a service that should be cut given our priorities, it is that one. However, Mr. Speaker, I think we must keep and even improve our Spanish broadcasting which is widely listened to in Cuba.

During a trip to Cuba, a few years ago, I met many Cubans whose only source of information coming from North America was Radio Canada International, for its waves are very well received in Havana. That is a service which, Mr. Speaker, I think we should maintain. On the other hand, other short wave services could be dropped, or revised as most other average countries like Canada have done—I have mentioned these countries just before—before cutting or reducing the whole of their short wave services.

Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to say to my friend from Mount Royal that her motion, as interesting as it might be, does not reflect the reality, because this government will continue to invest large amounts in its public broadcasting system, and Canadians will still choose between a public and a private system, because we can afford both.

For my part and in the opinion of my constituents, from my riding of Saint-Maurice, I must say, Mr. Speaker, that $1.4 billion represent a appropriate sum which we committed ourselves to maintain this year. I am sure that CBC management will know how to spend that money discreetly while securing the linguistic duality the federal government wishes to maintain and ensuring that official language minorities, anglophone everywhere in Quebec and francophone outside Quebec, will obtain a better service.

This is the rule we applied during the last few years, Mr. Speaker. The English-speaking minority in the Mauricie, Trois-Rivières and Shawinigan area did not have, when Liberals were in power, a local relay for the signals originating in Montreal, Quebec City and Toronto. Now they have. A whole series of French-speaking communities outside Quebec did not have this service. Since 1984, we have worked to give Canadians, from both language groups, access to these services. Our work is not over yet, Mr. Speaker, but we will keep at it. I am sure that Canadian citizens know that we are using their tax money with the utmost prudence and that we try to protect the high quality and reputation of the CBC, renowned around the world.

[*English*]

Ms. Catherine Callbeck (Malpeque): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the hon. member. I have a question to ask, but before doing so I would like to make a couple of comments.

One would think that this period of national uncertainty would bring about a strengthening of the institutions that bring us together as Canadians. However, during this period of constitutional negotiations the very essence of our national identity—the institutions that reflect our culture, our traditions, our priorities—was and still is being slowly destroyed.

The privatization of Petro-Canada, cutbacks to VIA Rail, closure of rural post offices, privatization of Air Canada, the free trade agreement, the watering down of CBC's role in the development of our national identity have all chipped away at these national institutions that were such an important element in our cultural and practical Canadian way of life. As a result of this government's lack of financial support for the CBC, the CBC was forced to cut back. In cutting back, regional coverage was made to suffer, in addition to a number of other important services.

In my area in eastern Canada a very important element of our culture was brought to an end. For 20 years eastern Canadians watched the program *Land and Sea*. This show provided eastern Canadians with a reflection of the people, the activities and the culture of the Atlantic area. The program gave the dairy farmer in Malpeque an understanding of the way of life and the problems of the lobster fishermen. It provided the tourist operator an opportunity to comprehend the needs and concerns of the potato farmer. It gave all islanders an outlet to enjoy and understand the diverse priorities that exist in our region of the country.

The dropping of the program *Land and Sea* has reduced the ability of eastern Canadians to understand ourselves, our identity and our differences and similarities.

Does my hon. colleague not agree that it is totally unacceptable for CBC to cut the program *Land and Sea*?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Pronovost (Saint-Maurice): Mr. Speaker, we could analyze CBC programming and we could take a good look at all this and look at each program individually to decide whether they should be cut or not.

• (1700)

I don't think it is up to the politicians in this House to decide whether or not a program should be heard. Mr. Speaker, in Saint-Maurice—and I am going to talk about what I know—according to the latest BBM survey, 7 per cent of the people listen to CBC Radio's French network. This means that 93 per cent, as far as I know, although the Liberals don't seem to use the same arithmetic—93 per cent of the people in my riding never listen to CBC Radio. I am not saying we should get rid of it. I am saying we should keep all these programs in perspective.

The program mentionned my colleague from Malpeque is special program that we could see. You know, Mr. Speaker, we could have programs on all sorts of subjects. Unfortunately, the CBC must limit itself to a certain number of programs and God knows that, all things considered, it is still a significant number.

Lets' look at Canadian television as a whole. I would remind the hon. member and the people listening to us that it is important to compare Canada with countries with a similar population in order to get a true picture of what Canada produces in terms of French and English television. In those comparisons, ten times out of ten, Mr. Speaker, Canada comes out above average considering the amount of money we invest in our television.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, we cannot compare Canada and the United States. It is totally impossible, considering the population pool and existing resources. However, the problem with liberals is that they compare themselves with Americans only when it suits their purpose. You can be sure that when it doesn't, they see the Americans as a bunch of villains. That is their attitude. They would like us to have as much as the Americans have, while the reality is not quite the same.

However, Mr. Speaker, look at countries of Northern Europe like Sweden, Norway and Finland. Look at the Netherlands, which have a larger population than us, and you will see very easily, Mr. Speaker, that we have a national television system, French and English, public and private, which is by far superior to all others systems in the world and offers a wider choice than anywhere else.

[*English*]

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, the member has made some rather provocative statements here today. One of the comments he made earlier in his presentation was that the CBC should be essentially chastized for going more and more into the commercial market for what he calls unfair competition with private broadcasters in Canada.

I just want to point out to the member that he cannot have it both ways. The fact is that the CBC has had to go more and more into commercial revenues because this government has cut back more and more of its public revenues.

If the corporation were facing fixed costs as any business enterprise does—it faces fixed or increasing costs year after year as inflation takes place—it has to make up that funding somewhere. If it cannot get it from the government, if it cannot get it from the public purse, then it will have to raise those revenues through competition in the commercial field.

I say to the member that he cannot have it both ways. He is complaining that this unfair competition is happening when his government is the very culprit that is forcing the CBC to rely more and more heavily on those commercial revenues.

I would also like to ask the member if he would wish to comment on this point. Earlier in the day the parliamentary secretary said that in fact the CBC was strengthening its mandate, that it was revitalizing its mandate. We find 1,100 people turfed out on the street, 11 regional broadcast centres closed, the cutting of over 140 programs, and the CBC facing another budget cut of $50 million to $60 million and another 500 jobs on the line.

Is this strengthening the public mandate of the CBC?

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The hon. member for Saint-Maurice has two minutes.

Mr. Denis Pronovost (Saint-Maurice): Mr. Speaker, I would need ten minutes, but you decided to limit my speaking time and that is perfectly understandable.

I think that this question can be answered quickly by saying that the Canadian people cannot be made to watch this or that television station. That is how it works in Cuba, Mr. Speaker. The Cubans watch a particular television station. My hon. friend should know that. In the Soviet Union, it was the same thing, at least until recently. They had to watch a given station. But here, we cannot do that. In English Canada, through no fault of mine or of any other member of this House, the television station the people choose to watch 82 per cent of the time is not the CBC. I have nothing to do with that. It is just how it is, Mr. Speaker. In Canada, 18 per cent of the total English television viewing time is taken up by the CBC, compared to 82 per cent by other stations.

The CTV Network manages to produce excellent programs without public funding. The Canadian taxpayers do not pay one penny to finance that network, except maybe indirectly through Telefilms Canada for some shows. All in all, it is an excellent television network. The hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell seems to disagree. I can tell him that CTV makes good television and, on top of that, they do it without taking a penny out of our pockets.

What I am saying is that, in a competitive context, we should remember what the Minister of Communications once said, namely that the role of the CBC should be completely redefined and that we should contemplate the possibility for the state-run television to play a role complementary to the existing networks but without having to count on advertising revenues. That is already the case with CBC Radio, Mr. Speaker, and I can see no reason why it could not be the same with television some day.

However, and I will finish on that, we have set clear markers in Bill C-40 to distinguish between the CBC French and English services. Since we are dealing with two different markets, the viewing habits are totally different in each of them, whether we like it or not, and, in that regard, Mr. Speaker, the bill passed by this Parliament will produce dividends in the medium term as well as the long term.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I would like to make something clear before we go on. The hon. member just said that the Speaker was restricting his speaking time. I have to point out that the Speaker is a servant of the House and of the Standing Orders and if an hon. member wants to speak for a longer period of time, he just has to ask for the unanimous consent of the House and the Speaker will be happy to comply.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

[*English*]

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, may I first of all request the indulgence of the House to share my time with my learned colleague from Edmonton Southeast.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate this afternoon. First, I would like to congratulate my colleague the hon. member for Mount Royal who moved the motion to which I bring the attention of the House:

> That this House call upon the Government as a matter of priority to ensure that the CBC be strenghtened as an instrument of national identity providing local, regional, and national services to all Canadians.

This motion, Mr. Speaker, deserves our support, in fact, the unanimous support of the House of Commons. At the beginning of the proceedings today, at one o'clock, I think, the House was presented with the report of the Commissioner of Official Languages. Mr. D'Iberville Fortier, the Commissioner of Official Languages, who is not an Opposition member nor a NDP member nor a partisan of any sort but rather a servant of this House, precisely says in his report concerning CBC—and I call to your attention, Mr. Speaker, what is said on page 20 of the English version: "In spite of the brave front put on by CBC executives, it is hard to believe that the Corporation will be able to fulfill its current basic mandate. Canadian identity, we fear, cannot be promoted by showing "Dallas" and "L.A. Law" in English and French. The CBC must have a strong national and regional presence. Regional programming has been slashed to such a point that it may never recover".

This is what Mr. D'Iberville Fortier, the Commissioner of Official languages, says in his report tabled here in this House, already a few hours ago.

In the recommendations contained in Mr. Fortier's report, on page 65, we can read the following about broadcasting and more particurlarly about television: "A recommendation to the CRTC on improved access by minorities to broadcasts of House of Commons debates."

• (1710)

Here is the next recommendation: "A recommendation to the CBC on improved services to minority language communities. Result: not implemented. Situation in 1991 will likely be considerably worse than in 1988 because of budget cuts."

This is what the Commissioner of Official languages had to say about this government's broadcasting policy, a government which has cut funding to the CBC and forcing it to reduce its local and regional programming.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Saint-Maurice told us earlier—and I can see him in the House—about the cuts to CBC's funding and he was saying, and I want to make sure I am quoting him accurately, that in Canada we also have private broadcasters and that we should talk about them. I did not have the opportunity earlier to ask questions to my colleague from Saint-Maurice, but I still want to remind him that outside Quebec, there is no private French television station in all of Canada. Not one, Mr. Speaker. Francophones outside Quebec have either access to Radio-Canada services or none at all. As people from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell would say: "We ain't have any." And that's that.

So, as Francophones outside Quebec, we need this tool to preserve our cultural identity and our language, Mr. Speaker.

We talk about local programming. Mr. Speaker, let me give you some examples of what is happening in Ontario. We have the television station CBOFT, in Ottawa, of course, and there is another CBC television station, in Toronto, CBLFT, which serves the greater Toronto, and then one station for Northern Ontario. Now, CBOFT serves the Ottawa-Hull area. CBC has announced that from now on programming in French for all of Ontario would be done out of Ottawa. When Mr. Gougeon, of the CBC, testified before the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture, on December 11, 1990, I asked him how they would serve the people in those areas. Or rather it was Mr. Veilleux I had the opportunity to question.

So, before this Parliamentary Committee, Mr. Veilleux answered: "You know, we will serve the people in Ontario through our station in Ottawa." So, I said: "All right." So if that is what they do, how are they going to serve western Quebec, Mr. Veilleux, because right now we have the news—or we had the news—from Ottawa-Hull on the CBC". Here is what he said: "Hull and western Quebec will be served from Montreal". "Fair enough, I said, but how? There is no broadcasting antenna. You will need another antenna if you want all that". From Hull you cannot directly tune in a station from Montreal; it cannot be done, unless of course they are directly linked by cable. Otherwise it does not work, we are out of range, the two cities are 100 miles apart, or 160 kilometres. There is no way to tune in directly. To that he replied: "We can review our plans to see what can be done to serve both audiences".

Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, the people in Timmins would hear all about a traffic jam in Gatineau. Imagine what that would do, how logical it would be to have that kind of programming. The CBC management insist on the fact that they now serve a region instead of a locality. They even have a rather loose interpretation of the word "region". For instance, Hawkesbury, in my riding, and Kakabeka Falls, along the Manitoba border, are part of the same region according to CBC. Mr. Speaker, it is like saying—if we transpose that to United States for a moment—that New York, Denver and Atlanta are part of the same region. Distances are almost the same. Hawkesbury is almost as far from Orlando, Florida, as from Kakabeka Falls, Ontario. And yet, they are considered to be in the same region. What do they have in common for programming, Mr. Speaker? Not much, and that kind of programming is not possible. People will get bad services.

Ontario is not the only region to suffer from CBC cuts. I myself welcome young students from the Embrun Secondary School who are visiting Parliament today. These young people know, for example, how important it is to have programs like *Génies en Herbe*, *Smac*, *Télé-Relais*, *L'Acadie* and other programs produced by CBC. Of course, everything is cut now.

I see the Secretary of State is here, in the House, now, Mr. Speaker. He is a man I rather appreciate and I would like to remind him that he is responsible for linguistic minorities in Canada—as he knows well—and tell him that I trust he will convince his colleagues to do something in order to ensure that CBC maintains its local programming to serve French speaking minorities in Canada, the French speaking Canadians outside Quebec. I agree with Mr. Rolland Beaulieu, the New Brunswick minister who, appearing before the CRTC a while ago, declared that CBC and the federal government must act to correct an unfair situation which leaves Acadians defenceless against assimilation and endangers their very existence.

So, the Secretary of State, who is a sensitive man, and I know he is, when it comes to linguistic minorities, will, I hope, communicate with his colleagues, the Minister of Communications, and particularly the one who sits in front of him, the Minister of Finance, to let them know of the complaints of French minorities outside of Quebec.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Five minute period for questions and comments. The member for Saint-Maurice.

Mr. Denis Pronovost (Saint-Maurice): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great pleasure to the remarks of the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell who pointed out a number of problems, and I think all members of this House will always be sensitive to issues concerning official languages minorities, anglophones in Quebec and francophones outside Quebec. We are all very sensitive to those issues.

The member should have listened to the part of my speech where I explained that the French service of the CBC outside Quebec has been considerably expanded in almost all the little towns of English Canada because people were not receiving that service before.

In my area, the English speaking people of Shawinigan could not tune in to CBC programs with a repeater antenna. They have it now. Listen, we cannot have a television station for each village in Canada. We have to be realistic. I saw a while ago the hon. member for Edmonton who, as usual, was nodding his agreement as his colleague said that the French speaking Canadians outside Quebec—it is true that there is no private station. Well, it is a matter of economics. You cannot operate a private station if— There must be a viewing public, Mr. Speaker, to open a private station. However, in Edmonton, my colleague should know about it, beside CBC in French, one can get, through cablevision, the TVA network from Montreal in French which broadcasts a whole series of programs which are different from those of CBC.

In Nova-Scotia, Mr. Speaker, I was in Halifax quite recently, and I saw it in my hotel room, one can watch, beside the basic French service provided by CBC, the television network *Quatre Saisons* from Montreal, Quebec. There are all sorts of programs which are different. I cannot think of a single Liberal member of this House who would leave for Nova Scotia tomorrow morning to open a private TV station over there. That is not what we are asking them. But the CBC is there and it can be tuned in easily enough in most of these municipalities.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, since 1984 we have extended the coverage of CBC antennas so as to serve the greatest number of small English-speaking localities in Quebec and French-speaking communities outside Quebec.

• (1720)

In that respect I must say that we have no lesson to take from the Liberal Party, for they put a stop to the antenna network expansion. The CBC now has 1,600 antennas right across the country, compared with only 950 in 1982.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): I had no intention to deal with this issue, Mr. Speaker, but our colleague has just said that he has no lesson to learn from the Liberals. I should like to tell him that it is becoming increasingly clear that he has indeed quite a lot to learn from my hon. colleagues. With the national unity crisis Canada is now facing, the government opposite has a lot to learn, and most Canadians share this view.

I should like to tell my hon. friend opposite that assimilation is especially a problem for teens who speak their mother tongue at home but often lose it gradually when they attend school. Such is the reality for francophones outside Quebec.

When I appeared before the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture on December 11 last, I raised the issue of youth oriented television programs produced by the CBC outside Quebec including *Smac* and *Génies en herbe*. After all, when young people watching television cannot see themselves, they like to see other young people. Television should mean something to them, Mr. Speaker.

As a francophone outside Quebec, I directed a question and received an answer which I will quote briefly, in view of the limited time available. As reported on page 1871 of the official report of the committee proceedings, I asked how many network programs produced outside Quebec for young people were left and Mr. Gougeon replied that there were none. Period. That is what I was told and such is the sad result of the cuts to the CBC budget. There is almost nothing left for francophones outside Quebec, something hon. members opposite should understand.

[*English*]

Mr. David Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast): Mr. Speaker, a greater unity is essential if we are going to survive as a single great nation.

A CBC which respects its regional mandate—I am not saying that it does that now as well as it should—could be a major unifying vehicle to allow all Canadians equally, without regional favourites, to share a cultural heritage which reflects our full national identity.

Those opposite, some of whom detest the CBC, clearly have it in their sights as a candidate for dismantling by denying it funds, or oxygen, as they have done with VIA Rail and other national institutions in the past.

If we can judge from news reports over the weekend, the government wants us to increase defence spending. The headline in one paper today is "Tories Urge Big Increase in Spending on Military."

By the way, the Minister of Transport will know that $13 billion is already being spent on defence in this country. Some of us think that that is not the priority to keep this country together.

The new Broadcasting Act says that the programming provided by the CBC should "reflect Canada and its regions to the national regional audiences while serving the special needs of those regions".

CBC cuts have resulted in the closing of three local television stations, downsizing eight others and cancelling hundreds of hours per year of programs, particularly in local and regional television, thus shutting off the voice input of many of our regions of Canada. It has become impossible for the CBC regions to fulfil their mandate, to reflect the regions to themselves and to one another.

I do not think the CBC is doing well enough in this regional mandate and what is happening now is just going to make it harder. Fil Fraser of Edmonton, the former CBC broadcaster and a member of the Spicer commission has described the CBC regions in the past as "a sham". "The regions are not producing programs because they have no access to the network schedules, and they do not have any money to produce with." What was true several years ago when Mr. Fraser said that is undoubtedly more true today.

There seems to be no end in sight for the CBC's budget cuts as the corporation expects a further shortfall in annual operating resources of almost $50 million by fiscal year 1992-93. The foreseeable strategy for the corporation's survival should be, presumably, further cuts to regional programming.

I might indicate that a friend of mine who works for the CBC tells me that CBC stereo is expected to be the next thing to be cut by this so-called government opposite. It that happens, some of us who listen to it will feel that we have lost a very close friend.

Mr. Lewis: You have got a friend? You never had any.

Mr. Kilgour: I must be getting to these fellows opposite, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Campbell (South West Nova): You're rattling them.

Mr. Kilgour: Pierre Juneau, the former CBC president, told the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission that "the CBC has already been put on a steep slippery slope downwards". He linked the latest round of cutbacks to what he called a six-year budgetary onslaught by the Mulroney government.

CBC president Gerard Veilleux has put last year's CBC cuts—15 per cent in jobs with 10 per cent in spending—in stark perspective: He said:

If the Government of Canada were to do what we did, it would reduce the size of the Public Service by 35,000 jobs—

—I interject parenthetically that I think many of those opposite would like to do that and more.

—and they would reduce their expenditure budget by $10 billion.

If the CBC is to remain a vital link between all the regions of Canada and protect Canadians against cultural absorption by another neighbouring country, the CBC should have an assured and predictable income.

The CBC has every reason to ask for stability in its funding. If the government is unwilling to provide the money for the corporation to do its legislated jobs, it should change the CBC's mandate on a national public broadcasting system.

The cabinet's termination of several Radio Canada International services is yet another example of Tory government contempt for the CBC.

For many years, as some members will know, the very existence of RCI has been endangered by cuts to the mother corporation. The service had 193 employees, a budget of approximately $20 million, a financially insignificant part of CBC's budget—1.7 per cent—with transmitters in Canada, Britain, Portugal, Austria, South Korea, China and Japan. RCI disseminates its radio programs all over the world in 14 languages. As of March 31, 93 out of 193 staff, most of whom are located in Montreal, will be declared redundant. All Polish, German, Japanese, Czechoslovakian and Slovak and Hungarian language broadcasts, and half of the Russian ones, all English and French broadcasts except for pick-ups from the CBC and Radio Canada are cancelled.

RCI's audience around the world is expected to drop from 10–12 million now to an estimated 6–7 million and fewer than half of its present listeners would be able to understand broadcasts restricted to English and French.

The cabinet's decision to decimate RCI will be hard to explain to its listeners who would like to know how Canada can be so short-sighted. Since RCI's broadcasts are unavailable—a former RCI employee wrote this part of the speech to the member who is going to lose his seat in the next election—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mrs. Campbell (South West Nova): Hear, hear. Listen to their cacophony of protest.

Mr. Hughes: Who wrote the speech?

Mr. Kilgour: I said a former employee. She is now working with the Official Opposition.

There will not be angry rallies on Parliament Hill, but perhaps more supportive letters of which RCI receives about 40,000 a year. I bet you that is more than the member opposite receives from his constituents. More than 80 countries have international radio services; the British, French and American governments have recently increased their broadcast services abroad for trade, human rights and foreign policy reasons. The BBC World Service and Voice of America are now spending about $200 million yearly on broadcasting abroad while our cabinet has slashed RCI's budget from $20 million to $12.7 million.

RCI has contributed to Canada's image and prestige in the world for more than 45 years, providing a variety of news and information about Canada within an international context, tailored to suit targeted Canadians.

Anyone who understands the history of 45 years of the complex and potentially explosive relations between the west and former communist bloc countries appreciates the accomplishments and the enormous potential of RCI since its inauguration in 1945.

• (1730)

A long-term objective was that of keeping the captive peoples well informed about this country and the world so that they could retain hope, *espoir*. For millions of citizens in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, denied any ideas, information and news that could upset the carefully pre-ordained diet prescribed by the leadership there, RCI was a lifeline of information about this country: its democratic institutions, its multicultural communities, its technological, scientific and cultural achievements.

Now, when the young democracies in eastern Europe have begun to enjoy a better environment—censorship is lessened or gone—what do these dough-heads opposite do? They want to cut its budget in half.

How can the government possibly declare "it is time to dismantle the machinery and shut down the transmitters"? The new democracies in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary are now rebroadcasting RCI programs on their national FM networks. For the near future, RCI had plans to relay, live, its daily broadcasts on the national radio networks in the Ukraine. RCI has extended its contractual agreements with national broadcasters in all of these countries, and the shutdown of the operation would understandably result in bewilderment as to Canadian intentions.

RCI's communication to such countries is that Canada is dedicated to democratic ideals, a country sensitive to its multicultural composition, a message that tends to affect the climate of opinion on which political leaders make decisions. Such feature programs as *Innovation Canada* introduced listeners to Canadian entrepreneurs, inventors and researchers whose ideas and discoveries are practical and profitable. *Earth Watch* looks at environmental issues informing how Canadian ecologists and scientists are attacking the problems that could face us all coast to coast. It brings a wealth of information about the events and issues that are making headlines in the Atlantic provinces, Quebec, Ontario, the prairies, B.C. and the north, and about native affairs across Canada.

RCI broadcasts in Polish, for example, translate into trade benefits. Some budding Polish entrepreneurs have been contacting the Polish section of RCI asking information about Canadian products, inventions and companies. As a result, a number of Canadian companies have established business contacts in Poland. In view of Canada's effort to expand trade with Pacific Rim countries, the termination of RCI in Japanese in Japan, for example, is difficult for any sane person to comprehend. Has our interest in Pacific Rim countries changed in the meantime?

[*Translation*]

My time is almost up, is it not Mr. Speaker?

To sum up, Radio Canada International spent many years skilfully and carefully building a system with credibility around the world. It seems that our colleagues opposite are about to cut all that by half now and maybe even more in the future.

[*English*]

Mr. Benno Friesen (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I have listened carefully to the member speak. I know that he is from western Canada, and the generalization for western Canadian members is that they are very cost conscious. They want to see most for their tax dollar, and do not like to see money wasted.

I have no real truck for either of the television networks in Canada; I don't watch enough to make an evaluation as to the comparative value of either one of them. However, I do know that both of them have roughly between 90 and 100 per cent penetration into the market. They cover most of Canada. It so happens that the employees of the private network total about 3,800 for total penetration, or 90 per cent penetration of the Canadian market, whereas the public broadcaster has about 10,000 employees. Take away the radio side of it and you still have 7,000 or 8,000, at least double the number of employees for the public broadcaster versus the private broadcaster. Both of them have about equal penetration of the market.

Could the member for Edmonton tell us whether he thinks that is good economics and good buying for the buck.

Mr. Kilgour: Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt there can be efficiencies made in any private or public organization. In the case of RCI, the perception is that by almost halving RCI's budget you have gutted it. It is called critical mass. I realize the hon. member does not have a lot of business experience, or do not believe he has. It is called critical mass and if you get below a certain level, you disappear, much the way I am afraid VIA Rail is probably going to disappear in a few years as well.

There is no doubt there is fat. There is lots and lots of fat in many institutions. I am not denying that. I think the government dislikes the CBC intensely. I have some personal knowledge of that. I think most of the members opposite think they do not get a fair shake from the CBC. Most of those opposite, not just the ones present, would like to get rid of CBC altogether.

The member for Macleod, who is going to lose his seat in the next election, may disagree with that. I was in Macleod last week, Mr. Speaker, and I tell you I will

make a wager with the member for Macleod that he is not here after the next election.

Mr. Hughes: I've got news for you.

Mr. Kilgour: The member for Mount Royal wants you to be more polite.

We can talk about efficiencies the way the member for Surrey–White Rock was just doing, but I do not think that is what the government has in mind. What the government has in mind is bleeding CBC to the point where it ceases to be a tool for national unity. I do not know about the south lower mainland, but now is not the time to be gutting Radio Canada International, to be gutting CBC and to be dismantling a lot of institutions across Canada.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The hon. member for Saint–Maurice has one minute and fifteen seconds left.

Mr. Denis Pronovost (Saint–Maurice): Mr. Speaker, I was quite pleased to hear that the hon. member for Edmonton is interested in Radio Canada International, but I was less happy when I learned that his speech had been prepared by a former employee of that agency. I would hope he has a keener interest than that in RCI.

Concerning the Polish language service, I am not aware of any decision by the government, but I have to admit I would be concerned if it were cut. As I said this afternoon in the House, nearly 3 million Polish listen daily to Radio Canada International. I do not think this service should be cut, Mr. Speaker. The minister in charge is not in the House, but I will tell him personally what I think about that.

My honourable colleague spoke of efficiency and good management. Then, he should know that only 50,630 Germans listen to Radio Canada International. I do not think we should spend a fortune to broadcast German programs that nobody listens to. We should cut that services, and we will probably do it.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Resuming debate, the hon. member for York—Simcoe. I apologize the time is over. On a point of order, the hon. member for Edmonton Southeast.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Kilgour: Mr. Speaker, you were in the Chair last week, when I asked a question and you gave the hon. member who had the floor a few minutes to answer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Is there unanimous consent to allow the hon. member for Edmonton–South–East to answer the question?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): We do not have unanimous consent. Resuming debate, the hon. member for York—Simcoe.

[*English*]

Mr. John E. Cole (York—Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, the motion before us today is one which touches the daily lives of virtually every Canadian. It asks that the national broadcaster of Canada, the CBC, and I quote from the motion: "be strengthened as an instrument of national identity providing local, regional, and national services to all Canadians".

Quite frankly, I am surprised that the members would want to bring this up again today after all of the discussion we have had over the last four months. Actually, we have been debating this particular matter for a number of years. I guess there may be some connection to the fact that there is a lobby group that is meeting here in the House this afternoon. That is probably why the opposition benches are virtually empty as well. There are probably a lot of people over there. That may be the reason, and I do not know if it is a very substantive reason, for bringing this kind of debate up here in the House.

• (1740)

I thought it was important to talk about the mandate that has been given to the CBC and in fact to all the broadcasters in this new legislation. We have heard a lot of rhetoric about what is going on, but I think it is important that we discuss the actual facts.

I think we should also look at the process that has gone through since 1985 when a task force on the future of broadcasting in Canada reported right through until February 1, 1991, when Royal Assent was given.

This long, exhaustive process has had as its *raison d'etre* the shape of our broadcasting system, and the CBC's role within it. The 1985 report of the task force recognized the vital role that the CBC plays in the lives of all Canadians, but suggested that its activities could be more

focused. The government's response to that suggestion was very positive. It acted on a number of recommendations to focus the CBC's mandate on its Canadian contributions.

A new broadcasting policy was put in place in June 1988. It recognized that the CBC was the cornerstone of the Canadian broadcasting system. At the same time, it recognized that the corporation was no longer the only broadcaster. Therefore, its mandate was focused toward reflecting Canada to its audience, and to being predominantly and distinctively Canadian.

That legislation died in the other place when the election of 1988 was called, but new legislation was introduced in 1989. Following extensive parliamentary committee hearings, where the hon. member for Mount Royal played an important and influential role, the bill finally received Royal Assent seven weeks ago.

The question of the role of the CBC has been in the public eye for nearly six years. It has been under examination in Parliament more or less continuously for the past three.

I would respectfully submit that the passage of this important legislation reflects in the strongest possible way this government's commitment to Canadian broadcasting, programming and to the renewal of a vital and meaningful public broadcaster. This new legislation will come into force in the near future.

I think it is appropriate to very quickly point out the important mandate which this legislation places on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Recognizing the enormous contribution of public broadcasting to the creation and exhibition of all forms of Canadian programming, this new Broadcasting Act reaffirms in strong and clear terms the role of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation as the primary instrument of broadcasting and cultural policy in Canada.

Time and time again, this government has reiterated its primary policy objective in introducing and passing new broadcasting legislation which will make more and better Canadian programs accessible to all Canadians.

The new Broadcasting Act makes it clear that the CBC is vital in this enterprise. Indeed, it redefines the mandate of the CBC to permit it to better concentrate on this activity. For the first time, it recognizes that other Canadian broadcasters should do their fair share to contribute to a vital Canadian programming industry as well.

The new Broadcasting Act builds this Canadian programming strategy around the CBC. There is absolutely no doubt that the CBC will continue to play its central role as the national broadcaster.

The new Broadcasting Act ensures that the CBC will remain the principal vehicle for cultural expression in Canada. It will continue to serve Canadians by providing a distinctly Canadian viewpoint and a broad range of programming, including news, variety, drama and sports.

The mandate of the CBC as contained in the new act expects the CBC to continue to lead in providing authentically Canadian choices, particularly in popular drama in both official languages. By tradition the CBC has enjoyed an arm's length relationship with the government. In fact, for the first time the CBC's freedom of expression and its journalistic and programming independence are clearly stated in the legislation.

As the national public broadcaster, the CBC is and will remain under the new Broadcasting Act a strong and independent voice and the foremost producer of Canadian radio and television programming.

The new Broadcasting Act reformulates the CBC's mandate to place greater emphasis on the distinctly Canadian character of CBC programming. For the first time this mandate includes specific references to the important role that the CBC performs in reflecting Canada and its regions to national and regional audiences, in providing English and French programming services, in meeting the needs of official language minorities, in reflecting Canadian society in all its aspects, in actively contributing to the flow and exchange of cultural expression; and in all these ways contributing to a shared national consciousness and identity.

Critics have lamented the removal of the phrase "national unity" from the CBC's mandate. Yet there can be no doubt that the objectives, which I have just cited, will indeed contribute to Canadian unity. But how can there be unity without the flow and exchange of cultural expression in English and in French among all regions of Canada? How can there be unity without a shared national consciousness and identity?

The new Broadcasting Act reinterprets the objective of Canadian unity, now in the CBC's mandate, in terms which are more appropriate to a truly independent public broadcaster. The CBC's mandate is refocused to emphasize that its programming should be predominantly and distinctively Canadian, reflecting Canada and its regions to national and regional audiences.

The mandate of the CBC as contained in this new Broadcasting Act expects the CBC to continue to lead in providing authentically Canadian programming choices in both official languages. At the same time, the new act introduces measures governing the corporation's operations and its financial and administrative accountability to government and to Parliament.

It rationalizes the CBC management structure by separating the very different functions of president and chief executive officer from those of the chairman of the board of directors. This division of responsibilities is consistent with the practices that take place in large corporations and dynamic businesses in the world in which we live today. In fact, it is a change which is long overdue.

The chairman is responsible with the board of directors for establishing broad policies and direction, whereas the president is responsible for the day-to-day management of the corporation within the framework established by the board of directors. Both functions are essential and the positions are complementary.

Mr. Watson and Mr. Veilleux have demonstrated their ability to work well together to provide the CBC with the essential combination of creative vision and sound management which a corporation of its mandate and its scale of operations needs and deserves.

Consistent with the new act's recognition that French and English language broadcasting operate under different conditions, and in fact may have different requirements, the new act establishes standing committees of the CBC board of directors to deal with matters related to French and English language broadcasting. The committees will both be headed by the chairman and the president of the CBC so that those committees can discuss different ideas and different programming and different mandates within the over-all mandate of the CBC to encourage exchange of ideas between English programming and French programming.

The new act clarifies the nature of the CBC's accountability to Parliament by bringing under the Broadcasting Act measures previously found in other legislation.

• (1750)

It is abundantly clear, by these actions, enshrined in this legislation that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation is a vital instrument of Canada's national identity. Its mandate is a strong, clear declaration by Parliament. The mandate is realistic, having been crafted and defined in today's circumstances, both within the broadcasting industry and for the country as a whole.

I would like for a moment to address the notion that national identity can only be preserved by the CBC providing local community services as well as regional and national services. I want to talk about the local service just for a moment.

The new act recognizes that the CBC is but one voice in many. Everywhere in this land there are other Canadian broadcasters and other choices. Clearly, the CBC does not need to nor in fact should it try to provide every conceivable service in broadcasting. There are other methods of doing this. There are private broadcasters who provide excellent services. They operate at the local level in their own towns and their own communities to provide the service to their individual communities as they see fit.

It may be that the CBC should not try to duplicate already strong local services, but use its resources to fill its legislated national and regional responsibilities.

As members well know, the CBC provides local, regional and national radio service complemented by regional, national and international television service.

In closing, I would like to place on the record the specific mandate of the CBC as contained in the new Broadcasting Act. I believe members will find it provides for a vibrant and meaningful CBC for the coming decade and beyond. It requires that the CBC, as the national public broadcaster, should provide radio and television services incorporating a wide range of programming that informs, enlightens and entertains.

The programming provided by the corporation should be predominantly and distinctively Canadian. It should reflect Canada and its regions to national and regional audiences, while serving the special needs of those regions. It should actively contribute to the flow and exchange of cultural expression, in English and in French, reflecting the different needs and circumstances of each official language community, including the particular needs and circumstances of English and French linguistic minorities. It should strive to be of an equivalent quality in both English and in French. It should contribute to the shared national consciousness and identity. It should be made available throughout Canada by the most appropriate and efficient means and as resources become available for that purpose. It should reflect the multicultural and multiracial nature of Canada.

This mandate for our national broadcaster, the CBC, is unequivocal as to the important role of the CBC in providing programming which will contribute to our shared consciousness of who we are as Canadians, of where we are going and what being Canadian means.

The government is confident that CBC is better equipped today to fulfil this important role. The concerns expressed in this motion, I submit, are unfounded. The new Broadcasting Act gives the corporation both a streamlined mandate and a new corporate structure, both of which will permit the CBC to fulfil its important role in reflecting the Canadian national identity from one coast to the other.

Mr. Rey Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to remind the member that CBC is more than a mere symbol of our country, but it is truly a living institution now almost doomed to failure and death by this government. It ought to continue as a living institution to reflect the collective conscience of all Canadians.

The member indicated that Mr. Veilleux had done a good job. I am trying to paraphrase him.

In appearing before the CRTC, Mr. Veilleux gave the message that the CBC had been unfairly treated by this government, and more harshly than any department of government. If I were to follow the member in his logic, if Mr. Veilleux had indeed done a good job, then he had to follow Mr. Veilleux's comment and advice and admit that the government had made a terrible mistake in allowing this financial situation to happen to the CBC. This, in fact, was also echoed by Mr. Pierre Juneau, a former CBC chief who served for seven years; that unless we move quickly, we may lose the living institution that really has to protect our culture and our soul as a nation.

So, I ask the member a few questions. Would the member agree that Parliament must review the CBC's legal mandate in light of this government's condoning eyes and hands to what CBC has done to its operations, cut 1,100 jobs, cancelled 150 local programs and closed 11 of its 31 TV stations, about one third of its TV stations.

The second question, through you, Mr. Speaker, is how could the member tell the House that the CBC is continuing to serve its mandate when it has now divided regions into provinces?

Mr. Cole: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned a couple of questions at the end, but I think there are a few things he mentioned related to what I was talking about earlier. If he checks *Hansard* tomorrow, he will see very clearly that I did not at any time say that the CBC was a mere symbol. I am quoting him quoting me. I did not say that, Sir.

To suggest that it is a living institution, I agree.

Mrs. Finestone: He did not say that either.

Mr. Cole: Yes, he did. Very clearly.

Mr. Pagtakhan: I said it, but it was my own statement.

Mr. Cole: That is right.

I do not think a living institution can just continue running rampant and going in all different directions at any one time. I think we have to accept some realities.

I understand that Mr. Veilleux has said that the CBC was cut and cut more substantively and that we should not allow this financial predicament to be what it is today.

I would like to tell the member: If the government was not in this financial predicament, if it had not been started about 10 years ago when there was another government in power, we would not be in the position where we would have to make cuts. This government has been very consistent in its ability to try and balance its budget, to do something with this deficit. Quite frankly, unless we are able to continue working at that and making cuts to government programs, it is going to be impossible to do that.

The member also suggests that we go back to its mandate. I think the mandate has been very clearly discussed for the past six years. It has been discussed in this House and the other place and it is very clear that there is a new mandate now that will allow the CBC to do the things that we have suggested to make this a better national broadcasting system. I hope to see the CBC flourish to a great extent with a new mandate and a new focus in the future.

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, I want to bring forward six points. The member does not have to answer them, but if he cares to analyse them, I would appreciate it.

First, I suggest that Canadians are the only people who pull themselves up by the roots to see if they are still alive and breathing.

The primary policy of the CBC was to ensure that we would be more Canadian in our programming. So what does this bill do? It allows for more Americanization of our air waves, which the member did not happen to mention.

The CBC contributes, even at 80 per cent Canadian content at prime time, only 65 per cent throughout the course of the day. So it still has not, with the resources that are at its disposal, been able to reach that 80 to 100 per cent the member was talking about.

Third, as my colleague phrased the question so well: Do you recognize that they have now defined regions as provinces? A slight change in the structure of the tree.

• (1800)

There is no attention paid to minority rights. The member has talked about *les francophones hors Québec*. He should go and tell the story he just told this House in Regina, Moncton and a few other French communities such as Sept Iles, Matane, et cetera. I suggest that he talk to the private broadcasters to see if they could even possibly want to, let alone financially undertake, reach rural Canada and all its small towns. It is not possible. They should not be asked to fill the same kind of mandate as the public should.

The last point he talked about about was cultural expression in Canada. How are we to do that and have any kind of artistic input when the directive from the CBC has been to cut out all regional programs except news? I know—and I said it earlier—that we may be news junkies. We also have another dimension to our personality.

I would like to know how the hon. member sees it. The CRTC cannot rule because it is not fulfilling either the 1968 bill that is in place or the 1990 bill, if it were to be proclaimed, and the CBC should not be allowed to carry it out because it is in contravention of both bills.

The member should read all the definitions of local, regional and national. He will see where they are in contravention of their own bill. What we really need to do is to send this bill back to the House of Commons, to parliamentarians, everyone in this room, so that we can find an appropriate solution.

It is not the role of the CBC board to determine the public airwaves. Unfortunately it is not possible within the CRTC's mandate to do even what the member is suggesting it do: let the CBC carry on the way it is. The role and the destruction will be irreparable if the government continues.

The hon. member laughed when I talked about the tree that we are busy examining. There will be no roots left. The leaves will wither, as will the branches, and Canada will die and it will be your fault.

Mr. Cole: Mr. Speaker, I have two minutes to answer about eight questions the member put forward.

I am not quite convinced of the analogy that she refers to with the tree and the roots. I think the tree is going to blossom because Canadians want it to blossom. Canadians will show their kind of support. That is the way we need to do it. We cannot force a tree to put down its roots. We cannot force a tree to grow, but we can encourage it by admiring it and by doing all the other things.

The member mentioned some other things with regard to regional and local. I want to mention a particular situation in my area where we have not had local CBC television for a long time.

Mrs. Finestone: You are in Toronto.

Mr. Cole: I am not in Toronto. I am in York Simcoe, north of Toronto. Toronto is a suburb to the south. Nothing is wrong with Toronto. I just want to use an example of the closest television station to me, which is the CBC in Barrie. It is a locally operated station. It provides local news to the communities. We found it very effective. The national and regional news are provided by the main station. It contains the news of local interest. It has become a very popular program. I think that is the

way for the CBC to go in the future. It should provide these small stations with the opportunity for local programming, local sponsorship and local mandates. I for one would be very supportive of that type of increase. It would put the responsibility back with the people who require it.

The member mentions that she does not like the idea of the direction coming from somewhere else: from regional, non-provincial, or whatever. Maybe the direction should be coming from the end user, the people who are providing the service. If the people providing that service and the people who are receiving that service feel there is a need, obviously they will support it in that particular area.

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, I would like to divide my speaking time with the hon. member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Is the House in agreement with the suggestion of the hon. member?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Althouse: We are debating the question of the CBC and its role as a national broadcaster. We are also discussing the cuts that have occurred at least twice in the last two years. As a consequence of those cuts, the whole question as to whether the CBC is still considered by this government to be a national broadcasting agency is very much a moot point. The original intention of the CBC to provide communications from sea to sea to sea and to permit all of us in Canada, this vast disparate land, to understand a little bit through listening to radio or through watching television about how other people in other regions live. This is somewhat in doubt with these cuts.

I look at the cuts that have occurred in my own region in the last two years. I find it very difficult to convince myself that somebody up there thinks that we are still part of Canada. The food show has been cut. Agricultural reporting during the noon hour has been cut back dramatically. A number of well-known programs in the Atlantic region and sometimes broadcast nationally were cut such as the *Land and Sea* program. *Country Canada* is still going but how much longer? As well the farm business news which was aired on the news channel has now been cut after a very successful run of some 16 months.

It makes us wonder just where the commitment went for CBC. We are finding that there are cuts right across the country. Out of Saskatoon the TV channel there has been taken off the air with these cuts. This means that stories which emanate from Saskatchewan that might be picked up on the national feed no longer have a place to come from except out of Regina. I do not know whether all members of the government realize that Saskatchewan is 700 or 800 miles from end to end. It is pretty hard for one station in the very southern part of the province to cover all of that territory. Saskatoon had a chance of making it possible.

I have a list here in my hand of CBC programs cut in British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and it goes on. There must be 23 or 24 programs that have been cut, some of which were heard nationally.

The cuts have been there. They have been real. They have been progressive. What about the cuts that were made a year ago? We were told by the president of CBC, in defending those cuts, that we still had a lot of regionally programming and a lot of resource programming. We were complaining at that time about the imminent departure of George Price who was a fixture around Parliament Hill and came into everyone's living rooms and kitchens at noon across the country. That voice is now dead. There is nobody reporting on food, agriculture and resource matters from Ottawa to the rest of the country.

Some government members and people at CBC who are defending the cuts say that this is simply taking away ghetto broadcasting. Was the food show a ghetto broadcast show? They are arguing that only a few hundred thousand farmers were interested in the food show, yet the main audience for the food show were consumers. Don't we need food? That is the new authority being granted to the CBC: if it is only as universal as food, it is not important.

How far do we carry this kind of thinking? The most popular show on CBC television at the moment is the news show—*The National* and *The Journal*—which takes an hour every night. It has very high ratings. Most of the people who are reported on those shows are some 295 people sitting in this Chamber. They take most of the coverage out of that hour every night. They said that

they have been told to cut broadcasting because there are only a few hundred thousand farmers left and there are only 26 million consumers in this country who are not interested in food. Yet a program that basically places forward the names and faces of some, if not all, of the 295 people in this Chamber still continues to get plenty of coverage. I suspect that that would be, from this government's point of view, one of the last places that cuts would be proposed. It is just a question of whose ox is being gored, I suppose.

• (1810)

I have mentioned the various cuts that have occurred. They were step by step. We were told when George Price went that we still had programs like *Country Canada* and the video programs and the all-news program. In fact, one of the quotations from a letter received almost a year ago, April 6, 1990, from the president of CBC defending the cuts that the government had forced on him at that point, justified laying off Mr. Price not because he was being retired, but by not filling the position. He said this was because there were changes, that times change and that it was time that particular show and format disappeared. He wrote: "Today only a very small percentage of CBC's audience claims farming as an occupation. These farmers get up to the minute information from computers, fax, wire services, all-news television and a variety of other sources, as well as CBC Radio".

Since that time, since this last round of cuts, we can forget about all-news television as one of the sources for farm information because that was one of the things that went this time. *Farm Business News* which was produced in Regina by Agcom Productions aired its last episode last February 16. It was part of the *Newsworld* operation. It was the only western and agricultural show that appeared on CBC affiliates and channels. It was on the all-news channel and has now disappeared.

I do not think it is just an accident that the shows being pulled not only represent agriculture, the land and the sea, but they were also produced in the regions. That regional ability to employ technicians, producers, writers and broadcasters is now disappearing.

It is more than just losing the service. It is a question of losing the technical ability in those regions to produce this kind of programming either in CBC or outside CBC. By pulling away this financing and this ability to hold the nation together and to provide the kind of expertise at the regional level, the country is going to be much poorer for it. I think we have lost far more than we are saving with these cuts.

Mr. Benno Friesen (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of my friend's remarks, he made it sound as though we were presiding over the demise of CBC because of the $100 million cutback. I am sure he is aware that the total budget of the CBC is $1.4 billion and that every year it gets bigger.

I would like to ask my friend from Saskatchewan—and his farming community knows a lot about cutting back, where it has to be done—how he would project that in a budget of $1.4 billion a cutback of $100 million would bring about the demise of that corporation.

Mr. Althouse: Mr. Speaker, this is the second of those types of cutbacks. It is becoming a habit. If it were only going to be a one-time shot, I am sure CBC could adjust. But each year it makes the cuts, lays off the people and closes the stations. Then it finds at the end of the year that it was not good enough and that it has to do it again the following year.

That is not the way this government has been operating in other areas. It has not had this kind of cutting back in crucial departments. In fact it has been increasing the expenditures in most departments.

Mr. Friesen: Would you repeat that?

Mr. Althouse: We have not seen these kinds of cutbacks in departmental expenditures. The expenditures of this government now are much higher than they were when it took office. They have gone up each of those years. The deficit has gone up. The expenditures have gone up. Expenditures have not been brought down on a continuous curve, the same way that the CBC has been asked to make its cuts in the last couple of years.

If there was an assurance that these were the last cuts, I am sure the country and CBC could make adjustments. They had a cut last year. Then they got this year's cut. How many more years of cutting will it take? Will people who are interested in a career in writing or producing tie into CBC, or will they go south or to Great Britain to do their life work?

This kind of message is sending a lot of good people away unnecessarily. If the government wants to provide some stability to CBC, it should make it quite clear that was the last cut and there will be no more.

Mrs. Dorothy Dobbie (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, I just want to ask the hon. member what he thinks. If budgets have increased year after year since 1984, how can they be characterized as cuts? If he believes that CBC should be given a blank cheque over other more needy institutions or people in the country, how does he expect people who are taking cuts in social spending and all sorts of other areas across the country, at all levels of government, municipal and provincial levels, to be able to deal with the fact that CBC expects to have year after year after year excessive spending habits?

How does the hon. member expect CBC to be able to carry on with its profligate spending with a blank cheque and not be asked once in a while to use a little bit of good, common business sense?

Mr. Althouse: Mr. Speaker, I do not think that anyone expects the CBC to go on with profligate spending. I believe those were the words the hon. member used. However, I think the public expects their government to make it quite clear to CBC that it still has a role to play in this country. I think the public expects that mandate to be made quite clear.

When they go into a budget each year for two consecutive years and ask for massive cuts, it does not send signals that CBC is going to have a continuing mandate. It begins to look as if there is a policy of attack rather than of sustaining that organization.

As a government it is possible to lay out the guidelines and stick with it. If we are going to have CBC as we all think we should, then they say so. If the budget is going to be frozen, then they should say so. But they should not come in with new budgets every year with a big surprise that there is going to be $100 million cut in consecutive years.

Mr. Rod Laporte (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to join in this debate with respect to the future of CBC.

The role of the CBC has been an integral part of encouraging, developing and maintaining the cultural fabric of this nation for over half a century. The cuts that have been made to the CBC in the last couple of years have in fact affected that very fabric.

The cuts that this government has made to the CBC has had an impact in this country. Certainly Canadians have voiced their concerns. In many ridings right across the country including my own—in fact most of them—I am sure members have been hearing comments. I have been receiving both telephone calls and letters from constituents.

It so happens that I recently received a letter from a Moose Jaw resident, Cathy Anderson. She wrote a very eloquent, in fact very passionate letter. I think she outlined very well the feelings and the concerns of many Canadians, including certainly the people in my riding. I would like to read a few parts of this letter that Cathy Anderson has written. She talks first of all of radio:

> I heard the Stamp Club, Just Mary stories, and my first symphony and opera, just to name a few. When CBC began TV programming, I was viewing. With CBC programming there was a certain quality that was ours, the players ours, the production ours, and unconsciously I was proud to be a Canadian.

• (1820)

She goes on to state:

> I think that this is when I first began to have a feeling of being a Canadian, and that all Canadians across Canada were seeing or hearing our own.

She continues:

> So for me CBC represents a reality of a united Canada, and with the CBC cuts I feel it will harm the ability of CBC to bind Canada as a nation. CBC is our mirror and our window.
>
> CBC is crucial to the Canadian fabric, and to weaken it implies to me the Canadian voice no longer matters to my government.

Actually this was a letter sent to the Prime Minister with a copy to myself.

I think Cathy Anderson sums up very well the feelings of many Canadians right across the country of the cuts and the effect this government has had on the corporation.

One of the concerns about the cuts to the CBC is that regional differences and regional diversification are not going to be represented any more at the CBC. There was a report by the standing committee in 1988 which summarized that. It said: "If the CBC is to function as a genuinely national broadcasting service, then it must be rooted firmly in all regions of Canada. If the CBC ignores the regional nature of this country, its relevance, importance and effectiveness as a national broadcasting service will be reduced".

It is interesting that the cuts which have been effected at the CBC have resulted in those very regional cuts. Many of the programs that reflected the regional diversity and uniqueness of this nation are gone. One of the important factors, certainly for me living in Saskatchewan, which is not a overly populated province, is that it is important for the Saskatchewan message to get out. It is also interesting and important for us to know what is happening in the rest of the country.

Places in the maritimes, like Newfoundland, have lost programs unique to their area just as we in the west have lost programs that are unique to our area. The cuts at the television station in Saskatoon leave Saskatchewan with one television station to cover news broadcasting in the province, that is, the major news broadcasting.

It is hard to believe that a city of 200,000 people, the city of Saskatoon, has lost its television station for local news. That certainly affects people in the northern part of my riding who receive Saskatoon television. They have expressed concern that their local station is no longer reflecting some of the local issues which occur in Saskatoon.

The loss of shows such as the food show have also affected people in my riding. As mentioned earlier, loss of shows such as the *Farm Business News* which was broadcast on *Newsworld*, mean people in Saskatchewan are not given full information with respect to what is happening in agriculture in this country.

It is interesting that in the city of Regina there is a major broadcasting station, a beautiful building sitting in Wascana Park with beautiful facilities that is not being used. It has some of the best studios and best facilities in western Canada and it is sitting idle. It is a white elephant, and it is not that old. The purpose of that building in the mid-1980s was to provide regional programming, and to develop and promote some of the culture in that area of the country. It is not doing it.

That is why we have people such as Cathy Anderson writing to me concerned that the CBC is not reflecting the various regions of this country.

If we do not reflect the regions of this nation, what have we got as a nation? In these days, with the concerns over the Constitution and the future of our country, there are many regions and areas that need the support of the CBC to tie the fabric of this nation together. The CBC is unable to do this more and more.

It is unable to reflect those areas so that we can feel that we are Canadian no matter what part of the country we live in. It is important that, as a country, we encourage regional development.

This is one of many directions that this government has taken which is having a direct impact on the regions of Canada. The CBC is one area. It also includes deregulation of transportation, cuts in VIA Rail, post offices, communications. The list goes on. Regions of this country are suffering. They are not being represented or promoted.

If this continues, it does not bode well for the future of our nation as a united nation. There has long been a feeling of western alienation, eastern alienation and northern alienation. Unless there is a concerted effort and a fundamental goal to promote regional development, then we are going to continue to suffer and to have an alienation feeling. The future of the nation is in danger.

As a nation that was born and built on regional development, we seem to have lost that objective. I feel it is very sad. I know that people in my riding feel it is very sad. Canadians right across this nation are lamenting that fact this very day.

Mr. Benno Friesen (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I just want to remind the member who just spoke that when he talks about cutbacks, he is using jargon that is actually very misleading.

If he has looked at the evidence at all, he knows that the budget will be bigger next year than it was this year. The proposal before us is that the size of the growth will be less than it has been other years, but they are not in fact cutbacks.

I am glad the member spoke because he mentioned a brand new CBC building in Regina. He called it a "white elephant" that is now sitting empty.

I asked him when the building was put up. His friend over there said it was 1985. If it was built in 1985, it was on the drawing board two and three years before that, and maybe planned four or five years before that.

If the CBC could plan a building roughly 10 years before the so-called cuts came in, is that not a symptom of a fat-cat corporation that is spending money recklessly and deserves to have its budget reined in a little bit in order to be a little bit more conscientious with a taxpayer's dollar.

If a building in Regina can sit there empty because of poor planning and too much money, is it not time that we cut back the authority of the CBC just a little bit so that its growth in spending will slow down?

• (1830)

Mr. Laporte: Mr. Speaker, it is no doubt true that the CBC facility in Regina was planned many years ago, before this government came to power, knowing that its objective would be to destroy CBC as a national network. The building is not sitting empty; the CBC still broadcasts its news programs from there. But it is largely empty. It is not being used to its full capacity. The reason that it was built was to provide a facility for regional programming, to highlight some of the cultural and regional aspects of that area of the country. Now it cannot fulfil that mandate.

The member talks about the growth of the CBC. He should go out to Saskatoon and tell the people in Saskatoon that the CBC is growing, and do it in front of the former CBC television station. He should come to Moose Jaw and tell the people that the CBC is growing. When he is there, he can remind them of the cuts of *This Week* right across western Canada; *This Week* in B.C. is gone. *Sportsline*, *Down to Earth*, *Forum*, *Diversity*, *Network Night Off*, parades, annual sports dinners, and Christmas concerts have all been cut from British Columbia.

In Regina we have lost the food show, which was a national show from Regina. We have lost agricultural programs. In western Canada, the CBC agriculture affairs person, George Price, retired and his position was cut. In fact, his colleagues in the agriculture standing committee were also lamenting the fact that agriculture would no longer be getting the thorough representation that it should. He should talk to his colleagues on that side of the House on the committee and find out if it has been growing.

The member should come to Saskatchewan and tell people that the CBC is growing. It is not growing. It is not being representative. He should tell francophones in Saskatchewan that CBC is growing. The only French network programming in western Canada is on the CBC; one channel on CBC-TV and one channel on the radio, period. That is a service.

Come to Saskatchewan and tell people that the CBC is growing. It is not growing.

Mrs. Louise Feltham (Wild Rose): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to address the motion presented by the hon. member for Mount Royal and to speak on a matter which is of great importance to all Canadians.

I can readily understand the member's concern for the continued strength and well-being of our national public broadcaster, the CBC. I would like to assure the hon. member that the government shares that concern and to ask her to understand that the restructuring of the CBC is not a dismantling of this great public broadcaster; rather, it is a response to changing circumstances and changing times.

There is no question that many businesses and individual Canadians are having to adjust to the present economic circumstances. This is always a difficult exercise but often the result is that one is better equipped for a changed environment. This may well be what the CBC is presently going through.

I would first like to make one thing clear. More than 1,600 CBC transmitters remain on the air serving Canadians from coast to coast. This is something that tends to be forgotten amid all the emotional pleas and cries of woe over the future of CBC. The CBC television service reaches 99 per cent of Canadians in both isolated regions and the large cities in Canada. Those 99 per cent of Canadians continue to receive CBC national and regional television. We have all been made aware that these are tough times. But they are also different times, very different from the 1950s when the CBC was the only channel in town. Different times require different thinking, different approaches, different strategies.

While I admire the hon. member's impassioned defence of the CBC and while I respect her tenacity for keeping the issue of the importance of the CBC alive before this House, I respectfully suggest that the hon. member should recognize that nothing is static and that one should adopt an outlook more relevant to today's environment and circumstances and to the rest of the 1990s.

It would be nice if we as Canadians could afford to say to the CBC: "Okay, here is an additional $100 million for this year. Yes, next year you can count on bigger increases from Parliament". But where is the money going to come from? We live in a time of severe economic restraint. Canadians everywhere are reassessing priorities. They are struggling to live within their means and they must balance their resources.

More importantly, asking the CBC to do all the things the hon. member would like to do, and asking Parliament to give it the money to do all of those things, fails to take into account the real environment in which CBC operates.

To be sure, dreams and ideals are all worth pursuing, but let us be practical. In our pursuit of a vision for the CBC, let us be a little more realistic, a little more modern. To do that, we have to place the CBC's mandate and its recent restructuring into the proper context.

The context is this. Broadcasting is a tough, competitive business that is constantly changing. Money is tight for private and for public enterprises alike and money is tight for all broadcasters, not just the CBC.

If we are going to ensure that CBC continues to provide a strong, quality Canadian television service, let us recognize the reality it finds itself in and embrace practical solutions, practical strategies so that CBC remains the cornerstone, not only of Canadian broadcasting but, indeed, of Canadian culture.

We must change our way of looking at things, of looking at the CBC, of thinking about what it should be doing. There is little to be gained by using old thinking and old solutions to address new challenges and changing circumstances that are vastly different today than even just 20 years ago.

What kind of environment is CBC facing? Well, as Mr. Veilleux explained in announcing the CBC's restructuring; among other things, the CBC has experienced a drop in advertising revenues. It has additional expenses as a result of inflation and of covering unforeseen world events, such as the war in the gulf.

The CBC is not alone. The entire Canadian broadcasting system is facing similar circumstances; rising costs, shrinking audiences, reduced advertising revenues and tougher competition.

Private broadcasters are also facing dramatically rising programming costs and shrinking advertising revenues. People do not watch as much television as they used to and the average television viewing in Canada is one hour less per week than it was ten years ago. Ten years ago there were a total of 103 television stations in Canada. Today, there are 129.

• (1840)

In 1985, CBC Television was watched by 30.6 per cent of the English-speaking Canadian audience. In 1989, this figure had dropped to 25.6 per cent.

Since 1985, the CITY network has lost 21 per cent of its audience.

The cost of programming has more than tripled in the last 10 years.

The shrinking audiences and rising costs have had a profound effect on the Canadian broadcasting system, not only on CBC, but on the private broadcasters as well.

The CBC is but one of many broadcasters that has had to change the way it operates. Other public broadcasters and private broadcasters, too, have been forced to change the way they operate to deal with these pressures. For instance, in 1987, TV Ontario and Access Alberta had to change their programming schedules substantially in response to financial pressures.

Radio Quebec has closed production centres in recent years.

The CTV network had to lay off 10 per cent of its total staff in 1987 in response to rising costs and decreasing revenues.

Private broadcasting's profits totalled 19 per cent of revenues in 1985, and then dropped to just 7.5 per cent of revenues by 1989.

This situation is not unique to Canada. In the United States, the big three networks' share of the viewing audience has plummeted from 90 per cent down to 60 per cent in just over the last 10 years.

The economics of broadcasting is changing. The structure of broadcasting is constantly evolving. This is happening in Canada and all around the world.

This is the reality of broadcasting today. This is the situation that the CBC and other broadcasters must adapt to.

Broadcasters in general, but public broadcasters especially, must adopt new strategies to deal with the ever changing broadcasting environment. This is the situation that Parliament has already faced up to and accepted. That is why Parliament passed a new Broadcasting Act recently. This followed months of consultation, debate, committee hearings, discussions in the media, not to mention a number of studies.

The new act updates the CBC's mandate in a very practical manner that ensures that CBC will be a relevant national and regional public broadcaster, not only for the 1990s, but well beyond.

This mandate reflects the fact that the CBC is not the only broadcaster in Canada today. It is one of many services, each vying for the attention of the Canadian viewing public.

There is a huge, diverse Canadian broadcasting system out there with private, provincial and local cable programming services. The CBC's mandate reflects this reality. The CBC's restructuring reflects all of this.

Indeed, it has been suggested in numerous studies over the last few years that the CBC should be restructured. For example, the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee proposed quite emphatically that the CBC withdraw from local programming and concentrate its efforts on regional production.

More recently, the Caplan–Sauvageau task force said of CBC's regional mandate, and I quote:

> The time has come for the CBC to send out a psychological message: That it is prepared to re-examine its commitments to a certain level of facilities and even to certain kinds of programming for the sake of a few hours of something more distinctive with higher production values and lower cost per viewer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): It being 6.45 p.m., it is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 81(15), to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

[*Translation*]

Does the hon. member for Mount Royal wish to raise a point of order?

Mrs. Finestone: Mr. Speaker, because you interrupted the debate, I would like to know if I will have the privilege to ask some questions to the hon. member for Wild Rose, in Alberta? Would that be possible? The debate was supposed to go on until—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I am sorry but I have to answer no because the Standing Orders are very strict and I will have to put an end to anything that is before the House at 6:45 p.m.

* * *

[*English*]

SUPPLY

CONCURRENCE IN SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (C), 1990–91

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)) moved:

> That Supplementary Estimates (C) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1991, laid upon the table Tuesday, March 5, 1991, except Vote 2c under "Parliament" which was ordered deleted from the Estimates by the Speaker on Wednesday, March 20, 1991, be concurred in.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Call in the members.

The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:

(*Division No. 397*)

YEAS

Members

Andre	Atkinson
Attewell	Beatty
Belsher	Bernier
Bird	Bjornson
Blais	Blenkarn
Bouchard (Roberval)	Boyer
Brightwell	Cadieux
Campbell (Vancouver Centre)	Cardiff
Casey	Chadwick
Champagne (Champlain)	Charest
Clark (Yellowhead)	Cole
Collins	Cooper
Corbett	Côté
Darling	DeBlois
de Cotret	Della Noce
Desjardins	Dick
Dobbie	Duplessis
Epp	Fee
Feltham	Ferland
Fontaine	Fretz
Friesen	Gray (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)
Greene	Guilbault
Gustafson	Halliday
Harvey (Chicoutimi)	Hawkes
Hudon	Hughes
Jacques	Jelinek
Johnson	Joncas
Jourdenais	Kempling
Koury	Larrivée
Layton	Lewis
Loiselle	Lopez
MacDonald (Rosedale)	MacKay
Malone	Marin
Martin (Lincoln)	Masse
Mayer	Mazankowski
McCreath	McDougall (St. Paul's)
McKnight	McLean
Merrithew	Monteith
Moore	Oberle
O'Kurley	Plourde
Porter	Pronovost
Redway	Ricard
Richardson	Saint-Julien
Schneider	Shields
Siddon	Sobeski
Soetens	Sparrow
Stevenson	Tardif
Thacker	Thompson
Thorkelson	Tremblay (Québec-Est)
Tremblay (Lotbinière)	Turner (Halton—Peel)
Valcourt	Van De Walle
Venne	Vézina
Vien	Weiner
White	Wilbee
Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia)	
Winegard	Worthy—111

NAYS

Members

Allmand	Althouse
Arseneault	Assad
Baker	Bélair
Bellemare	Berger
Bevilacqua	Blackburn (Brant)
Boudria	Brewin
Caccia	Callbeck
Campbell (South West Nova)	Catterall
Copps	Crawford
de Jong	Dingwall
Ferguson	Finestone
Fontana	Foster
Fulton	Funk
Gagliano	Gardiner
Grey (Beaver River)	Guarnieri
Harvey (Edmonton East)	Hopkins
Hovdebo	Jordan
Karpoff	Keyes
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)	Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kristiansen	Langdon (Essex—Windsor)
Laporte	Lee
MacAulay	MacLaren
MacLellan	MacWilliam
Marchi	Marleau
Martin (Lasalle—Émard)	McCurdy
Milliken	Nault
Pagtakhan	Peterson
Phinney	Pickard
Proud	Prud'homme
Riis	Robinson
Rodriguez	Rompkey
Simmons	Skelly (North Island—Powell River)
Skelly (Comox—Alberni)	Speller
Stewart	Stupich
Taylor	Tobin
Tremblay (Rosemont)	Walker
Wappel	Whittaker
Wood	Young (Beaches—Woodbine)—76

• (1910)

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, considering the number of votes on the next two bills, I wonder if you would find unanimous consent to apply the vote we have just taken on the concurrence motion to the first reading of the Appropriation Act, Bill C-99; second reading of the Appropriation Act, with clauses 1 to 7 including the schedule, the title and reporting to carry on division; and concurrence in Bill C-99; and third reading. I would ask that all those votes be applied.

We could actually do the same, that is apply the votes just taken, to first reading of Bill C-100, the interim supply bill; second reading of that bill, with clauses 1 to 5 carrying on division, as well as the schedule, the title and reporting to the House; concurrence; and third reading of Bill C-100.

Mr. Dingwall: Mr. Speaker, prior to giving our consent, I would like to ask the President of the Treasury Board if he could give the usual assurances to the House that these bills are in their standard form and that there are

no extraneous issues which he would want to take in with regard to those items.

Mr. Loiselle: I can give assurance to the hon. member and to this House, Mr. Speaker, that the form of this bill is the same as the bill for other supplementary estimates passed in previous years.

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, I accept the suggestion of my hon. friend and the concurrence of the Liberal Party.

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, may I ask the House for its indulgence and maybe record my vote with my party in the forthcoming votes.

Mr. Speaker: The House has heard the motion. Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Loiselle moved that Bill C-99, an act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the Government of Canada for the financial year ending March 31, 1991, be read the first time.

The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:

(*Division No. 398*)

YEAS

Members

Andre	Atkinson
Attewell	Beatty
Belsher	Bernier
Bird	Bjornson
Blais	Blenkarn
Bouchard (Roberval)	Boyer
Brightwell	Cadieux
Campbell (Vancouver Centre)	Cardiff
Casey	Chadwick
Champagne (Champlain)	Charest
Clark (Yellowhead)	Cole
Collins	Cooper
Corbett	Côté
Darling	DeBlois
de Cotret	Della Noce
Desjardins	Dick
Dobbie	Duplessis
Epp	Fee
Feltham	Ferland
Fontaine	Fretz
Friesen	Gray (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)
Greene	Guilbault
Gustafson	Halliday
Harvey (Chicoutimi)	Hawkes
Hudon	Hughes
Jacques	Jelinek
Johnson	Joncas
Jourdenais	Kempling
Koury	Larrivée
Layton	Lewis
Loiselle	Lopez
MacDonald (Rosedale)	MacKay
Malone	Marin
Martin (Lincoln)	Masse
Mayer	Mazankowski
McCreath	McDougall (St. Paul's)
McKnight	McLean
Merrithew	Monteith
Moore	Oberle
O'Kurley	Plourde
Porter	Pronovost
Redway	Ricard
Richardson	Saint-Julien
Schneider	Shields
Siddon	Sobeski
Soetens	Sparrow
Stevenson	Tardif
Thacker	Thompson
Thorkelson	Tremblay (Québec-Est)
Tremblay (Lotbinière)	Turner (Halton—Peel)
Valcourt	Van De Walle
Venne	Vézina
Vien	Weiner
White	Wilbee
Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia)	
Winegard	Worthy—111

NAYS

Members

Allmand	Althouse
Arseneault	Assad
Baker	Bélair
Bellemare	Berger
Bevilacqua	Blackburn (Brant)
Boudria	Brewin
Caccia	Callbeck
Campbell (South West Nova)	Catterall
Copps	Crawford
de Jong	Dingwall
Ferguson	Finestone
Fontana	Foster
Fulton	Funk
Gagliano	Gardiner
Gauthier	Grey (Beaver River)
Guarnieri	Harvey (Edmonton East)
Hopkins	Hovdebo
Jordan	Karpoff
Keyes	Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)	Kristiansen
Langdon (Essex—Windsor)	Laporte
Lee	MacAulay
MacLaren	MacLellan
MacWilliam	Marchi
Marleau	Martin (Lasalle—Émard)
McCurdy	Milliken
Nault	Pagtakhan
Peterson	Phinney
Pickard	Proud
Prud'homme	Riis
Robinson	Rodriguez
Rompkey	Simmons
Skelly (North Island—Powell River)	Skelly (Comox—Alberni)
Speller	Stewart
Stupich	Taylor
Tobin	Tremblay (Rosemont)
Walker	Wappel
Whittaker	Wood
Young (Beaches—Woodbine)—77	

Motion agreed to and bill read the first time.

Mr. Loiselle moved that the bill be read the second time and referred to committee of the whole.

The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:

(*Division No. 399*)

YEAS

Members

Andre	Atkinson
Attewell	Beatty
Belsher	Bernier
Bird	Bjornson
Blais	Blenkarn
Bouchard (Roberval)	Boyer

Brightwell
Campbell (Vancouver Centre)
Casey
Champagne (Champlain)
Clark (Yellowhead)
Collins
Corbett
Darling
de Cotret
Desjardins
Dobbie
Epp
Feltham
Fontaine
Friesen
Greene
Gustafson
Harvey (Chicoutimi)
Hudon
Jacques
Johnson
Jourdenais
Koury
Layton
Loiselle
MacDonald (Rosedale)
Malone
Martin (Lincoln)
Mayer
McCreath
McKnight
Merrithew
Moore
O'Kurley
Porter
Redway
Richardson
Schneider
Siddon
Soetens
Stevenson
Thacker
Thorkelson
Tremblay (Lotbinière)
Valcourt
Venne
Vien
White
Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia)
Winegard
Cadieux
Cardiff
Chadwick
Charest
Cole
Cooper
Côté
DeBlois
Della Noce
Dick
Duplessis
Fee
Ferland
Fretz
Gray (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)
Guilbault
Halliday
Hawkes
Hughes
Jelinek
Joncas
Kempling
Larrivée
Lewis
Lopez
MacKay
Marin
Masse
Mazankowski
McDougall (St. Paul's)
McLean
Monteith
Oberle
Plourde
Pronovost
Ricard
Saint-Julien
Shields
Sobeski
Sparrow
Tardif
Thompson
Tremblay (Québec-Est)
Turner (Halton—Peel)
Van De Walle
Vézina
Weiner
Wilbee
Worthy—111

NAYS

Members

Allmand
Arseneault
Baker
Bellemare
Bevilacqua
Boudria
Caccia
Campbell (South West Nova)
Copps
de Jong
Ferguson
Fontana
Fulton
Gagliano
Gauthier
Guarnieri
Hopkins
Jordan
Keyes
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Langdon (Essex—Windsor)
Lee
MacLaren
MacWilliam
Althouse
Assad
Bélair
Berger
Blackburn (Brant)
Brewin
Callbeck
Catterall
Crawford
Dingwall
Finestone
Foster
Funk
Gardiner
Grey (Beaver River)
Harvey (Edmonton East)
Hovdebo
Karpoff
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)
Kristiansen
Laporte
MacAulay
MacLellan
Marchi
Marleau
McCurdy
Nault
Peterson
Pickard
Prud'homme
Robinson
Rompkey
Skelly (North Island—Powell River)
Speller
Stupich
Tobin
Walker
Whittaker
Young (Beaches—Woodbine)—77
Martin (Lasalle—Émard)
Milliken
Pagtakhan
Phinney
Proud
Riis
Rodriguez
Simmons
Skelly (Comox—Alberni)
Stewart
Taylor
Tremblay (Rosemont)
Wappel
Wood

Motion agreed to and bill read the second time.

Bill deemed considered in committee.

Clauses 2 to 7 inclusive agreed to.

Schedule agreed to.

Preamble agreed to.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Title agreed to.

Bill deemed reported.

Mr. Loiselle moved that the bill be concurred in.

The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:

(*Division No. 400*)

YEAS

Members

Andre
Attewell
Belsher
Bird
Blais
Bouchard (Roberval)
Brightwell
Campbell (Vancouver Centre)
Casey
Champagne (Champlain)
Clark (Yellowhead)
Collins
Corbett
Darling
de Cotret
Desjardins
Dobbie
Epp
Feltham
Fontaine
Friesen
Greene
Gustafson
Harvey (Chicoutimi)
Hudon
Jacques
Johnson
Jourdenais
Koury
Layton
Loiselle
MacDonald (Rosedale)
Malone
Martin (Lincoln)
Mayer
McCreath
Atkinson
Beatty
Bernier
Bjornson
Blenkarn
Boyer
Cadieux
Cardiff
Chadwick
Charest
Cole
Cooper
Côté
DeBlois
Della Noce
Dick
Duplessis
Fee
Ferland
Fretz
Gray (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)
Guilbault
Halliday
Hawkes
Hughes
Jelinek
Joncas
Kempling
Larrivée
Lewis
Lopez
MacKay
Marin
Masse
Mazankowski
McDougall (St. Paul's)

McKnight
Merrithew
Moore
O'Kurley
Porter
Redway
Richardson
Schneider
Siddon
Soetens
Stevenson
Thacker
Thorkelson
Tremblay (Lotbinière)
Valcourt
Venne
Vien
White
Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia)
Winegard
McLean
Monteith
Oberle
Plourde
Pronovost
Ricard
Saint-Julien
Shields
Sobeski
Sparrow
Tardif
Thompson
Tremblay (Québec-Est)
Turner (Halton—Peel)
Van De Walle
Vézina
Weiner
Wilbee
Worthy—111

NAYS

Members

Allmand
Arseneault
Baker
Bellemare
Bevilacqua
Boudria
Caccia
Campbell (South West Nova)
Copps
de Jong
Ferguson
Fontana
Fulton
Gagliano
Gauthier
Guarnieri
Hopkins
Jordan
Keyes
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Langdon (Essex—Windsor)
Lee
MacLaren
MacWilliam
Marleau
McCurdy
Nault
Peterson
Pickard
Prud'homme
Robinson
Rompkey
Skelly (North Island—Powell River)
Speller
Stupich
Tobin
Walker
Whittaker
Young (Beaches—Woodbine)—77
Althouse
Assad
Bélair
Berger
Blackburn (Brant)
Brewin
Callbeck
Catterall
Crawford
Dingwall
Finestone
Foster
Funk
Gardiner
Grey (Beaver River)
Harvey (Edmonton East)
Hovdebo
Karpoff
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)
Kristiansen
Laporte
MacAulay
MacLellan
Marchi
Martin (Lasalle—Émard)
Milliken
Pagtakhan
Phinney
Proud
Riis
Rodriguez
Simmons
Skelly (Comox—Alberni)
Stewart
Taylor
Tremblay (Rosemont)
Wappel
Wood

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Loiselle moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:

(Division No. 401)

YEAS

Members

Andre
Attewell
Belsher
Bird
Blais
Bouchard (Roberval)
Brightwell
Campbell (Vancouver Centre)
Casey
Champagne (Champlain)
Clark (Yellowhead)
Collins
Corbett
Darling
de Cotret
Desjardins
Dobbie
Epp
Feltham
Fontaine
Friesen
Greene
Gustafson
Harvey (Chicoutimi)
Hudon
Jacques
Johnson
Jourdenais
Koury
Layton
Loiselle
MacDonald (Rosedale)
Malone
Martin (Lincoln)
Mayer
McCreath
McKnight
Merrithew
Moore
O'Kurley
Porter
Redway
Richardson
Schneider
Siddon
Soetens
Stevenson
Thacker
Thorkelson
Tremblay (Lotbinière)
Valcourt
Venne
Vien
White
Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia)
Winegard
Atkinson
Beatty
Bernier
Bjornson
Blenkarn
Boyer
Cadieux
Cardiff
Chadwick
Charest
Cole
Cooper
Côté
DeBlois
Della Noce
Dick
Duplessis
Fee
Ferland
Fretz
Gray (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)
Guilbault
Halliday
Hawkes
Hughes
Jelinek
Joncas
Kempling
Larrivée
Lewis
Lopez
MacKay
Marin
Masse
Mazankowski
McDougall (St. Paul's)
McLean
Monteith
Oberle
Plourde
Pronovost
Ricard
Saint-Julien
Shields
Sobeski
Sparrow
Tardif
Thompson
Tremblay (Québec-Est)
Turner (Halton—Peel)
Van De Walle
Vézina
Weiner
Wilbee
Worthy—111

NAYS

Members

Allmand
Arseneault
Baker
Bellemare
Bevilacqua
Boudria
Caccia
Campbell (South West Nova)
Copps
de Jong
Ferguson
Althouse
Assad
Bélair
Berger
Blackburn (Brant)
Brewin
Callbeck
Catterall
Crawford
Dingwall
Finestone

Fontana	Foster
Fulton	Funk
Gagliano	Gardiner
Gauthier	Grey (Beaver River)
Guarnieri	Harvey (Edmonton East)
Hopkins	Hovdebo
Jordan	Karpoff
Keyes	Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)	Kristiansen
Langdon (Essex—Windsor)	Laporte
Lee	MacAulay
MacLaren	MacLellan
MacWilliam	Marchi
Marleau	Martin (Lasalle—Émard)
McCurdy	Milliken
Nault	Pagtakhan
Peterson	Phinney
Pickard	Proud
Prud'homme	Riis
Robinson	Rodriguez
Rompkey	Simmons
Skelly (North Island—Powell River)	Skelly (Comox—Alberni)
Speller	Stewart
Stupich	Taylor
Tobin	Tremblay (Rosemont)
Walker	Wappel
Whittaker	Wood
Young (Beaches—Woodbine)—77	

Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed.

* * *

INTERIM SUPPLY

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)) moved:

That the House concur in Interim Supply as follows:

That a sum not exceeding $13,144,733,701.68 being composed of:

(1) three-twelfths ($9,810,806,535.00) of the total of the amounts of the items set forth in the Main Estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1992, which were laid upon the Table Thursday, February 28, 1991, except for Parliament Vote 5 which was ordered deleted from the Estimates by the Speaker on Wednesday, March 20, 1991 and except those items below;

(2) eleven-twelfths of the total of the amounts of Transport Vote 15, and Treasury Board Vote 10 (Schedule A) of the said Estimates, $171,116,000.00;

(3) nine-twelfths of the total of the amounts of Employment and Immigration Vote 20, and Treasury Board Vote 5 (Schedule B) of the said Estimates, $305,918,250.00;

(4) eight-twelfths of the total of the amount of Agriculture Vote 30 (Schedule C) of the said Estimates, $29,896,000.00;

(5) six-twelfths of the total of the amounts of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Vote 40, and Labour Vote 15, and Secretary of State Vote 20 (Schedule D) of the said Estimates, $156,326,500.00;

(6) five-twelfths of the total of the amounts of Communications Vote 45, and Indian Affairs and Northern Development Votes 15 and 45, and Industry, Science and Technology Vote 45, and Transport Vote 1 (Schedule E) of the said Estimates, $1,568,493,750.00; and

(7) four-twelfths of the total of the amounts of Communications Votes 25, 30, 55 and 70, and Consumer and Corporate Affairs Votes 1 and 20, and Energy, Mines and Resources Vote 35, and Environment Vote 1, and Finance Vote 25, and Indian Affairs and Northern Development Vote 30, and Industry, Science and Technology Votes 40 and 100, and Justice Vote 1, and Labour Vote 5, and National Health and Welfare Vote 15, and National Revenue Vote 5, and Privy Council Vote 1, and Secretary of State Vote 15, and Solicitor General Vote 1, and Supply and Services Vote 1, and Transport Vote 35 (Schedule F) of the said Estimates, $1,102,176,666.68;

be granted to Her Majesty on account of the fiscal year ending March 31, 1992.

The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:

(Division No. 402)

YEAS

Members

Andre	Atkinson
Attewell	Beatty
Belsher	Bernier
Bird	Bjornson
Blais	Blenkarn
Bouchard (Roberval)	Boyer
Brightwell	Cadieux
Campbell (Vancouver Centre)	Cardiff
Casey	Chadwick
Champagne (Champlain)	Charest
Clark (Yellowhead)	Cole
Collins	Cooper
Corbett	Côté
Darling	DeBlois
de Cotret	Della Noce
Desjardins	Dick
Dobbie	Duplessis
Epp	Fee
Feltham	Ferland
Fontaine	Fretz
Friesen	Gray (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)
Greene	Guilbault
Gustafson	Halliday
Harvey (Chicoutimi)	Hawkes
Hudon	Hughes
Jacques	Jelinek
Johnson	Joncas
Jourdenais	Kempling
Koury	Larrivée
Layton	Lewis
Loiselle	Lopez
MacDonald (Rosedale)	MacKay
Malone	Marin
Martin (Lincoln)	Masse
Mayer	Mazankowski
McCreath	McDougall (St. Paul's)
McKnight	McLean
Merrithew	Monteith
Moore	Oberle
O'Kurley	Plourde
Porter	Pronovost
Redway	Ricard
Richardson	Saint-Julien
Schneider	Shields
Siddon	Sobeski
Soetens	Sparrow
Stevenson	Tardif
Thacker	Thompson
Thorkelson	Tremblay (Québec-Est)

Tremblay (Lotbinière)
Turner (Halton—Peel)
Valcourt
Van De Walle
Venne
Vézina
Vien
Weiner
White
Wilbee
Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia)
Winegard
Worthy—111

NAYS

Members

Allmand
Althouse
Arseneault
Assad
Baker
Bélair
Bellemare
Berger
Bevilacqua
Blackburn (Brant)
Boudria
Brewin
Caccia
Callbeck
Campbell (South West Nova)
Catterall
Copps
Crawford
de Jong
Dingwall
Ferguson
Finestone
Fontana
Foster
Fulton
Funk
Gagliano
Gardiner
Gauthier
Grey (Beaver River)
Guarnieri
Harvey (Edmonton East)
Hopkins
Hovdebo
Jordan
Karpoff
Keyes
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kristiansen
Langdon (Essex—Windsor)
Laporte
Lee
MacAulay
MacLaren
MacLellan
MacWilliam
Marchi
Marleau
Martin (Lasalle—Émard)
McCurdy
Milliken
Nault
Pagtakhan
Peterson
Phinney
Pickard
Proud
Prud'homme
Riis
Robinson
Rodriguez
Rompkey
Simmons
Skelly (North Island—Powell River)
Skelly (Comox—Alberni)
Speller
Stewart
Stupich
Taylor
Tobin
Tremblay (Rosemont)
Walker
Wappel
Whittaker
Wood
Young (Beaches—Woodbine)—77

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Loiselle moved that Bill C-100, an act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the Government of Canada for the financial year ending March 31, 1992, be read the first time.

The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:

(*Division No. 403*)

YEAS

Members

Andre
Atkinson
Attewell
Beatty
Belsher
Bernier
Bird
Bjornson
Blais
Blenkarn
Bouchard (Roberval)
Boyer
Brightwell
Cadieux
Campbell (Vancouver Centre)
Cardiff
Casey
Chadwick
Champagne (Champlain)
Charest
Clark (Yellowhead)
Cole
Collins
Cooper
Corbett
Côté
Darling
DeBlois
de Cotret
Della Noce
Desjardins
Dick
Dobbie
Duplessis
Epp
Fee
Feltham
Ferland
Fontaine
Fretz
Friesen
Gray (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)
Greene
Guilbault
Gustafson
Halliday
Harvey (Chicoutimi)
Hawkes
Hudon
Hughes
Jacques
Jelinek
Johnson
Joncas
Jourdenais
Kempling
Koury
Larrivée
Layton
Lewis
Loiselle
Lopez
MacDonald (Rosedale)
MacKay
Malone
Marin
Martin (Lincoln)
Masse
Mayer
Mazankowski
McCreath
McDougall (St. Paul's)
McKnight
McLean
Merrithew
Monteith
Moore
Oberle
O'Kurley
Plourde
Porter
Pronovost
Redway
Ricard
Richardson
Saint-Julien
Schneider
Shields
Siddon
Sobeski
Soetens
Sparrow
Stevenson
Tardif
Thacker
Thompson
Thorkelson
Tremblay (Québec-Est)
Tremblay (Lotbinière)
Turner (Halton—Peel)
Valcourt
Van De Walle
Venne
Vézina
Vien
Weiner
White
Wilbee
Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia)
Winegard
Worthy—111

NAYS

Members

Allmand
Althouse
Arseneault
Assad
Baker
Bélair
Bellemare
Berger
Bevilacqua
Blackburn (Brant)
Boudria
Brewin
Caccia
Callbeck
Campbell (South West Nova)
Catterall
Copps
Crawford
de Jong
Dingwall
Ferguson
Finestone
Fontana
Foster
Fulton
Funk
Gagliano
Gardiner
Gauthier
Grey (Beaver River)
Guarnieri
Harvey (Edmonton East)
Hopkins
Hovdebo
Jordan
Karpoff
Keyes
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kristiansen
Langdon (Essex—Windsor)
Laporte
Lee
MacAulay
MacLaren
MacLellan
MacWilliam
Marchi
Marleau
Martin (Lasalle—Émard)
McCurdy
Milliken
Nault
Pagtakhan
Peterson
Phinney

Pickard
Prud'homme
Robinson
Rompkey
Skelly (North Island—Powell River)
Speller
Stupich
Tobin
Walker
Whittaker
Young (Beaches—Woodbine)—77

Proud
Riis
Rodriguez
Simmons
Skelly (Comox—Alberni)
Stewart
Taylor
Tremblay (Rosemont)
Wappel
Wood

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Loiselle moved that the bill be read the second time.

The House was divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:

(*Division No. 404*)

YEAS

Members

Andre
Attewell
Belsher
Bird
Blais
Bouchard (Roberval)
Brightwell
Campbell (Vancouver Centre)
Casey
Champagne (Champlain)
Clark (Yellowhead)
Collins
Corbett
Darling
de Cotret
Desjardins
Dobbie
Epp
Feltham
Fontaine
Friesen
Greene
Gustafson
Harvey (Chicoutimi)
Hudon
Jacques
Johnson
Jourdenais
Koury
Layton
Loiselle
MacDonald (Rosedale)
Malone
Martin (Lincoln)
Mayer
McCreath
McKnight
Merrithew
Moore
O'Kurley
Porter
Redway
Richardson
Schneider
Siddon
Soetens
Stevenson
Thacker
Thorkelson
Tremblay (Lotbinière)
Valcourt
Venne
Vien
White
Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia)
Winegard

Atkinson
Beatty
Bernier
Bjornson
Blenkarn
Boyer
Cadieux
Cardiff
Chadwick
Charest
Cole
Cooper
Côté
DeBlois
Della Noce
Dick
Duplessis
Fee
Ferland
Fretz
Gray (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)
Guilbault
Halliday
Hawkes
Hughes
Jelinek
Joncas
Kempling
Larrivée
Lewis
Lopez
MacKay
Marin
Masse
Mazankowski
McDougall (St. Paul's)
McLean
Monteith
Oberle
Plourde
Pronovost
Ricard
Saint-Julien
Shields
Sobeski
Sparrow
Tardif
Thompson
Tremblay (Québec-Est)
Turner (Halton—Peel)
Van De Walle
Vézina
Weiner
Wilbee
Worthy—111

NAYS

Members

Allmand
Arseneault
Baker
Bellemare
Bevilacqua
Boudria
Caccia
Campbell (South West Nova)
Copps
de Jong
Ferguson
Fontana
Fulton
Gagliano
Gauthier
Guarnieri
Hopkins
Jordan
Keyes
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Langdon (Essex—Windsor)
Lee
MacLaren
MacWilliam
Marleau
McCurdy
Nault
Peterson
Pickard
Prud'homme
Robinson
Rompkey
Skelly (North Island—Powell River)
Speller
Stupich
Tobin
Walker
Whittaker
Young (Beaches—Woodbine)—77

Althouse
Assad
Bélair
Berger
Blackburn (Brant)
Brewin
Callbeck
Catterall
Crawford
Dingwall
Finestone
Foster
Funk
Gardiner
Grey (Beaver River)
Harvey (Edmonton East)
Hovdebo
Karpoff
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)
Kristiansen
Laporte
MacAulay
MacLellan
Marchi
Martin (Lasalle—Émard)
Milliken
Pagtakhan
Phinney
Proud
Riis
Rodriguez
Simmons
Skelly (Comox—Alberni)
Stewart
Taylor
Tremblay (Rosemont)
Wappel
Wood

Motion agreed to.

Bill deemed considered in committee.

Clauses 2 to 5 inclusive agreed to.

Schedule agreed to.

Preamble agreed to.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Title agreed to.

Bill deemed reported.

Mr. Loiselle moved that the bill be concurred in.

The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:

(*Division No. 405*)

YEAS

Members

Andre
Attewell
Belsher
Bird
Blais

Atkinson
Beatty
Bernier
Bjornson
Blenkarn

Bouchard (Roberval)
Brightwell
Campbell (Vancouver Centre)
Casey
Champagne (Champlain)
Clark (Yellowhead)
Collins
Corbett
Darling
de Cotret
Desjardins
Dobbie
Epp
Feltham
Fontaine
Friesen
Greene
Gustafson
Harvey (Chicoutimi)
Hudon
Jacques
Johnson
Jourdenais
Koury
Layton
Loiselle
MacDonald (Rosedale)
Malone
Martin (Lincoln)
Mayer
McCreath
McKnight
Merrithew
Moore
O'Kurley
Porter
Redway
Richardson
Schneider
Siddon
Soetens
Stevenson
Thacker
Thorkelson
Tremblay (Lotbinière)
Valcourt
Venne
Vien
White
Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia)
Winegard
Boyer
Cadieux
Cardiff
Chadwick
Charest
Cole
Cooper
Côté
DeBlois
Della Noce
Dick
Duplessis
Fee
Ferland
Fretz
Gray (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)
Guilbault
Halliday
Hawkes
Hughes
Jelinek
Joncas
Kempling
Larrivée
Lewis
Lopez
MacKay
Marin
Masse
Mazankowski
McDougall (St. Paul's)
McLean
Monteith
Oberle
Plourde
Pronovost
Ricard
Saint-Julien
Shields
Sobeski
Sparrow
Tardif
Thompson
Tremblay (Québec-Est)
Turner (Halton—Peel)
Van De Walle
Vézina
Weiner
Wilbee
Worthy—111

NAYS

Members

Allmand
Arseneault
Baker
Bellemare
Bevilacqua
Boudria
Caccia
Campbell (South West Nova)
Copps
de Jong
Ferguson
Fontana
Fulton
Gagliano
Gauthier
Guarnieri
Hopkins
Jordan
Keyes
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Langdon (Essex—Windsor)
Lee
MacLaren
Althouse
Assad
Bélair
Berger
Blackburn (Brant)
Brewin
Callbeck
Catterall
Crawford
Dingwall
Finestone
Foster
Funk
Gardiner
Grey (Beaver River)
Harvey (Edmonton East)
Hovdebo
Karpoff
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)
Kristiansen
Laporte
MacAulay
MacLellan
MacWilliam
Marleau
McCurdy
Nault
Peterson
Pickard
Prud'homme
Robinson
Rompkey
Skelly (North Island—Powell River)
Speller
Stupich
Tobin
Walker
Whittaker
Young (Beaches—Woodbine)—77
Marchi
Martin (Lasalle—Émard)
Milliken
Pagtakhan
Phinney
Proud
Riis
Rodriguez
Simmons
Skelly (Comox—Alberni)
Stewart
Taylor
Tremblay (Rosemont)
Wappel
Wood

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Loiselle moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:

(Division No. 406)

YEAS

Members

Andre
Attewell
Belsher
Bird
Blais
Bouchard (Roberval)
Brightwell
Campbell (Vancouver Centre)
Casey
Champagne (Champlain)
Clark (Yellowhead)
Collins
Corbett
Darling
de Cotret
Desjardins
Dobbie
Epp
Feltham
Fontaine
Friesen
Greene
Gustafson
Harvey (Chicoutimi)
Hudon
Jacques
Johnson
Jourdenais
Koury
Layton
Loiselle
MacDonald (Rosedale)
Malone
Martin (Lincoln)
Mayer
McCreath
McKnight
Merrithew
Moore
O'Kurley
Porter
Redway
Richardson
Schneider
Siddon
Soetens
Stevenson
Thacker
Thorkelson
Atkinson
Beatty
Bernier
Bjornson
Blenkarn
Boyer
Cadieux
Cardiff
Chadwick
Charest
Cole
Cooper
Côté
DeBlois
Della Noce
Dick
Duplessis
Fee
Ferland
Fretz
Gray (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)
Guilbault
Halliday
Hawkes
Hughes
Jelinek
Joncas
Kempling
Larrivée
Lewis
Lopez
MacKay
Marin
Masse
Mazankowski
McDougall (St. Paul's)
McLean
Monteith
Oberle
Plourde
Pronovost
Ricard
Saint-Julien
Shields
Sobeski
Sparrow
Tardif
Thompson
Tremblay (Québec-Est)

Tremblay (Lotbinière)	Turner (Halton—Peel)
Valcourt	Van De Walle
Venne	Vézina
Vien	Weiner
White	Wilbee
Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia)	
Winegard	Worthy—111

NAYS

Members

Allmand	Althouse
Arseneault	Assad
Baker	Bélair
Bellemare	Berger
Bevilacqua	Blackburn (Brant)
Boudria	Brewin
Caccia	Callbeck
Campbell (South West Nova)	Catterall
Copps	Crawford
de Jong	Dingwall
Ferguson	Finestone
Fontana	Foster
Fulton	Funk
Gagliano	Gardiner
Gauthier	Grey (Beaver River)
Guarnieri	Harvey (Edmonton East)
Hopkins	Hovdebo
Jordan	Karpoff
Keyes	Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)	Kristiansen
Langdon (Essex—Windsor)	Laporte
Lee	MacAulay
MacLaren	MacLellan
MacWilliam	Marchi
Marleau	Martin (Lasalle—Émard)
McCurdy	Milliken
Nault	Pagtakhan
Peterson	Phinney
Pickard	Proud
Prud'homme	Riis
Robinson	Rodriguez
Rompkey	Simmons
Skelly (North Island—Powell River)	Skelly (Comox—Alberni)
Speller	Stewart
Stupich	Taylor
Tobin	Tremblay (Rosemont)
Walker	Wappel
Whittaker	Wood
Young (Beaches—Woodbine)—77	

Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FARM INCOME PROTECTION ACT

MEASURE TO ENACT

The House resumed from Thursday, March 21, consideration of Bill C-98, an Act authorizing agreements between the Government of Canada and the provinces to provide for protection for the income of producers of agricultural products and to enable the Government of Canada to take additional measures for that purpose, as reported with amendments from the Standing Committee on Agriculture.

Mr. Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 94(2)(b), the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred divisions at the report stage of Bill C-98, an Act authorizing agreements between the Government of Canada and the provinces to provide for protection for the income of producers of agricultural products and to enable the Government of Canada to take additional measures for that purpose.

May I dispense with the ringing of the bells?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member on a point of order.

Mr. Gagliano: Mr. Speaker, you may find that there is unanimous consent to apply to this division the results of the previous one, but conversely.

[*English*]

Mr. Riis: I agree, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, it is in reverse, except for the concurrence motion, which would move it forward to the third stage. That would be as the first vote.

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

• (1920)

Miss Grey: Mr. Speaker, in the interest of saving time, I would not want to have a recorded vote on all of these motions, but I would like to ask the Table to record my votes. My vote on Motion No. 1, no; Motion No. 7, no; Motions Nos. 8, 10 and 11, yea.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker: The first vote is on Motion No. 1 standing in the name of Mr. Althouse.

The House divided on Motion No. 1 (Mr. Althouse), which was negatived on the following division:

(*Division No. 407*)

YEAS

Members

Allmand	Althouse
Arseneault	Assad
Baker	Bélair
Bellemare	Berger
Bevilacqua	Blackburn (Brant)
Boudria	Brewin
Caccia	Callbeck
Campbell (South West Nova)	Catterall
Copps	Crawford
de Jong	Dingwall
Ferguson	Finestone
Fontana	Foster
Fulton	Funk
Gagliano	Gardiner
Gauthier	Guarnieri

Harvey (Edmonton East)
Hovdebo
Karpoff
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)
Kristiansen
Laporte
MacAulay
MacLellan
Marchi
Martin (Lasalle—Émard)
Milliken
Pagtakhan
Phinney
Proud
Riis
Rodriguez
Simmons
Skelly (Comox—Alberni)
Stewart
Taylor
Tremblay (Rosemont)
Wappel
Wood

Hopkins
Jordan
Keyes
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Langdon (Essex—Windsor)
Lee
MacLaren
MacWilliam
Marleau
McCurdy
Nault
Peterson
Pickard
Prud'homme
Robinson
Rompkey
Skelly (North Island—Powell River)
Speller
Stupich
Tobin
Walker
Whittaker
Young (Beaches—Woodbine)—76

NAYS

Members

Andre
Attewell
Belsher
Bird
Blais
Bouchard (Roberval)
Brightwell
Campbell (Vancouver Centre)
Casey
Champagne (Champlain)
Clark (Yellowhead)
Collins
Corbett
Darling
de Cotret
Desjardins
Dobbie
Epp
Feltham
Fontaine
Friesen
Greene
Guilbault
Halliday
Hawkes
Hughes
Jelinek
Joncas
Kempling
Larrivée
Lewis
Lopez
MacKay
Marin
Masse
Mazankowski
McDougall (St. Paul's)
McLean
Monteith
Oberle
Plourde
Pronovost
Ricard
Saint-Julien
Shields
Sobeski
Sparrow
Tardif
Thompson
Tremblay (Québec-Est)
Turner (Halton—Peel)

Atkinson
Beatty
Bernier
Bjornson
Blenkarn
Boyer
Cadieux
Cardiff
Chadwick
Charest
Cole
Cooper
Côté
DeBlois
Della Noce
Dick
Duplessis
Fee
Ferland
Fretz
Gray (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)
Grey (Beaver River)
Gustafson
Harvey (Chicoutimi)
Hudon
Jacques
Johnson
Jourdenais
Koury
Layton
Loiselle
MacDonald (Rosedale)
Malone
Martin (Lincoln)
Mayer
McCreath
McKnight
Merrithew
Moore
O'Kurley
Porter
Redway
Richardson
Schneider
Siddon
Soetens
Stevenson
Thacker
Thorkelson
Tremblay (Lotbinière)
Valcourt

Van De Walle
Vézina
Weiner
Wilbee
Assiniboia)
Worthy—112

Venne
Vien
White
Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—
Winegard

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion negatived. Motions Nos. 2 and 3 are therefore negatived.

The next vote is on Motion No. 7, standing in the name of Mr. Foster.

The House divided on Motion No. 7 (Mr. Foster), which was negatived on the following division:

(*Division No. 408*)

YEAS

Members

Allmand
Arseneault
Baker
Bellemare
Bevilacqua
Boudria
Caccia
Campbell (South West Nova)
Copps
de Jong
Ferguson
Fontana
Fulton
Gagliano
Gauthier
Harvey (Edmonton East)
Hovdebo
Karpoff
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)
Kristiansen
Laporte
MacAulay
MacLellan
Marchi
Martin (Lasalle—Émard)
Milliken
Pagtakhan
Phinney
Proud
Riis
Rodriguez
Simmons
Skelly (Comox—Alberni)
Stewart
Taylor
Tremblay (Rosemont)
Wappel
Wood

Althouse
Assad
Bélair
Berger
Blackburn (Brant)
Brewin
Callbeck
Catterall
Crawford
Dingwall
Finestone
Foster
Funk
Gardiner
Guarnieri
Hopkins
Jordan
Keyes
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Langdon (Essex—Windsor)
Lee
MacLaren
MacWilliam
Marleau
McCurdy
Nault
Peterson
Pickard
Prud'homme
Robinson
Rompkey
Skelly (North Island—Powell River)
Speller
Stupich
Tobin
Walker
Whittaker
Young (Beaches—Woodbine)—76

NAYS

Members

Andre
Attewell
Belsher
Bird
Blais
Bouchard (Roberval)
Brightwell
Campbell (Vancouver Centre)
Casey
Champagne (Champlain)
Clark (Yellowhead)

Atkinson
Beatty
Bernier
Bjornson
Blenkarn
Boyer
Cadieux
Cardiff
Chadwick
Charest
Cole

Collins
Corbett
Darling
de Cotret
Desjardins
Dobbie
Epp
Feltham
Fontaine
Friesen
Greene
Guilbault
Halliday
Hawkes
Hughes
Jelinek
Joncas
Kempling
Larrivée
Lewis
Lopez
MacKay
Marin
Masse
Mazankowski
McDougall (St. Paul's)
McLean
Monteith
Oberle
Plourde
Pronovost
Ricard
Saint-Julien
Shields
Sobeski
Sparrow
Tardif
Thompson
Tremblay (Québec-Est)
Turner (Halton—Peel)
Van De Walle
Vézina
Weiner
Wilbee
Assiniboia)
Worthy—112

Cooper
Côté
DeBlois
Della Noce
Dick
Duplessis
Fee
Ferland
Fretz
Gray (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)
Grey (Beaver River)
Gustafson
Harvey (Chicoutimi)
Hudon
Jacques
Johnson
Jourdenais
Koury
Layton
Loiselle
MacDonald (Rosedale)
Malone
Martin (Lincoln)
Mayer
McCreath
McKnight
Merrithew
Moore
O'Kurley
Porter
Redway
Richardson
Schneider
Siddon
Soetens
Stevenson
Thacker
Thorkelson
Tremblay (Lotbinière)
Valcourt
Venne
Vien
White
Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—
Winegard

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion negatived.

The next question is on Motion no. 8 standing in the name of Mr. Foster.

The House divided on the motion, which was negatived on the following division:

(Division No. 409)

YEAS

Members

Allmand
Arseneault
Baker
Bellemare
Bevilacqua
Boudria
Caccia
Campbell (South West Nova)
Copps
de Jong
Ferguson
Fontana
Fulton
Gagliano
Gauthier
Guarnieri
Hopkins
Jordan
Keyes
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)

Althouse
Assad
Bélair
Berger
Blackburn (Brant)
Brewin
Callbeck
Catterall
Crawford
Dingwall
Finestone
Foster
Funk
Gardiner
Grey (Beaver River)
Harvey (Edmonton East)
Hovdebo
Karpoff
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)
Kristiansen

Langdon (Essex—Windsor)
Lee
MacLaren
MacWilliam
Marleau
McCurdy
Nault
Peterson
Pickard
Prud'homme
Robinson
Rompkey
Skelly (North Island—Powell River)
Speller
Stupich
Tobin
Walker
Whittaker
Young (Beaches—Woodbine)—77

Laporte
MacAulay
MacLellan
Marchi
Martin (Lasalle—Émard)
Milliken
Pagtakhan
Phinney
Proud
Riis
Rodriguez
Simmons
Skelly (Comox—Alberni)
Stewart
Taylor
Tremblay (Rosemont)
Wappel
Wood

NAYS

Members

Andre
Attewell
Belsher
Bird
Blais
Bouchard (Roberval)
Brightwell
Campbell (Vancouver Centre)
Casey
Champagne (Champlain)
Clark (Yellowhead)
Collins
Corbett
Darling
de Cotret
Desjardins
Dobbie
Epp
Feltham
Fontaine
Friesen
Greene
Gustafson
Harvey (Chicoutimi)
Hudon
Jacques
Johnson
Jourdenais
Koury
Layton
Loiselle
MacDonald (Rosedale)
Malone
Martin (Lincoln)
Mayer
McCreath
McKnight
Merrithew
Moore
O'Kurley
Porter
Redway
Richardson
Schneider
Siddon
Soetens
Stevenson
Thacker
Thorkelson
Tremblay (Lotbinière)
Valcourt
Venne
Vien
White

Atkinson
Beatty
Bernier
Bjornson
Blenkarn
Boyer
Cadieux
Cardiff
Chadwick
Charest
Cole
Cooper
Côté
DeBlois
Della Noce
Dick
Duplessis
Fee
Ferland
Fretz
Gray (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)
Guilbault
Halliday
Hawkes
Hughes
Jelinek
Joncas
Kempling
Larrivée
Lewis
Lopez
MacKay
Marin
Masse
Mazankowski
McDougall (St. Paul's)
McLean
Monteith
Oberle
Plourde
Pronovost
Ricard
Saint-Julien
Shields
Sobeski
Sparrow
Tardif
Thompson
Tremblay (Québec-Est)
Turner (Halton—Peel)
Van De Walle
Vézina
Weiner
Wilbee

Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia)
Winegard Worthy—111

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion negatived.

The next question is on Motion No. 10 standing in the name of Mr. Vanclief.

The House divided on the motion, which was negatived on the following division:

(Division No. 410)

YEAS

Members

Allmand
Arseneault
Baker
Bellemare
Bevilacqua
Boudria
Caccia
Campbell (South West Nova)
Copps
de Jong
Ferguson
Fontana
Fulton
Gagliano
Gauthier
Guarnieri
Hopkins
Jordan
Keyes
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Langdon (Essex—Windsor)
Lee
MacLaren
MacWilliam
Marleau
McCurdy
Nault
Peterson
Pickard
Prud'homme
Robinson
Rompkey
Skelly (North Island—Powell River)
Speller
Stupich
Tobin
Walker
Whittaker
Young (Beaches—Woodbine)—77

Althouse
Assad
Bélair
Berger
Blackburn (Brant)
Brewin
Callbeck
Catterall
Crawford
Dingwall
Finestone
Foster
Funk
Gardiner
Grey (Beaver River)
Harvey (Edmonton East)
Hovdebo
Karpoff
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)
Kristiansen
Laporte
MacAulay
MacLellan
Marchi
Martin (Lasalle—Émard)
Milliken
Pagtakhan
Phinney
Proud
Riis
Rodriguez
Simmons
Skelly (Comox—Alberni)
Stewart
Taylor
Tremblay (Rosemont)
Wappel
Wood

NAYS

Members

Andre
Attewell
Belsher
Bird
Blais
Bouchard (Roberval)
Brightwell
Campbell (Vancouver Centre)
Casey
Champagne (Champlain)
Clark (Yellowhead)
Collins
Corbett
Darling
de Cotret

Atkinson
Beatty
Bernier
Bjornson
Blenkarn
Boyer
Cadieux
Cardiff
Chadwick
Charest
Cole
Cooper
Côté
DeBlois
Della Noce

Desjardins
Dobbie
Epp
Feltham
Fontaine
Friesen
Greene
Gustafson
Harvey (Chicoutimi)
Hudon
Jacques
Johnson
Jourdenais
Koury
Layton
Loiselle
MacDonald (Rosedale)
Malone
Martin (Lincoln)
Mayer
McCreath
McKnight
Merrithew
Moore
O'Kurley
Porter
Redway
Richardson
Schneider
Siddon
Soetens
Stevenson
Thacker
Thorkelson
Tremblay (Lotbinière)
Valcourt
Venne
Vien
White

Dick
Duplessis
Fee
Ferland
Fretz
Gray (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)
Guilbault
Halliday
Hawkes
Hughes
Jelinek
Joncas
Kempling
Larrivée
Lewis
Lopez
MacKay
Marin
Masse
Mazankowski
McDougall (St. Paul's)
McLean
Monteith
Oberle
Plourde
Pronovost
Ricard
Saint-Julien
Shields
Sobeski
Sparrow
Tardif
Thompson
Tremblay (Québec-Est)
Turner (Halton—Peel)
Van De Walle
Vézina
Weiner
Wilbee

Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia)
Winegard Worthy—111

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion negatived.

The next question is on Motion No. 11 standing in the name of Mr. Laporte.

The House divided on the motion, which was negatived on the following division:

(Division No. 411)

YEAS

Members

Allmand
Arseneault
Baker
Bellemare
Bevilacqua
Boudria
Caccia
Campbell (South West Nova)
Copps
de Jong
Ferguson
Fontana
Fulton
Gagliano
Gauthier
Guarnieri
Hopkins
Jordan
Keyes
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Langdon (Essex—Windsor)
Lee
MacLaren
MacWilliam
Marleau

Althouse
Assad
Bélair
Berger
Blackburn (Brant)
Brewin
Callbeck
Catterall
Crawford
Dingwall
Finestone
Foster
Funk
Gardiner
Grey (Beaver River)
Harvey (Edmonton East)
Hovdebo
Karpoff
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)
Kristiansen
Laporte
MacAulay
MacLellan
Marchi
Martin (Lasalle—Émard)

McCurdy
Nault
Peterson
Pickard
Prud'homme
Robinson
Rompkey
Skelly (North Island—Powell River)
Speller
Stupich
Tobin
Walker
Whittaker
Young (Beaches—Woodbine)—77

Milliken
Pagtakhan
Phinney
Proud
Riis
Rodriguez
Simmons
Skelly (Comox—Alberni)
Stewart
Taylor
Tremblay (Rosemont)
Wappel
Wood

NAYS

Members

Andre
Attewell
Belsher
Bird
Blais
Bouchard (Roberval)
Brightwell
Campbell (Vancouver Centre)
Casey
Champagne (Champlain)
Clark (Yellowhead)
Collins
Corbett
Darling
de Cotret
Desjardins
Dobbie
Epp
Feltham
Fontaine
Friesen
Greene
Gustafson
Harvey (Chicoutimi)
Hudon
Jacques
Johnson
Jourdenais
Koury
Layton
Loiselle
MacDonald (Rosedale)
Malone
Martin (Lincoln)
Mayer
McCreath
McKnight
Merrithew
Moore
O'Kurley
Porter
Redway
Richardson
Schneider
Siddon
Soetens
Stevenson
Thacker
Thorkelson
Tremblay (Lotbinière)
Valcourt
Venne
Vien
White
Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia)
Winegard

Atkinson
Beatty
Bernier
Bjornson
Blenkarn
Boyer
Cadieux
Cardiff
Chadwick
Charest
Cole
Cooper
Côté
DeBlois
Della Noce
Dick
Duplessis
Fee
Ferland
Fretz
Gray (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)
Guilbault
Halliday
Hawkes
Hughes
Jelinek
Joncas
Kempling
Larrivée
Lewis
Lopez
MacKay
Marin
Masse
Mazankowski
McDougall (St. Paul's)
McLean
Monteith
Oberle
Plourde
Pronovost
Ricard
Saint-Julien
Shields
Sobeski
Sparrow
Tardif
Thompson
Tremblay (Québec-Est)
Turner (Halton—Peel)
Van De Walle
Vézina
Weiner
Wilbee
Worthy—111

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion negatived.

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture) moved that the bill be concurred in.

The House divided on the motion of Mr. Mazankowski which was agreed to on the following division:

(*Division No. 412*)

YEAS

Members

Andre
Attewell
Belsher
Bird
Blais
Bouchard (Roberval)
Brightwell
Campbell (Vancouver Centre)
Casey
Champagne (Champlain)
Clark (Yellowhead)
Collins
Corbett
Darling
de Cotret
Desjardins
Dobbie
Epp
Feltham
Fontaine
Friesen
Greene
Gustafson
Harvey (Chicoutimi)
Hudon
Jacques
Johnson
Jourdenais
Koury
Layton
Loiselle
MacDonald (Rosedale)
Malone
Martin (Lincoln)
Mayer
McCreath
McKnight
Merrithew
Moore
O'Kurley
Porter
Redway
Richardson
Schneider
Siddon
Soetens
Stevenson
Thacker
Thorkelson
Tremblay (Lotbinière)
Valcourt
Venne
Vien
White
Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia)
Winegard

Atkinson
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Chadwick
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Côté
DeBlois
Della Noce
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Duplessis
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Ferland
Fretz
Gray (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)
Guilbault
Halliday
Hawkes
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Lopez
MacKay
Marin
Masse
Mazankowski
McDougall (St. Paul's)
McLean
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Shields
Sobeski
Sparrow
Tardif
Thompson
Tremblay (Québec-Est)
Turner (Halton—Peel)
Van De Walle
Vézina
Weiner
Wilbee
Worthy—111

NAYS

Members

Allmand
Arseneault
Baker
Bellemare
Bevilacqua
Boudria
Caccia
Campbell (South West Nova)
Copps
de Jong
Ferguson
Fontana
Fulton
Gagliano
Gauthier
Guarnieri
Hopkins
Jordan
Keyes
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Langdon (Essex—Windsor)
Lee
MacLaren
Althouse
Assad
Bélair
Berger
Blackburn (Brant)
Brewin
Callbeck
Catterall
Crawford
Dingwall
Finestone
Foster
Funk
Gardiner
Grey (Beaver River)
Harvey (Edmonton East)
Hovdebo
Karpoff
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)
Kristiansen
Laporte
MacAulay
MacLellan
MacWilliam
Marleau
McCurdy
Nault
Peterson
Pickard
Prud'homme
Robinson
Rompkey
Skelly (North Island—Powell River)
Speller
Stupich
Tobin
Walker
Whittaker
Young (Beaches—Woodbine)—77
Marchi
Martin (Lasalle—Émard)
Milliken
Pagtakhan
Phinney
Proud
Riis
Rodriguez
Simmons
Skelly (Comox—Alberni)
Stewart
Taylor
Tremblay (Rosemont)
Wappel
Wood

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

It being 7.22 p.m., this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

The House adjourned at 7.22 p.m.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, March 26, 1991

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

[*English*]

PRIVILEGE

STANDING COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege which arises from an incident that took place after the meeting of the Standing Committee on Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Government Operations last Thursday, March 21, 1991.

Briefly, the member for Calgary West rose in the House last Thursday after and put before Your Honour the matter of recorded minutes without a quorum. Mr. Speaker said at that time, and I quote:

> Again the hon. member for Calgary West has raised a matter which I think is properly still a matter for the committee. If his position is well founded, I am sure that some discussion with those who do our printing for us would probably keep the situation under control.

In a nutshell, Mr. Speaker, you reiterated what you have said so many times before: that a committee must resolve problems within the committee.

Last Friday afternoon, the day following the committee meeting, I was informed by an editor of committee reporting that the PMO ordered the minutes of the meeting following Mr. Spicer's appearance removed from the record. In Beauchesne's fifth edition citation 41(1) is quite clear on this matter. It states:

> The control of the House over its publications is absolute.

It goes on in citation 75 as follows:

> Committee reports and the verbatim transcripts of committee hearings are documents published under the authority of the House and are entitled to the same absolute privilege as House documents.

Interference by the Prime Minister's office in the printing of a committee proceeding is contempt of the authority of the House and its committees.

Furthermore, I submit that while this contempt arose from a committee meeting, it has nothing to do with the proceedings of the committee and everything to do with interference in the committee report by the PMO.

As a contempt, it is the Speaker who should permit a motion to be put to the floor. It is not a question for the committee to decide. Should you find that I have a basis of privilege in this matter, Mr. Speaker, I have prepared the appropriate motion and I am prepared to move it.

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, those are quite serious allegations. I think there should be some obligation on the part of the member to provide the House with some piece of evidence. He claims to have talked to a clerk who claims to have received an order from the Prime Minister's office. If the member were serious about his question then perhaps he could name names or, if he has a written document to that effect, he could share it with us so we could have it as part of our record and reproduced and in our hands.

It disturbs me that we get into something like this on the basis of something amorphous out there in the world.

I rose in the House a week ago Thursday to make sure that the House was seized of the matter. It is, as you indicated at that time, Sir, a House matter. I do not know of any occasion in my time in this place where "the Prime Minister's office", whatever that is, has ordered the House to do anything or a House committee to do anything.

If one wants to make this allegation, I think one should be prepared to put one's personal reputation on the line and provide some evidence for the allegation.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, as you will recall from my interventions of last Thursday, I was definitely present at the meeting in question, and quite a meeting it was.

I just want to bring one or two items to the attention of the Chair which might assist it in deliberating on this issue.

While it is true, as Mr. Speaker has often said, that committees are masters of their own business, as indicated in Beauchesne's, it is only true provided committees follow the rules set down by this House and its Standing Orders. We know that to be the case as well.

That is why the issue the control of all publications of the House falls within the jurisdiction of the House. That extends as well to the authority of the House over the publications of committees. As far as I am concerned, a transcript of a committee is the same as *Hansard*. It is the *Hansard* of the committee, if I can put it that way.

There is a long-standing tradition in parliamentary committees of quorum being defined in two ways. There is a formal quorum for the purpose of voting. There is also what is commonly referred to as mini quorum in our parliamentary jargon. That means to say that at any time when four members are present they can hear witnesses, *Hansard* or the parliamentary publication of the committee is published and so on, but votes cannot be taken.

The point I am making is that notwithstanding the fact that the committee might have lost its full quorum for a period, if mini quorum were still present a publication of the proceedings was indeed not only in order, but necessary according to our tradition.

The allegation is to determine whether or not interference has taken place with the publication of the report pursuant to the mini quorum which was obviously there.

• (1110)

To that extent I feel that if the issue were brought to the attention of the parliamentary committee pursuant to the *prima facie* information brought before us today, the committee could be seized of all the details and render a recommendation to the House on the issue.

It is not up to this House at this point to bring forward the clerk of the committee to the bar or whomever else. That is the role of the parliamentary Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections. What this House has to decide is whether or not there is a prima facie case of privilege. You will make that determination at some point, Mr. Speaker, and, if you deem there is a prima facie case of privilege pursuant to the allegation made by the hon. member for Nickel Belt, I would submit that the issue can and should be referred to the appropriate parliamentary committee, notwithstanding the remarks that have been made by the hon. government Whip.

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I was watching the proceedings on television and heard the allegations of the member for Nickel Belt, which indeed are very serious.

I took the opportunity immediately to ask the Prime Minister's chief of staff, his deputy chief of staff, and his legislative assistant—the three people who would know about this—if in fact it were true. All three have denied absolutely that any of them undertook to do what the hon. member for Nickel Belt has alleged and they are not aware of anybody in the Prime Minister's office besides those who might have.

What we have is a very serious allegation of interference, which is denied by those who would be responsible in that regard so I must dispute the conclusion reached by the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell that there is prima facie evidence on the floor.

There is an unsubstantiated allegation on the floor, an allegation that I wanted immediately to indicate is not one which has any basis in fact, based on my discussions with the people responsible. Perhaps this item might best go back to that committee for consideration. I would not like to see us accept an unproven allegation as having substance, particularly in face of the information I have been able to relay to the House that none of the people in the Prime Minister's office who might have undertaken this are aware of any such suggestion or action.

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, I believe that the member for Nickel Belt has risen on an extremely serious matter. I have listened to the inter-

ventions by the chief government Whip and the government House leader.

One of the problems the member for Nickel Belt faces is that normally when a senior member of the parliamentary staff raises an issue, whether it is a clerk of the House or some other person, we usually do not use his or her name because they are not in this House to defend themselves.

We may hear from the member for Nickel Belt later on. This is not an allegation that the member for Nickel Belt makes lightly. He believes, and I think quite correctly, that a member who is in charge of producing the committee *Minutes of Proceedings* was called by a representative of the Prime Minister's office, whether a senior member or not is not something we know at this time. But it is a very serious allegation and it is a very serious issue.

Are we in a situation where we want to say in the House that a charge was made by a certain staff member and this is that staff person's name? That is a new issue for us, and that is something that we have tried to avoid in the past, to protect those people who work at the table and others who work for the House of Commons.

If indeed the call was made by a member of the Prime Minister's office, that is a very serious charge of interfering with the privileges of this House.

I do not know what method may be used to solve the issue. Perhaps the Speaker could be given the name of the staff person involved. There may be methods that we can use. I would feel very uncomfortable if the government is to stand here and insist that in this House we name the person who is working for the House and use that name publicly. I think there is a real difficulty in this situation if that is what the government is insisting be done.

Mr. Speaker: I will hear the hon. member for Nickel Belt shortly. I should indicate to the House that I am deeply concerned about this. I do not know with whom the hon. member for Nickel Belt was speaking. I am not even sure that it would be appropriate for the hon. member for Nickel Belt at this stage to give that name before the House.

I am deeply concerned that this matter has not been taken back to the committee from which it comes. The hon. member for Nickel Belt may be able to persuade me that it should rest here. I am not persuaded at the moment.

Mr. Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, I have no intention of providing any name in this House, but I am prepared to be directed by Your Honour. I could provide Your Honour with the name of the person who came to my office so that the Speaker can in fact do whatever is necessary to verify what I have said in this House.

Should there be a question of privilege, I am prepared to move the appropriate motion.

Mr. Speaker: It is acknowledged on both sides of the House that the suggestion or the allegation, as it has been called, is a very serious one.

I have to say that on the basis of a conversation with someone, certainly at the stage it is at this time, is not sufficient to raise in my mind a prima facie case of a contempt of the House or privilege. I am going to ask the hon. member for Nickel Belt to do what I think is the appropriate thing in this case, that is go back to the committee and deal with it further there.

I may very well be interested in what happens at that time, but I think that is the appropriate thing to do. We would be getting on I think very dangerous ground if we proceeded any further at this time. The allegation is very serious indeed. I do not take the allegation lightly, but neither apparently does the government.

I would ask the hon. member and other members to take this back to the committee and perhaps it can be resolved there. That is where it ought to go at the moment. If it cannot be resolved there, then of course it may have to come back here.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

PETITIONS

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 22 petitions.

[*Editor's Note: See today's Votes and Proceedings.*]

Routine Proceedings

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION

COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

Mr. Girve Fretz (Erie): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34, I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

* * *

• (1120)

[*Translation*]

NARCOTICS CONTROL ACT

MEASURE TO AMEND

Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough–West) moved for leave to introduce Bill C–350, an Act to amend the Narcotics Control Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Does the hon. member have leave to introduce the bill?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*English*]

He said: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this bill is to ensure that any money seized by a Canadian law enforcement body in the enforcement of the Narcotics Control Act is returned to that body for further use in the war against drugs.

A simple example will illustrate the intent of the bill. If, during the course of a drug arrest, narcotics officers seize a suitcase containing $100,000 which was used for the purchase of narcotics, then, after due process of law and conviction, that $100,000 would be returned to the police force concerned, to be used by it in future enforcement of the Narcotics Control Act.

Under the present law, this $100,000 is forfeited to Her Majesty in right of Canada, to be disposed of as the minister of health directs.

My bill is intended to ensure that seized moneys are specifically used in the fight against drugs.

Motion agreed to, bill read the first time and ordered to be printed.

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS INFORMATION REVIEW ACT

REFERRAL OF SECTION 12 TO STANDING COMMITTEE

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations on this motion. I believe you will find unanimous consent for it. I move:

> That pursuant to section 57 of an act to amend the Hazardous Products Act and the Canada Labour Code, to enact the Hazardous Materials Information Review Act and to amend other acts in relation thereto, chapter 24, third supplement, Revised Statutes of Canada, 1985, section 12 of the act be referred to the Standing Committee on Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Government Operations, and that the committee undertake a comprehensive review of section 12 and submit a report to the House no later than December 1, 1991.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lapierre: Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that although the parliamentary secretary said there had been consultations, there were none with independent members, I am sorry to say. Consequently, since there was no consultation, I will have to withhold my consent.

[*English*]

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate to my friend that I was advised that a member of the bloc was consulted, and I guess this is one of those cases where they have chosen not to wear the party label but are now independents.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lapierre: Mr. Speaker, I think that by trying to talk his way out of this, the parliamentary secretary is only making matters worse. The fact is, he refuses to recognize us, and when I refer to independents I include my colleague for the Reform Party who was not consulted either. He should do his homework before rising in the House and saying everybody was consulted.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Since there is no unanimous consent, the Chair cannot entertain the motion.

[*English*]

Miss Grey: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I would like to confirm also that although we may not have a problem with granting unanimous consent in this area, there may be other areas where consultation does not take place. I think it sets a dangerous precedent. I was not consulted on this, and my friend from the bloc has spoken to that as well. There will have to be other channels opened up.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I will then withdraw the motion and we will not be sending that subject to the committee at this time.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if we need to make that commitment. We all appreciate that this motion is most appropriate, and that the subject matter ought to receive consideration. I would ask my hon. friend to have further discussions and perhaps we could re-visit this later today. I think it is important that we consider this. I am hearing my hon. friend say now that there has been, in a sense, indirect consultation, so there is not a problem.

I would urge that we proceed with this motion with the support of my two colleagues who have just recently spoken.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): If I understand correctly, the parliamentary secretary has withdrawn his motion, so there is no motion before the House at this time.

Mr. Lapierre: Later, later!

[*English*]

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, if there is unanimous consent, of course I would be happy to reintroduce the motion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lapierre: Mr. Speaker, just because he rose in the House and proceeded to do a little song and dance doesn't mean that we were consulted. We are available here, near the curtains, at any time. If the parliamentary secretary wants to consult us, we are available. Then we can talk.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Since there is no unanimous consent, the matter is now settled.

[*English*]

PETITIONS

GUN CONTROL

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour today to table two massive petitions signed by over 500,000 Canadians asking the government to legislate stricter gun control laws. In particular, they ask for the banning of all semi-automatic and para-military assault weapons of the type used to kill 14 women at the Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal on December 6, 1989.

This petition was organized by students, family and friends at the Ecole Polytechnique, but the signatures come from all regions of Canada.

In tabling this petition, I have the support of the hon. members for Don Valley North, New Westminster—Burnaby and Rosemont. I have on my desk, ready to give the clerk, four boxes full of the said petitions, but I have another 21 boxes outside in the lobby..

The first petition says that the petitioners humbly pray and call upon Parliament to immediately enact laws forbidding anyone in Canadian territory from having in their possession any military or para-military weapon.

[*Translation*]

And the second petition reads as follows: The undersigned humbly pray and call upon Parliament to pass legislation now, prohibiting anyone on Canadian territory from possessing an automatic or semi-automatic weapon.

[*English*]

COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS

Mr. Rod Laporte (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present two petitions. The first petition is from constituents in my riding who are concerned about the unfair increase with respect to the cost of mailing newspapers.

They say that weekly farm community newspapers fill a vital function by providing information on issues of importance to rural communities and that the proposed cuts to the Publication Distribution Assistance Program threatens the existence of these publications. Therefore, the petitioners humbly pray and call upon Parliament to instruct the government to delay any changes in these mail rates for Canadian farm community newspapers

until meaningful consultation has taken place. They are concerned that consultation has not taken place.

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Rod Laporte (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from a group of farmers from Saskatchewan who are very concerned about the removal of oats from the responsibility of the Canadian Wheat Board. They call upon the government to place oats under the Canadian Wheat Board and to give oats and barley the same protection that wheat now has under the Wheat Board, namely that those two commodities cannot be removed unless this body, Parliament, does so.

BALKAN STATES

Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour and duty, pursuant to Standing Order 36, to present to this House a petition, certified correct by the clerk of petitions. It contains the signatures of some 612 Canadians who reside in towns and communities like Hamilton, Burlington, Toronto, Lynden, Mount Hope, Lancaster, Dundas, Stoney Creek, Guelph and Grimsby.

The petitioners make five demands. First, that members of the Canadian Parliament immediately recognize the legitimate, democratically elected governments of the republics of Lithuania and establish diplomatic relations with it. Second, they demand that the Soviet Union not annihilate the legitimate government of Lithuania. Third, they demand that the Soviet Union withdraw all of its military forces from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Fourth, they demand that negotiations between the Soviet Union and Lithuania begin and ensure that international mediation is provided during the negotiations.

• (1130)

Fifth, the petitioners demand that the members of the Canadian Parliament be aware of their demand that the unconditional international aid to the Soviet Union in the form of credits and feed grains be conditional upon the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the Baltic States and resolution of the Baltic crisis.

MIDDLE EAST

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege, indeed an honour, to present a large petition today on behalf of residents from Sarnia and Cambridge, Ontario, from Sorrento, Salmon Arm, Heffley Creek, Kamloops, Pritchard, Avola, Blue River, Clearwater and Chase, British Columbia. As well, a petition was sent in by Kylee Olund on behalf of students from Rayleigh Elementary School. From Valleyview Junior Secondary, a petition was sent in by Carmel Burke and Rebecca Cameron. Petitions have also been received from Clearwater Secondary School, Sahali Junior Secondary School, a number of apartments in Hamilton, Ontario, and many others too numerous to mention.

The petitioners point out their support for the end of the war in the gulf, their support for peace, and their support for bringing the Canadian troops home from the gulf region. They support peace initiatives for Kuwait and the Middle East generally, support negotiations for peaceful resolutions to the ongoing conflict, and support Canada's role in a supportive military role as opposed to an offensive role.

To be fair, there is also a petition from a number of students at Sahali Junior Secondary School who supported offensive military action on behalf of Canada in the gulf region.

The petitions contain hundreds of names. It is certainly not quite 500,000, as my hon. friend earlier submitted, but we are getting very close.

[*Translation*]

CANADA POST

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions I wish to table in the House today, signed by constituents in Ottawa—Vanier who reside at 160 Charlotte and other addresses near the post office, which may be closed any time. These constituents ask the House, through their petitions, to put pressure on the Canada Post Corporation and urge it to review its decision to close the branch at 580 Rideau, supposedly because they are concentrating their efforts elsewhere.

These people claim, and rightly so, that this unwelcome decision will put an additional burden on local senior citizens and that since for many years, they were

accustomed to having postal services at 580 Rideau, they would like to see Parliament urge the Canada Post Corporation to change its mind.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Shall all questions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[*English*]

POINT OF ORDER

PROJECTED HOUSE BUSINESS

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I notice in today's *Projected Order of Business* that my hon. friend, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader, has indicated the government's interest in completing the motion on Bill C–79, as well as completing third reading of Bill C–98, and other business.

I want to give my hon. friend a very clear indication that if those are the two orders of business for the day, C–79 and the agricultural bill, C–98, I can guarantee that as far as our party is concerned they will pass. We are prepared to move and complete two pieces of legislation today in the interest that Parliament is going to wrap up tomorrow.

On behalf of my party, the agricultural bill will be completed today as well as the motion on C–79, if that is the business that is going to be conducted today, but only these two items.

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I believe this is what is called negotiations on the floor.

The hon. member will know that at the last House leader's meeting there were discussions that we would be proceeding with the rule changes today, and that Bill C–79 and Bill C–98 would be given an opportunity for quick passage this morning.

I appreciate his generosity. However, I am not in a position to negotiate on the floor. As the other party can attest, the discussions that went on previously indicated Bill C–79, Bill C–98 and the rule changes this afternoon.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the very frank response by my hon. friend.

I just want to make it clear that as far as the New Democratic Party is concerned, Bill C–98, the agricultural bill, should pass today. We are prepared to pass it today, but if the government decides that it is not in its interest, so be it.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, obviously the hon. member is trying to score political points for an audience.

If he wants to negotiate in good faith, we are happy to do it at any time.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I feel I should not have to remind experienced parliamentarians like the parliamentary secretary and the hon. member for Kamloops that there is a time and a place for talking and negotiating, and that, until further notice, I must follow the Standing Orders.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

PARLIAMENT OF CANADA ACT

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed from Thursday, March 21, consideration of the motion of Mr. Andre in relation to amendments made by the Senate to Bill C–79, an act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act, and the motion of Mr. Hawkes (p. 18849).

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to speak on Bill C–79 and the motion that is before the House as a result of the Senate amendments.

The House is aware that at 5.58 p.m. last Thursday, the government moved to try to quickly pass Bill C–79. There was a one–minute debate by the minister introducing it and a 30–second response by the Liberal member for Kingston and the Islands. Then the government Whip moved the previous question which, basical-

ly, prevents any member of this House from introducing any amendments.

The government did that with the full knowledge that I had amendments to the legislation as it came from the Senate. I believe that the Senate has closed one loophole, but it has built a much bigger credibility gap. This move will come to haunt this House of Commons and will come to haunt the Senate if this motion is passed without amendment.

I believe that the Senate acted in good faith. It saw in the bill which originally came from the House of Commons that it is possible for a member of this House or of the Senate who was under investigation to go quickly to the Board of Internal Economy or the equivalent committee of the Senate and ask that body to give an opinion on the issue of whether or not that money, service or premise was being used for the proper purposes.

According to the Senate, that created a chance for delay. If a member went to the Board of Internal Economy at the last minute, the board may take four, five or six weeks to render an opinion. Because that opinion had to be given to a judge, a member of Parliament or a Senator could end up delaying the work of a police officer and could prevent a search warrant or some other appropriate document from being served at the appropriate time.

If that was all that a Senate amendment did, that would be an improvement to the legislation. However, the Senate went much further. It took away all obligation on the part of the board to give the opinion to the police officer who was conducting an investigation. A police officer could be aware that the board has given an opinion. The board may have given an opinion to the member that what he or she did was acceptable, but that board may also have given an opinion that what the member of Parliament or the senator did was unacceptable under our rules and under the by-laws that the board will be introducing.

• (1140)

If the board in its wisdom decided that it was not going to issue that opinion to a police officer, we would all live under a cloud of doubt because that police officer in going forward to get a search warrant or something else should, and probably would, indicate that he sought an opinion that was available from the Board of Internal Economy, that the Board of Internal Economy had made that decision but refuses to give it to the police officer.

By making the whole issue of whether or not the board gives its opinion to a police officer discretionary, we put ourselves under a real cloud of doubt. I can bet that if the board refuses to give an opinion on the actions of a certain member, you can be assured that the media and the public will assume that the board is covering up for that member. They will automatically assume that the board's opinion was unfavourable to that member.

We are being asked by the quick actions of this government to vote now on a measure that is only going to cause unnecessary havoc and concern for members of this House in the future. I believe that if an opinion has already been made by the board—we are not talking about delay— then that opinion should be given forthwith to the police officers doing the investigation.

If the board has not made a decision, or given an opinion, then there should be no obligation on the part of anyone to act because then we could be perceived as delaying. But if the opinion is already made by this board or by its equivalent in the Senate, then that should be given to a police officer and that information can be used by the officer as he or she sees fit.

We are not talking about delay. We are talking about making sure that there is no perception whatsoever that the Board of Internal Economy is covering up any possible criminal wrongdoing by a member of this House or that the Senate is doing the equivalent thing with one of its members.

In answer to some questions I asked about this issue on Friday, the government said that all members can be rest assured that nothing devious is going to happen because all parties are represented on the Board of Internal Economy. That is true for this House, but it is also true that as a result of Bill C-79 members of the board are going to have to sign an oath of secrecy. We will not know what happened at a board meeting, whether the government majority on the board used its majority to prevent a ruling from being released to the police. We will never know what has happened.

We cannot be guaranteed that the board will act in the best interests of all members of this House. As I said, every time the board decides not to give an opinion, the

public will assume that the member is guilty of some breach.

We have a problem with what we are being asked to vote on today. We have a problem with perception. We have a problem with fairness. That problem becomes even worse when you think about the Senate because at least on the Board of Internal Economy of the House all three parties are represented. In the Senate it is just the Liberals and the Conservatives, people who are unelected, people who never have to face the scrutiny of the public. We saw how cavalier they can be in their treatment of the public purse with their request for $153 a day attendance bonus. Last week we heard the Speaker rule that the method they used to try and guarantee themselves this bonus went against the laws of this land and the rules of the House.

We would have a situation where a committee of the Senate, meeting in secret, could decide that it does not want to issue opinions to police officers and there is nothing that can be done about it.

What we have offered, and I have given copies to the other parties, is a couple of amendments. I will read one of them:

> For greater certainty, if an opinion has been given by the Board in relation to the use by a member of funds, goods, services and premises referred to in subsection 52.6(1), the Board shall provide the opinion to the peace officer forthwith.

That is a reasonable amendment. I have a companion amendment to that to make sure that the law is covered in both clauses and both areas this is referring to. We are not talking about delay. We are saying that only if an opinion has been given by the board already, then it must be given to the police officer forthwith. It is not up to the majority on the board. It is not up to the Senate secret committee to make that decision. The board should be able to live with the opinions it has made and it should make those opinions public.

Unfortunately, the manoeuvring that took place at 5.58 p.m. on Thursday prevented the New Democratic Party from making those amendments in the House. The government is preventing debate on this very important matter. The Liberal Party, through its spokesman, allowed that to happen. We are in a situation now where we are dealing with flawed legislation.

We are dealing with something which will be a time bomb, ticking away, waiting for some member in the future, some senator in the future to be charged.

The whole reason for setting up the committee to review the Parliament of Canada Act was to make sure that we had procedures in place that protected members, but also did not put them above the law, that did not make us above the law, but at the same time, people would understand what the rules of the game are and that we have procedures in place. That is why we are calling for bylaws to be made by the Board of Internal Economy. That is why we are calling for a process where there is an investigation of a member. All of that was to make sure that we got out of the problems we faced in the past.

Now, by a last minute amendment coming from the Senate, and by the manoeuvrings that took place in this House on Thursday evening, we are facing a situation which is taking us full circle, back to where we started a year and a half ago when this committee first started to work.

There have been suggestions by others that there are other ways out of this mess. It has been suggested to me in private that perhaps what the Board of Internal Economy should do as its first order of business is to pass a bylaw that would make all of its opinions public in the case of a police officer's investigation. That is a possible way out.

I have to raise the question: Do we have the same guarantees that the Senate committee would do the same thing? They have no sense of public responsibility. There is no way of dealing with senators who act in arrogance. There is no way of dealing with senators who choose to continue to act in secret.

As members of the House, our obligation is to try and pass the best legislation possible. I think it is important that we have these amendments before this House. If we do not have these amendments before this House, we have no guarantee that members will be treated equally in the future. We have no guarantee that the board will make the wisest decision. A police officer making an investigation has no guarantee that he or she will have access to a board opinion that is ready. A judge has no guarantee that he or she will be given access to that board opinion, all of this because the government wants to act in haste.

• (1150)

The Parliament of Canada Act committee has basically been non-partisan. It has basically tried to resolve its issues. On Thursday of last week the government moved with undue haste. It knew that these amendments were coming. I had informed the government earlier that day that these amendments would be in front of the legislative clerk. It was that same day that the actual wording for the amendment that I read earlier and its companion amendment were produced.

Had the government waited a few hours, had they consulted, the government and the Official Opposition would have known the wording. There was no talk of delay. There was no talk of stalling. We had a legitimate concern with this legislation. We still have that legitimate concern.

Unfortunately as a result of the motion by the government Whip, "That this question be now put", those amendments which would protect members, which would protect the reputation of this House cannot be put before this very House.

I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that you seek unanimous consent of this House that the amendments that I referred to be allowed to be placed on the Order Paper. I would make that a motion at this time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Does the House agree with the motion by the hon. member for Churchill?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): We do not have unanimous consent.

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, I think that states the problem. Here we are in a situation where the Liberal opposition and the government have the amendments. We have a situation where amendments that would clear the reputation of this House—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Order please. I do not understand why the hon. member speaks before the House. In presenting his motion, his time is over.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Victoria.

Mr. John Brewin (Victoria): Mr. Speaker, my comment first of all, I guess to set up the question, arises out of my absolute astonishment that this issue has arisen. There are many duties we have as members of Parliament. It is not possible always for us to follow in detail the intricacies of each bill. It is our responsibility, which we fulfil, to read the legislation and to consider it before we vote.

I had frankly understood that this issue and the issue of Bill C-79 had been settled some time ago. I guess when things head off to the other place we have a sense of it disappearing, usually off into the ether, some time to return without any change.

Here we have a case where the Senate has acted and in which it appears both the Liberals and the Conservatives, who not only dominate the Senate, but there really are no members other than a couple of independents who do not have a Liberal or a Conservative background, essentially six my friend indicates. Essentially it is a Conservative and Liberal institution. That institution sometimes gets public attention, as it did last fall, but here again it interferes with the legislative process and does so for what would appear to me on the face of it to be highly partisan reasons. The Senate amends this legislation which was designed to protect the public interest, and Parliament as well, the public interest in having an independent Parliament along with the public interest that wrongdoing be properly prosecuted; that that very delicate bill, which did provide that balance, has now been altered by the Liberals and Conservatives in the Senate. The bill comes back to this House, and what happens? The Liberals and Conservatives in this House gang up to endorse and rubber-stamp this interference in the will of this House on this bill.

Frankly, it leaves me absolutely mystified. I would like to ask the member for Churchill, who has spoken already so eloquently on this, if he could speculate for us why the Liberals and Conservatives are taking this position. He has been able to participate more carefully than I in some of the discussions and in following the details of this bill. Why would the Liberals and Conservatives want to do this? Why would it not be an absolutely obvious thing that the report to the Board of Internal Economy, or to the committee, would be made available to the peace officer and to the judge?

It seems to me so absolutely obvious, if the interests of justice are to be maintained. How come the Liberals and Conservatives not only have allowed this to happen, but

don't appear to be interested in participating in this debate?

Mr. Murphy: The member for Victoria asked me to speculate, to use my imagination. I do not think I have enough time to deal with all the possible scenarios.

But, let me say this, even assuming that there is no attempt at a cover-up, and even assuming that this wasn't just an accident, the problem is that it is much more comfortable for a committee in the Senate, or for the Board of Internal Economy, to make its decisions behind closed doors and not to be accountable to anyone.

People can be very comfortable with that way of doing things. But when there is a police investigation and when a police officer comes to the Board of Internal Economy, and when the police officer knows that the board has made a decision or that the equivalent committee in the Senate has made a decision—that decision is already made, there is no possibility of us delaying anything, or the board or the House being perceived as delaying anything—then I believe that the board has a public responsibility to provide that information.

If it means that the board has to be more careful when it makes a decision, if it means it has to keep clear and accurate records of its proceedings, well, Mr. Speaker, I cannot think of a more appropriate place than for the House of Commons and its committees to keep accurate records.

I believe that if the board has looked at a member's budget and how that member has spent his budget, and it believes that that was not done under the rules of this House, then there should be no question, there should be no discretion, the board should have an obligation to give that information to a police officer and then it is up to the judge and jury to make a decision on the broader aspects of wrongdoing.

If we have a rule in this House that says you cannot spend money in such a way that it comes back to your own pocket, or to your spouse's pocket—and that is indeed happening—then I think the board has to say that that is not acceptable. I think the board has that obligation.

With regard to the question, it may well be that some people are comfortable with the old way of doing things, and maybe some people think the board should not have to be that careful when it makes its opinions. But I think the board does have that obligation.

I have clearly put our amendments in such a way that we can never be charged with delaying the due process of a police investigation.

• (1200)

I have not said that the board must have the right to give an opinion before the police officer can go any further. I have said that the board only acts where the information is ready and where it can present it to a police officer. I am saying that where the information is ready it is not discretionary; it must be given to the police officer. We cannot be perceived in any way, shape or form of being engaged in a cover-up of our own members.

Mr. Neil Young (Beaches—Woodbine): Mr. Speaker, I too have a question for the hon. member.

As the House knows, the other day the government introduced a package of so-called reforms to the Standing Orders, ostensibly to bring democracy back to the House of Commons and that people would perceive democracy to be existing in the House of Commons. In actual fact those of us who understand the orders that govern this House know that the very opposite is the case. It would in fact turn the government party in this House into nothing less than a dictatorship.

I just want to ask the hon. member whether or not the example we have just seen in the House today which arose from procedural manoeuvring in the House by both the government and the Official Opposition over the last couple of weeks is the kind of activity that will ultimately destroy democracy in this House.

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, I think the member for Beaches—Woodbine has managed to raise some of the other issues that are before the public.

If through procedural gains the government, with the compliance of the Official Opposition, has prevented amendments from coming forward on this very important matter, where we are talking about police investigations of members of this House or members of the Senate, where we see the rules being used to prevent a debate over what are the obligations of the Board of Internal Economy when there is a police investigation,

we have to be worried about the over-all agenda and the government's way of doing things.

I may have problems with the rule changes, but we are not debating them at the present time. What I am afraid of—and I think the member who asked the question is aware of it—is that we already had this abuse of the rules. If anything, the rule changes that are coming down perhaps later today or tomorrow in this House make it that much more difficult for myself or some other member who is in opposition to the government or some public group that wants to appear before a legislative committee of this House. Those rules are designed in such a way as to make it more difficult for an opposition member or a government backbencher, as somebody pointed out. For that matter, under the proposed rules legislative committees would not even hear from public groups that oppose government's legislation. That is taken away.

What happened last Thursday at two minutes to six o'clock is unfortunately an indication of where this government goes with all rule changes.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, I was looking across the aisle at my hon. friend from Peace River who I suspect was going to make some comments on the important issue raised by my hon. friend from Churchill.

I must say it is with a heavy heart today that we have to be here taking up time when we should be talking about agriculture. As far as I am concerned, farming is the backbone of much of our economy. The farmers are struggling. There is a whole set of issues that ought to be addressed immediately with almost a sense of crisis in some sectors of the agricultural community. We would like to do so but we can only do what the government asks us to do, as you well know, Mr. Speaker, that is to talk about a rather peculiar turn of events regarding Bill C-79.

Before I talk about Bill C-79, I want to say that I can only assume that the government is trying to put a fast one over on the people of Canada. After all, I remember last Thursday. I have just to take a moment to explain last Thursday because it is so germane to the debate today.

Last Thursday we were debating agriculture. It was appropriate. It was a good discussion. There were some excellent debates. As a matter of fact they were some of the most enlightened debates I have heard in this House in a long time. They showed a real concern about agriculture and a want to get on with dealing with these issues.

We had agreed that we would complete report stage of Bill C-98. I left some direction with my hon. colleagues which said "just prior to six o'clock let's wrap up this stage of the deliberations so that the report stage can pass and we can get on with debating agriculture", we thought today. Unfortunately it looks like that is not the case. In other words, we were trying to facilitate the business of the House by wrapping up by six o'clock so that the appropriate votes could take place. In other words, it was in good faith, above the table, honest, and positive. We were trying to do the best job we could as a positive and effective opposition.

Then, out of the blue we get a left hook coming at us.

Ms. Mitchell: A right hook.

Mr. Riis: First of all it was a right hook where the government stood up in a split second and said: "Aha, maybe we can put a fast one over on the opposition", namely the New Democrats. It stood up and introduced Bill C-79 out of the blue. There were no discussions. There had been no consultation. It was out of the absolute blue.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I may remind the hon. member that a question of privilege was raised by the hon. member for Churchill, that the Speaker has already ruled on the incident described by the hon. member, and that the Standing Orders of the House were applied. I would therefore ask the hon. member for Kamloops to be prudent in his comments.

[*English*]

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, the government may have technically been following the rules, but it tried to sneak one past us. It tried at the last minute, just seconds before the House would normally rise for the day, to introduce a piece of legislation when no one was watching. No one was watching. I am not concerned about us here. There were some opposition members here, but what about the people of Canada? That is who the government was trying to pull a fast one on, not us. We are on top of this.

This is my disappointing comment. My friends in the Liberal Party co-operated with the government. My hon. friend for Kingston and the Islands stood in his place. He usually speaks for 20 minutes. Normally he has a lot of intelligent things to say. He has a contribution to make to debate, so when he stands we always assume we are going to have a full deliberation.

He spoke for only 20 seconds. This was the first time in his life my hon. friend for Kingston and the Islands has ever spoken for 20 seconds. Why? It was to allow the government, as my hon. friend from Churchill has explained, to pass another sneaky motion which would eliminate any possibility of this motion being amended.

Mr. Milliken: We support the bill.

Mr. Riis: That is the point that I am trying to make. My hon. colleague from Kingston and the Islands yells out that they support the government, that they support this. We do not.

We think that there is something very seriously flawed with this particular legislation. My hon. friend from Prince George—Peace River is rattling his head. I can hear him from here, right across the entire aisle.

I know my hon. friends on the government benches find the opposition obstructive. They do not want to have debate in the House of Commons. They do not want to have a reaction to the government's Draconian legislation. They want to slip fast ones through to manipulate the House. I will tell you, Mr. Speaker: the people of Canada are fed up with this government manipulating the House of Commons on behalf of the people of Canada.

Let me get back to the business at hand. I am a member of the Board of Internal Economy. I am proud to be a member of that board. A lot of people in Canada wonder what it is this board does. There has been a veil of questions around this particular board. People ask me what it is we do. I explain what we do and so on. There is an element of jitteriness. We appreciate that we need a group to manage the affairs of the parliamentary precincts and people on that board, in my judgment, work very hard and are very dedicated to the task.

• (1210)

However, there is an element of some question. I put it at that, nothing more than that.

Then the government introduced Bill C-79, and again there was another element of question and concern. What kind of powers are we giving this board? Most of what goes on in there is not in the public purview. Then we see in the legislation—and I supported this legislation up until very recently, with the exception of the point raised by my hon. friend from Churchill—where it says that every member of the board, as soon as practicable after becoming a member of the board, shall take before the Clerk of the House of Commons an oath of affirmation, fidelity and secrecy.

As soon as we start operating in secret, people become somewhat suspicious, for good reason. The one thing we know as parliamentarians is that we want to be up-front. We want to have things on the table. We want to be in the open. After all, we are servants of the people. Whenever we start to agree to do things in secret, people begin to wonder.

Form 3, which all of us on the Board of Internal Economy will sign, says "I"—and you fill in your name—"do solemnly swear or affirm that I will faithfully, truly, and to the best of my judgment, skill and ability execute and perform the duties required of me as a member of the Board of Internal Economy of the House of Commons, so help me God". It goes on: "I further solemnly swear or affirm that I will not communicate or allow to be communicated to any person without due authority in that behalf any information related to matters of employment and staff relations, tenders, security, investigations in relation to a member of the House of Commons".

In other words, as a member of the board, I will swear an oath that I will not communicate, ever, any investigations in relation to a member of the House of Commons.

Mr. Malone: That is because it would not be right if you did communicate it.

Mr. Riis: I hear an echo. The point is right. To communicate in matters of this perhaps would be highly questionable. However, that is what we agree to do.

What are we saying, then? Let us make sure that we have taken every precaution to ensure that whatever decision that board makes is not only right in terms of the law but is perceived to be right in terms of the law.

The hon. member for Churchill has worked on Bill C–79 from the outset. He has spent literally hundreds of hours examining, analysing, discussing, and in thoughtful introspection in terms of the implication of this legislation. I mean that with all sincerity. He has identified a small flaw in the legislation that came back from the Senate.

He offers the following clarification so the people of Canada will know full well that if a member of Parliament is being investigated by the RCMP there will be no cover–up. There was a concern in the past that there were cover–ups, that the Board of Internal Economy and other investigations were being influenced in terms of being able to allow the RCMP to carry out its investigations effectively.

Again, not only must we be doing the right thing. We must be perceived to be doing the right thing.

The hon. member for Churchill has picked up on a problem with the amendment returned from the Senate. He has suggested:

> That Bill C–79 be amended by adding after line 18 on page 8 the following:
>
> "52.7(1.1) For greater certainty, if an opinion has been given by the Board in relation to the use by a member of funds, goods, services and premises referred to in subsection 52.6(1), the Board shall provide the opinion to the peace officer forthwith".

Then he suggested:

> That amendment 6 be amended to read as follows:
>
> "Strike out lines 19 to 29, page 8, clause (2) and substitute the following:
>
> (2) Where an opinion is provided to a peace officer to subsection (1) or the peace officer has been advised by the Board that an application under subsection 52.6(2) has been made by the member of the House of Commons to whom the investigation relates and the Committee has given an opinion and where an application for a process is made to a judge, the judge shall consider it in determining whether to issue the process."

It is perfectly clear, absolutely clear. It is a straightforward and simple amendment that would rectify any concern about the whole process so that Canadian citizens could feel secure and comforted to know that a fair evaluation will take place by the Board of Internal Economy and that the information will be passed along to the most appropriate persons.

That is perfectly clear, perfectly obvious. It is the right thing to do. Yet the government has, in its mysterious way, taken steps to ensure that this will not take place, that this change will not occur.

Let us set aside the House of Commons because we have a good check and balance system. All members of the House, all recognized parties of the House, are at least represented on the Board of Internal Economy.

In the Senate and its committee, with a similar operation, such is not the case. First of all, we are dealing with people who are not elected by the people of Canada. They have been appointed for a variety of reasons, because they are hacks, flacks, or bagmen, or for some other reason, by the Prime Minister of the day to the Upper House. Only two political parties sit there.

I personally do not have that much faith in the integrity of the Senate of Canada after seeing its decision to try to slip something through the back door. You referred to the thoughtful comments and the decision of the Speaker on a previous occasion, Mr. Speaker. You will only appreciate too well that the Speaker felt it was his job to point out the inappropriateness of the Senate using the back–door routine to try to get themselves a raise.

In other words, if you want to pay yourself $153 a day to show up for work then do it up–front, do it through the appropriate process. They tried a rather devious route and thank goodness the Speaker stood up, pointed that out and said it was inappropriate and unacceptable in a democratic system.

Something similar may be happening here. There is a back–door routine and the government is not permitting what anybody would consider to be a fair, just, or equitable resolution to the particular problem that has been pointed out in the motion coming back from the Upper House.

Not only are we concerned about the process. Why is it that there has been this duplicity between the Liberals and the Conservatives to try to fast–track this piece of legislation so that the New Democrats will not have a chance to clarify the legislation through amendment? Why would they do that?

I do not know. It is that kind of duplicity, that kind of working together to protect one another, which causes us concerns in this party regarding the Senate. Essentially

there are only those two parties represented in the Senate. There are some Independents, but basically there are those two parties.

I do not want to start mentioning names. I do not think that would be appropriate. However, we have some pretty cosy arrangements being provided and some secret examinations going on in terms of some of their members' conduct. I do not think the people of Canada have faith in that system. That is why we are saying that it needs to be clarified. Nothing more, just clarified, so that everybody understands what the process is, everybody buys into the process and says: "Yes, this is a decent process. This is a good process. This is an up-front process. This is a just, fair, equitable process".

Why is the government against that? Why would it be against considering something that is so obviously positive and so obviously good?

We have received all sorts of advice from procedural experts. We have received all sorts of suggestions from people who watch this very closely. They say that what the hon. member for Churchill is proposing is probably soft, if anything, but at least it is a move in the right direction. I hate to say this because I have many friends with the caucus opposite and in the Liberal Party, but they have refused to accept this. We can only say that this is a very serious situation.

Tied in with this is the whole matter of changing the way this House of Commons operates, the Standing Orders, and tossing a hundred-plus years of regulation, rule, and tradition out the window to enable the government to implement with minimal opposition, minimal fuss, its oppressive agenda on the people of Canada.

Obviously we will not stand for that, and we are not going to stand for this. We are just not going to turn a blind eye and let these organizations that already work in secret have the legislative authority to make decisions regarding the conduct of members of Parliament or senators regarding police investigations and hold that under some kind of cloud. That is not the way to proceed. I want to speak very positively in support of these two amendments. I think that my hon. friend from Churchill did the right thing when he asked for unanimous consent for the government to now reconsider its silliness and permit consideration of these two amendments.

• (1220)

I would like to think that before we end this debate, we will again make that suggestion. Perhaps it would be appropriate to hear from other members. Many members here have a lot to say about this issue. If necessary, we are prepared to speak all day and all day tomorrow and beyond on this because we just do not feel comfortable at all. As a matter of fact, we would not even consider supporting legislation that is so obviously flawed when my hon. colleague from Churchill has provided a simple amendment which would rectify the situation.

We will continue to discuss and debate this in hopes that eventually the government will see the wisdom of following our advice.

Mr. David Barrett (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the New Democratic Party House leader, as a member of the committee, would enlighten us as to why we are faced with this unique opposition only by the New Democratic Party. Where is the voice of the Official Opposition, the Liberal Party of Canada?

In the member's opinion, is it a presumption that it may be in government and that it would like this kind of protection when it is in government? Surely, as a new member, I would would like to be disabused of that concept. If, indeed, that is his opinion, then the Canadian public should hear it. Why is the Liberal Party so silent on this issue today? Why is it, in its years of experience, just as the Tories have been governing, when there have been errant members, that the cops should be allowed to go directly into this without any political interference? Cops are not interfered with by ordinary citizens. Why should they be interfered with by politicians?

I want to ask my good friend the House leader of the New Democratic Party to enlighten me, as a novice to this place and to this whole system of politics, why would the Liberal Party be opposed to our amendments?

Please do not disappoint me. Do not tell me the Liberal Party is cynical. I am ready for anything.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, this is a most serious question raised by my hon. colleague. I suspect, just by looking at the faces of all members interested in this issue, that it is a question on the minds of a lot of people. Why are the Liberals involved in what appears to be a very draconian

and sinister move to cover up and to establish, in a sense, almost two levels of justice?

Mr. Barrett: Right.

Mr. Riis: One for the people of Canada and a separate one for—

An hon. member: For members under investigation.

Mr. Riis: Well, members under investigation, but members of Parliament and Senators.

I think I speak for everyone in the New Democratic Party caucus when I say that we feel there should be one justice system.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Riis: We can only accept one justice system.

My hon. friend, the government Whip is in his place listening carefully and we look forward to his remarks. I think perhaps, he has a different interpretation of the seriousness of this problem.

We might argue the technicalities and he might feel that in terms of the exact letter of the law, particularly as it applies to subsection 52.7 and 52.6, that technically we are overly concerned. Is it not appropriate that there be no question whatsoever? My hon. friend from Churchill raised this critical question and we might debate how critical it is.

From the fact that it has been raised and no one in the Liberal or Conservative parties have even discussed or argued against it, we can only assume that they are feeling very uncomfortable today.

An hon. member: Shame, shame.

Mr. Riis: They are feeling a part of a process that is going to get us as members of Parliament in big trouble if we give the impression that there are two justice systems. I appeal to my friends across the aisle in the Conservative Party and my colleagues in the Liberal Party to participate in this debate. Then I can determine from their points of view if my friend from Churchill has misinterpreted this amendment. I do not think he has. There is a serious problem of perception, and it is imperative that collectively all of us say that there is one justice system, one for members of Parliament and the people of Canada, and no special treatment for anybody in this country.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to hear all the applause from the NDP benches. I must say that the hon. member for Kamloops surprises me; he is trying to allege there is some kind of sinister plot going on here, if I can quote his words. This particular bill, Bill C–79, was introduced in this House in June of last year and I well recall that the House leader of the New Democratic Party wanted to put this bill through all stages in one day. It was only the objections of our party which saved this bill from being passed at that time—

Some hon. members: Order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Order, please. On a point of order, the hon. member for Churchill.

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member is referring to June of last year, he will find that it was the New Democratic Party that refused to allow it to go through in all stages. We said there were some flaws; we insisted that it be sent to committee.

Mr. Milliken: Obviously that was not a point of order, and I maintain the position that it was our party that objected to having that bill passed at all stages in its original form in June 1990.

We then had the outraged statements of the member for Kamloops. He said this bill was a travesty and was now opposed to it, because he had seen the good reasons we put forward for opposition to the bill in its original form. The bill was referred to a special committee.

I believe the hon. member for Churchill was a member of that special committee. I think he sat on it throughout the summer. The government Whip says it was only half the time but nevertheless I understand he appeared at the committee and took part in its deliberations. The committee reported to this House in November 1990 and recommended some very worth-while changes to the bill. Those changes were agreed upon and the bill was passed on November 30 in this House.

Now the bill has come back from the Senate with a couple of amendments which are technical in nature which we in our party support. I stood up the other day when the Senate amendments were moved for second reading and indicated my support and the support of our party for those amendments. We stand by that support.

An hon. member: Hear, hear.

Mr. Milliken: I didn't hear anything in what the hon. member for Kamloops said that indicated that support was withdrawn by his party. He supports those amendments also.

What I understand is that the member for Churchill has had a death-bed repentance of some kind and thinks he has to make more amendments because he somehow feels left out.

I say to the hon. member for Kamloops, who supported this bill on his own admission until the other day, that he should be standing up praising the government and allowing this bill to go through. Everyone agrees with it. The only person who has a problem is the hon. member for Churchill, and we all saw how he behaved the other day when he found that he was not going to be able to move his amendments.

Furthermore, I suggest that the hon. member for Kamloops knows full well that it would be out of order for the hon. member for Churchill to move amendments to this bill at this stage. The bill has been amended and passed in this House. The Senate amendments only are before us; we cannot provide other amendments at this stage to this bill. The hon. member for Kamloops knows that and I suggest he stand up right now and admit it. This whole thing is a facade and a fraud that he is trying to put over on this House and convince the Canadian people that somehow there is some kind of cover-up going on here, which there is not.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, methinks my hon. friend protesteth too much. He gets a little excited. We must have touched a bit of a nerve when we suggested that.

Let me explain what actually happened, because obviously my hon. friend was missing during part of the deliberations.

We are not debating a bill, we are debating a motion. My hon. friend should know that. Consequently when he said that we supported Bill C-79, we are not talking about Bill C-79 today.

• (1230)

We are talking about a motion referring to Bill C-79 today. He knows better than that, but is obviously trying to cover some tracks that are pretty murky at the moment.

While we supported Bill C-79—

An hon. member: Before it was amended.

Mr. Riis: Before it was amended by your friends in the Senate, yes, we supported Bill C-79. It was then altered and we do not support the alteration. From the day it came back from the Senate, my hon. colleague for Churchill, who was the representative of the New Democratic Party during consideration of Bill C-79, indicated clearly to my hon. friend the government Whip, the Government House Leader, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader and, presumably, similar counterparts in the Liberal Party that we had serious concerns and we were going to suggest we amend the motion.

My hon. friend then went to the law clerks who were drafting the motion. We communicated that to not only the Parliamentary Secretary of the Government House Leader, but the Deputy House Leader as well. He was waiting to hear back from the clerks in conclusion.

Our track record on this is perfectly clean, perfectly clear and perfectly straightforward. I have yet to hear from my hon. friends why they are supporting—

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Resuming debate. The hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier.

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I think it is time someone put on the record the events connected with the motion before us which, in the Senate, led to a number of comments by senators which I feel are justified and to amendments that reflect an entity that is different from our own.

To be perfectly clear, the amendments before us today, which are being proposed by the Senate, deal with a situation that somewhat differs from ours in that the Senate's board of internal economy is not organized the same way. The Speaker of the House of Commons is both member and Chairman of the Board of Internal Economy of the House of Commons. That is not the case in the Senate. The Speaker of the Senate does not automatically chair the Senate's committee on internal economy which is, in fact, a Standing Committee of the Senate that regularly reports to the Senate. So the procedure differs somewhat from what is customary here in the House of Commons.

Second, the amendments confirm these differences and provide for intersessional authority. The point is, that when Parliament is prorogued, since the Senate's internal economy committee is a Standing Committee, it

would immediately lose its powers and be unable to pursue any further activities. The Senate therefore proposes an amendment that would provide for intersessional authority, so that senators would be able to continue to work during a period of prorogation of Parliament.

In fact, during the debate in the Senate, there was some discussion on section 52.7.

[*English*]

I will use my second language so that members of the House will understand there was no plot and no cover up. There was absolutely nothing done to try and change the spirit and the objectives that we had all tried to reach in getting Bill C–79 before Parliament.

I think it is a first in terms of parliamentary democracy that we now have a bill that guarantees in the House of Commons full representation to all parties on the Board of Internal Economy. One only has to look back some years ago when the government was in total command of that committee.

Today all parties have a representative on the Board of Internal Economy and that assures some justice and some equity in matters dealing with all parties and all members.

In my view there is no other way of assuring a non–partisan approach to the issues we deal with on the Board of Internal Economy, of which I am a member, and so is the member for Kamloops, who is the representative of his party.

The question arose in debate in the Senate as to our intent, our motive, our purpose. It was to give members of this House and of the Senate an opportunity to have an adjudication by their peers, by the Board of Internal Economy, of the expenditure of public funds entrusted to them to administer their offices and other things. We also wanted to put in place a system which would allow us, members of Parliament, to ask the board for an interpretation, an opinion as to the expenditures of funds in the operations of our constituency and House of Commons offices.

I see nothing wrong with that. I see absolutely nothing wrong with that. I think it is a step in the right direction. If a member is concerned or has doubt about what he is about to do in terms of expenditure or what he is about to do in terms of administering his office, then he can go to the board and ask for its opinion. He can say to the board: "What do you think of this proposal", and the board will answer either that it is okay or: "No, we do not agree, therefore you cannot do it".

The question that arose in the Senate and arose in my mind, because when we passed the bill at third reading an amendment was passed about which I had some hesitation, but nevertheless with the assurance of all parties, I thought I will not pursue that. I will not pursue it because maybe the Senate will agree that there could be here a review of that clause, which is clause 52.7.

Clause 52.7(2) read this way: "Where an opinion is provided to a peace officer, pursuant to subsection (1)", and the text went on to say, "or", and I underline "or", "the peace officer has been advised by the board that an application under subsection 52.6(2) has been made by the member of the House of Commons to whom the investigation relates and where an application for a process is made to a judge, the judge shall be provided with the opinion and shall consider it in determining whether to issue the process".

The difficulty that I had and that some other members of this group had, was with the "or the peace officer having been advised by the board that an application under subsection 52.6". I am not a lawyer, but I am told that members of Parliament and senators sometimes get wind that an investigation is ongoing on matters pertaining to the administration of their funds, that is the funds given to them to administer their office. They get wind of this.

The possibility which I objected to, and I am thinking here in terms of an all–party position, the difficulty of that position was that if a member heard or got wind of an investigation on his administration of public funds, he could immediately ask the board for an opinion. In my judgment and the judgment of many others in the Senate, that would have stopped the process there and then. That would have prevented due process because that would have prevented the completion in my view and in the view of others of that investigation by the police officer.

It said here: "Where an opinion is provided to a peace officer pursuant to subsection (1) or the peace officer has been advised".

• (1240)

What if the peace officer had asked the board if it was about to give an opinion on the administration of funds from Mr. or Mrs. So-and-so? If the board said: "Yes, we are about to render that opinion," I contend that is quite logical.

There is nothing here of cover-up. It is strictly a question of interpretation. I am not a lawyer, but I do think as a legislator that a possibility could exist that the board would have been obligated to give that opinion.

If the opinion took time, it could slow the process and retard the ongoing investigation. In fact, it could stop that whole investigation. That is what we objected to, that is mainly the issue at hand here and that is why in the Senate—I can quote from the *Debates* extensively—that is what the argument was.

I could quote from the text of Senator MacEachen, for example: "However, if the process of going to a judge to have a search warrant or to lay a charge is linked to the work of the peace officer in laying a charge, that process cannot be completed until the opinion of the board is given. Then there is an anomaly."

At the very least, that provision was looked at and improved in my humble opinion. The purpose of the amendment in the motion before the House today is to eliminate the possibility that an opinion, having been asked, would prevent the ongoing process, that is, the legal process, to continue.

That is now eliminated. Therefore, it cannot be read to have any other interpretation.

I say to the member for Churchill—I am not quarrelling with him on the intent of his amendments—that I would agree with the purpose and the intent of his amendment. However, I say with all due respect that there is a provision in this bill that allows the House of Commons at this time to adopt this bill and look after the preoccupations of my friends from Churchill and Kamloops.

What we could do is to look at the section dealing with the bylaws of the board. I want to read the bylaws of the board:

> Subject to section 20.7, the board may make bylaws:
>
> (a) respecting the calling of meetings of the board to conduct the business of the meetings;
>
> (b) governing the use by senators or members of Parliament of funds, goods, services and premises made available to them for the carrying out of their parliamentary functions;
>
> (c) prescribing the terms and conditions of the management of and accounting of funds referred to in paragraph (b);
>
> (d) respecting all such things that are necessary or incidental to the exercise of its powers under this section and sections 20.3 and 20.6.

We have a provision in this bill that would allow the Board of Internal Economy to pass bylaws doing exactly what the member for Churchill is proposing to the board and that would satisfy most of us. I would recommend to this House that we immediately pass this motion so we can go on to other things.

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the former House leader, former Whip and very active committee member for his intervention. In particular, I want to thank him for the way he ended that intervention.

I want to point out to the House that the member for Churchill and the House leader of the New Democratic Party are just as aware as the member who has just spoken of what is in Bill C-79 and what was not touched by the Senate.

I would go one step further and read another section:

> The Speaker shall table before the House of Commons the bylaws made under this section on any of the first 30 days after the making thereof.

If the member for Churchill really cares about this institution or the people in it, does he really want to hand the Senate the power to change what it is that he proposes? Or, does he trust the House of Commons, at least, and his member on it—the House leader of the New Democratic Party—to pass a bylaw to accomplish what it is that he sees as an oversight of the bill?

Does he really want to reject the Senate message because we made a mistake? He did, I did, the member who spoke did. The Chamber did. We passed a clause with an unseen possibility in it, which the Senate spotted. I want to pay a compliment to the Senate, as the Chamber of sober second thought, on that particular

clause it spotted a flaw and simply corrected it. I say thank you to the Senate. The Senate changed from a board to go back to its committee and that is a mistake. I think the Senate will be back to this Chamber some day in the next two or three years asking for a board, because I think it has created for itself an administrative structure that is unwieldy and makes it very difficult to activate the responsibilities inherent in this bill.

This bill came about and was examined by all sides of this Chamber for a purpose. We are not today, without the passage of this bill, treated like ordinary Canadians when it comes to the justice system. The securing of information from this Chamber about the behaviour of members and their utilization of the budget today, without this piece of legislation, requires a judicial process, usually a search warrant, before any information can be obtained. The Speaker has to grant permission for the warrant to be executed.

I think it is fair to say that we found that situation intolerable, that the public nature of search warrants and the fact that they are full of allegations and not proof, created difficulties for members, and in particular, members' families.

This piece of legislation is an obligation on the part of the board to provide the police and courts with information that they cannot get today. It is additional information. It is saying to the police and the courts, we will give you accurate information if you would simply come and ask.

If there is an allegation out there about the behaviour of a member, it can be dealt with quickly and expeditiously. If there is truth, or some element of truth to the allegation, it will go through an investigation and a process. If it is simply an allegation without a foundation in truth, that can be discovered and all members, all sides of the Chamber can avoid the public nature of allegations. Allegations do enormous damage. This day started at 11 a.m. with an NDP allegation about an unnamed person in the Prime Minister's office. That tars all of the members of the Prime Minister's office with a brush. It is not fair. It is simply not fair.

I would like to indicate to the colleague who spoke ahead of me, that both as board members and certainly on behalf of all the board members of my party, we would be quite willing to pass a bylaw that would require the board to give to the police officers or to the courts an opinion which is relevant to the case.

It says in the bill itself, under the bylaw section, the board of governors must make bylaws respecting all such things as are necessary or incidental to the exercise of its powers and carrying out of its functions.

Those early bylaws must deal with the way the board itself intends them to function. It can deal with the issues that are contained in these two amendments, without turning over the control to the Senate.

Abolish the Senate, says the former premier of the province of British Columbia. I did not see his legislature when he was in charge pass a motion to that effect, to abolish the Senate. It is awfully easy to sit on the side lines and snipe, but when you have the responsibility of governing, surely you have to act responsibly.

I suggest to this House there really needs to be no more time on this particular piece of legislation, that we should move to the agriculture bill. If we want more time on the agriculture bill or more time on this, I would move:

> That the House continue to sit beyond the ordinary hour of daily adjournment for the purpose of continuing consideration of the second reading of government Bill C-79, an act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act.

• (1250)

If we do not need it then we can adjourn at one o'clock or we could actually agree to consider the agricultural bill after one o'clock. At this point, I simply would ask you to put that motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): A point of order, the hon. member for Churchill.

Mr. Murphy: I believe, Mr. Speaker, if you check the records or your memory, you will realize that the government Whip got up on questions and comments. Therefore, he cannot move that particular motion. It should also be noted that he has taken almost all the time for questions and comments and, therefore, not allowing other members to speak.

I am sure, with regard to this specific point of order, because he asked a number of questions which we obviously do not have a chance to reply to since he has taken up most of the time, the motion he put is out of order.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I will consult before ruling on the Government Whip's motion. Since we have two and a half minutes left, I will recognize the

hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier, on questions and comments.

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I didn't realize there was a question in the comments made by my hon. friend, the Government Whip, but if our common objective is to clarify the bill—and I believe the amendment does exactly that—I have no further comments. I think everything is quite clear. All we wanted to do is eliminate any interpretations that might hamper the legal process. In other words, if a member got wind of an investigation into his administration or budget, he could ask the board for an opinion, which would have had the effect of delaying if not altogether preventing the investigation. I think that possibility has now been eliminated from the bill and that the Senate did a good job. They are to be commended and derserve our thanks.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): After consulting the Standing Orders, I must admit that the objection raised by the hon. member for Churchill is in order, since according to Standing Order 43, during the period for questions and comments members may not move a motion to extend the sitting hours of the House.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, on a point of order.

[*English*]

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, during the remarks of the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier, there was an offer on his behalf, as the Liberal member of the board, to take care of the concerns of the member for Churchill. I have since heard the offer from the chief government Whip, who is also a member of the board, indicating the government's support to take care of those concerns at the Board of Internal Economy.

I would like to ask the House Leader of the New Democratic Party whether he, as the New Democratic representative on the same board, would agree to attend to these concerns at the board.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I would like to reply on a point of order on two points. First of all, I think it indicates, on behalf of the government a recognition that clarification is required and a suggestion perhaps that this might be an appropriate way to deal with this issue raised by my hon. friend from Churchill. I want to say, with all sincerity, that I would enjoy discussing this as a way of enabling this motion to proceed.

On another point, however, I want to say that my offer still stands from earlier regarding the important agricultural bill. If the government wants to introduce that and say this is the item of business for this afternoon, and we want to see this completed as the only item of business, we will ensure that takes place and that the bill will be passed today.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I understand that the hon. member is agreeing to let a decision be taken on Bill C-79 at this time. There are seven minutes which allow us to call Bill C-98. I would then ask for unanimous consent to allow us to continue through the lunch hour to deal with Bill C-98, the agricultural bill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, I understood that the hon. member for Kamloops suggested that members interested in this matter might get together for a discussion.

I have plenty of time this afternoon to discuss my proposal for using the Board of Internal Economy to meet the concerns of the hon. member for Churchill. If this suits hon. members, I am prepared to meet them to discuss the matter. I hope the outcome will be satisfactory.

[*English*]

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my hon. friend from Ottawa—Vanier and his offer that he would be prepared to make time available later today to discuss this and see if we can come to a satisfactory resolution. I would be more than pleased to do the same and make myself available. I think a gesture of good faith that the government is serious in this initiative would be to introduce the agricultural bill at three o'clock when we begin this afternoon.

However, I want to make perfectly clear that if the government tries to jam through the changes to the Standing Orders at three o'clock, I would have to consider this offer to be made not necessarily in good faith.

Mr. Milliken: Mr. Speaker, in response to the government's suggestion, we would be prepared to embark on consideration of the agricultural bill immediately and we would be prepared to sit through lunch in order to discuss it. I want to indicate our co-operation on that point. We think it is an important bill and ought to be disposed of promptly.

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, the motions that I was not allowed to make to this House have been the subject of debate for the last half hour and have been the subject of a number of offers and counter-offers across the floor. However, I recognize that if we allow this debate to collapse now, there is no pressure on anyone to act. For us to give up this debate and allow the legislation to pass in the next two minutes means that we really do not have any bargaining power to make sure that the amendments that I was not allowed to place before this House are going to be adequately dealt with.

Considering the manoeuvring that took place at two minutes to six last Thursday, I am certainly not going to allow the same manoeuvring to take place at two minutes to one.

Our House leader has already guaranteed that if the agricultural bill is the measure brought back at three o'clock today when the House next deals with legislation, we will help make sure that that legislation passes. On legislation, we are willing to negotiate; we are willing to guarantee.

We are not going to be stuck now with a manoeuvre which will give the government the Parliament of Canada Act as it was amended by the Senate. There is a fundamental flaw there and I want to make sure it is adequately dealt with before we do anything else.

Therefore, we cannot agree to a unanimous motion to deal with other business until this is clarified.

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, the offer which came from the member from Vanier and which had been discussed earlier with members of the New Democratic Party caucus is to use the bylaw provision under Bill C-79 to take care of the concern; that it must be made public within 30 days of the making of the bylaw. You had the public commitment from the two parties and there is only one other party represented on the board. That is the situation at the moment, that will be the situation an hour from now and it will be the situation five days from now: that Bill C-79 and its passage is the precondition to being able to act.

I do not know whether we have a board meeting scheduled for tomorrow night, but if we were to approve that bill at this moment, move it to Royal Assent, and put it into law at the very first board meeting subsequent to it becoming the law of the land, then we can solve the problem.

The only other possibility would be to go through the whole cumbersome mending process and back to the Senate. Canadian taxpayers will be well served by the bill; it will have a great deal more clarity. That is why all parties in all corners of the House have supported it historically—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): It being one o'clock, I do now leave the chair until two o'clock this afternoon.

The House took recess at 1 p.m.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 31

[*English*]

KIMBERLY-CLARK

Mr. Réginald Bélair (Cochrane—Superior): Mr. Speaker, on March 19, Kimberly-Clark outlined its position on the sale of the Spruce Falls Pulp and Paper Company in Kapuskasing.

Kimberly-Clark has set a purchase deadline of April 30, 1991. This deadline creates unwarranted pressure on the purchasing employee group by withdrawing its exclusive buying rights. The deadline also applies to the sale of the Smokey Falls dam to the Ontario government. This time restriction will not permit a complete environmental assessment.

In 1983 Kimberly-Clark decided not to modernize Spruce Falls. This was inappropriate. As a corporate citizen it has failed miserably to honour its commitment to the workers.

The Government of Ontario could retaliate by avoiding the forest management agreement which would leave Spruce Falls without a wood supply for next year. A new FMA would be renegotiated with a new owner.

Kimberly-Clark is shifting its corporate responsibility to the province. Suddenly, it has forgotten the profits it has made in the past 63 years. Kimberly-Clark has the

moral responsibility to secure work for the 1,200 workers it plans to lay off.

* * *

TELEMARKETING

Mrs. Louise Feltham (Wild Rose): Mr. Speaker, many Canadians are frustrated when Telemarketing calls intrude upon their personal lives.

Today I would like to congratulate the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and the Canadian Direct Marketing Association for establishing standards of conduct that respect consumer privacy.

I am especially pleased to see the leadership that the minister has demonstrated by making businesses responsible for maintaining acceptable standards that are in the consumer interest.

* * *

GLOBAL WARMING

Mr. Stan Darling (Parry Sound—Muskoka): Mr. Speaker, yesterday afternoon the Standing Committee on Environment released its third report on global warming fittingly entitled *Out of Balance: The Risks of Irreversible Climate Change*. The report is based on hearings that extended over eight months, a review of over 120 written submissions, and the testimony of more than 100 qualified witnesses.

The recommendations of the report are solid, comprehensive and realistic. Based on four principal premises, the report concludes that global warming is proven and validated scientifically, that global warming is the inevitable consequence of past and present human activity, that global warming is a dire threat to Canada and the entire planet, and that the time to act is now, without delay.

In memory of Dean Clay, the committee's principal researcher and adviser who passed away suddenly on October 22, 1990, let me say that Dean's outstanding assistance and contribution on this pressing global issue will be a legacy for generations to come.

* * *

POTATO INDUSTRY

Ms. Catherine Callbeck (Malpeque): Mr. Speaker, potato farmers in Prince Edward Island are still waiting for the federal government to come forward with its compensation package to assist those farmers affected by the PVY–N virus.

Farmers are looking to plant their crops within five weeks and must get their seed lined up. The uncertainty resulting from this delay is not only causing anxiety among the farmers. It is affecting their ability to obtain operating credit.

This problem does not only affect the potato industry. It has repercussions on the entire economy of my province.

Surely the welfare and security of the potato industry should be a priority. The U.S. ban was put in place almost two months ago. In that length of time surely this government has been able to put together the required compensation package.

I call on the federal government to delay no longer, to let the farmers of Prince Edward Island know where they stand, and to announce immediately a full and comprehensive compensation package.

* * *

FEDERAL–PROVINCIAL FORESTRY AGREEMENTS

Mr. Ray Funk (Prince Albert—Churchill River): Mr. Speaker, at the end of this week it will be two years since the last federal–provincial forestry agreement in Saskatchewan expired.

I have lost track of how many times this government has told me that an agreement is just around the corner. The Minister of Forestry himself came to Prince Albert last August and said it would be there by Christmas. Finally word circulated that on March 11 a new agreement would finally be signed.

A new agreement was signed yesterday in Manitoba, but what has happened in Saskatchewan? On March 6, Grant Devine's election timetable was derailed by the boundaries fiasco and we have not seen hide nor hair of the agreement since.

This farce has gone on long enough.

The sustainable development of Saskatchewan's forests and the livelihood of the people living in those forests are simply too important to be held hostage by Grant Devine's election shenanigans.

Therefore I call on this government to stop playing footsie with Grant Devine on this issue and to start giving Saskatchewan's forests and the forest communities the support it has promised for so long.

* * *

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Ross Stevenson (Durham): Mr. Speaker, medicare is the cornerstone of the social system, cherished by all Canadians. However few understand the actual cost of these excellent services, for example that it is much more expensive to treat minor health problems at hospital emergency wards rather than in doctors' offices.

In this age of computers we should provide everyone with a print-out showing the real cost of medical services received each year. Then we would have an informed public able to make more cost effective use of medicare, with resulting savings for all taxpayers.

We already get print-outs showing our Canada Pension entitlement. I urge the federal government and the provinces to give Canadians personal information about the actual cost of their medicare.

* * *

COST SHARING PROGRAMS

Mr. Jim Jordan (Leeds—Grenville): Mr. Speaker, the recently announced $80 million joint expenditure by the province of Quebec and the federal government should be looked upon as a positive step by all levels of government.

The 75-25 sharing arrangement to develop municipal roads, sewage and water facilities for industrial projects will be welcomed, I am sure, by the municipalities that benefit from it.

With a similar need for funds for regional development by municipalities in all provinces, it is hoped that the minister responsible will advise the House soon what the criteria are for provinces to apply for this assistance or tell us when similar cost sharing programs will be announced for other provinces.

The government is finally seeing the folly in its deindustrialization process and has taken a step in the right direction with Quebec, a step which should be repeated with all other provinces.

[*Translation*]

GUN CONTROL

Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Hubert): Mr. Speaker, last week, the National Firearms Association sent me a copy of the book entitled "Armed and Female" by the Americain author Paxton Quigley. It advocates the use of firearms as the only effective means of self-defense for women. It also puts forward an American philosophy, of an armed society, which is far from what we want in Canada. Increasing the number of firearms is not the answer to the problem of violence against women.

By sending me this book, the management of the National Firearms Association show their true intention, which is to copy the Americans. In spite of the pressures of these lobbyists working for American arms manufacturers, I will keep asking for more severe gun control measures, knowing I can count on the support of over 500,000 Canadians.

* * *

EASTERN ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, the Hawkesbury Employment Center which serves my riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell just released the most recent statistics on unemployment in Glengarry—Prescott—Russell and the verdict is a condemnation of the economic policy of the government opposite. Based on these figures, the rate of unemployment in the Hawkesbury area, in my riding, is 16.6 per cent. It has never been this high, even during the global recession of 1982. Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Prescott in particular, is in need of immediate help.

So, I call upon the government to develop an economic recovery plan for Eastern Ontario and the Hawkesbury area in particular.

* * *

[*English*]

ENERGY

Mr. Ross Harvey (Edmonton East): Mr. Speaker, after just six months in power, the New Democratic Government of Ontario has already left the Mulroney Conser-

vatives far behind on environmentally responsible energy policy.

As just one example, the Ontario government has ordered Ontario Hydro to divert $240 million, that is $60 million per year for four years, from nuclear energy development into reducing demand through energy conservation and efficiency.

That diversion alone is worth more than one and a half times the total annual energy department's spending on all federal programs for efficiency, conservation and alternate energy. Indeed, that total federal budget of $35 million a year is only $20 million more than Ontario Hydro will spend just on advertising its conservation and efficiency programs.

• (1410)

Members might wish to remember this as they take in the solar energy exposition in the West Block today and, thereafter, they may wish to redress this shameful imbalance.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Alan Redway (Don Valley East): Mr. Speaker, my constituents send me a very loud and clear message that in the next round of constitutional discussions native issues must be a major priority.

They do not want to see any more violence or armed confrontation. They do want to see a rapid and just settlement of all outstanding legitimate claims of native Canadians whether they involve land, self-government or sovereignty.

Mr. Speaker, you and I know that is not an easy task. Native leaders do not always agree with one another, let alone the government. The Mohawks at Oka, for example, are reportedly divided into seven factions all claiming to be the sole legitimate community leaders.

However it is essential that the government at least be seen to be doing all that it can to find a solution, and so far in spite of the minister's efforts that message is just not getting through.

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL FRANCOPHONE WOMEN'S EDUCATION WEEK

Mr. Eugène Bellemare (Carleton—Gloucester): Mr. Speaker, the *Réseau national d'action éducation femmes* established in 1980 has just celebrated its first national francophone women's education week throughout Canada.

It turned out to be a successful week thanks to the work done by RNAEF volunteers and to the financial support made available through the Secretary of State Women's Program. The purpose of this organization is to promote francophone women in all Canadian provinces through education and access to education.

I am proud to wear this badge which says that enlightened men respect and encourage women seeking equity. It was presented to me at the first exhibition of educational services for francophone women which took place in Orléans in the riding of Carleton—Gloucester.

Congratulations to the women of RNAEF.

* * *

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Before the CRTC yesterday, Mr. Speaker, Télé-Métropole and CFCF went after the CBC management with a vengeance and accused them of seeking to increase the unfair advantage the Crown corporation already has over the private television network.

Mr. Charles Bélanger singled out the CBC advertising revenues as well as the way the corporation has been promoting revenue-producing programs since the early 1980s, preferring airing *Dallas* to producing Canadian drama or documentaries on politics, the economy and the environment.

* * *

[*English*]

ORDER PAPER QUESTIONS

Mr. Doug Fee (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, I was astounded yesterday to find that it has cost up to $8,000 each to research answers to questions on the Order

Paper. In fact, some shared questions involving more than one department could exceed that $8,000 figure.

None of us can question the fact that we have the right, indeed the responsibility, to be thorough, but we also have the obligation to set an example of fiscal responsibility.

When the issue is pertinent and the information relevant for an important issue and not readily available, we have the right to demand it and the government the responsibility to provide it.

However, in the name of common sense and fiscal responsibility, let each of us ask only those questions we truly need. For the sake of the taxpayer, let us consider the value of the question as well as the cost of the answer.

* * *

[*Translation*]

BÉLANGER–CAMPEAU COMMISSION

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, I want to pay tribute to the men and women who sat on the Bélanger–Campeau Commission, particularly Bloc Québécois leader Lucien Bouchard.

A general consensus developed within this commission made up of various interests and groups, except for the Liberal Party Of Canada, the Progressive Conservative Party, and the Equality Party. Mr. Speaker, Quebec is serenely preparing for the future.

Within eighteen months Canada will have an opportunity to make formal offers to the people of Quebec. Ever more Quebecers are becoming aware that the referendum campaign has just begun and that, by October 26, 1992 at the latest, the majority of men and women in the province will vote in favour of the only realistic and practical option, sovereignty.

* * *

[*English*]

EXPO 92

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, I wish to draw the attention of the House to an article in today's edition of *The Ottawa Citizen* which describes the construction of Canada's pavilion at Expo 92 in Seville, Spain as being on time and on budget.

Mr. Gordon Smith, Canada's Deputy Commissioner General to Expo 92, is quoted as saying:

> We're ahead because we're the best organized country here, we planned and made decisions early on.

I have in my possession an internal External Affairs document which paints a much different picture, a much costlier picture of the construction of the Canadian pavilion. Under the heading of immediate problem, the document says:

> The situation today is that we are on time but not on budget, and we may need to return to TB for extra funding in the magnitude of $10 million.

In fact, the budget for the Canadian pavilion at Expo 92 has been revised upward by $2.4 billion in the 1990 Supplementary Estimates. This represents a 42 per cent increase in less than one year.

I hope the minister of external affairs will see fit to correct the misleading impression this story leaves in *The Ottawa Citizen* of the true cost of the Canadian pavilion and let Canadians know just how much of a financial bath we can expect to take.

* * *

MINING

Mr. John A. MacDougall (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what it is about the NDP. Whether we are talking about the member for Nickel Belt or his leader, the member for Yukon, they have got a bugaboo about the mining corporations not paying their fair share of taxes. In fact, the leader of the socialists began her questioning on Friday by suggesting that mining companies should pay more tax.

I know the leader was in downtown Toronto yesterday speaking to the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada at its annual meeting. I sincerely hope that she has learned something about the mining association. I hope she was listening to the men and women at the meeting.

She should have heard, I am sure, that the creators of wealth, the companies the NDP would like to hit hard with rising taxes, are certainly not in the best position to pay more new NDP taxes.

The business section of *The Globe and Mail* today said: "mining companies reeling: $1.4 million writedowns resulted from weak gold prices and bad decisions".

Again I hope that our socialist friends read *The Globe and Mail*. Perhaps they will stop ranting about things and learn a little more about what is common knowledge in the mining community.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*English*]

BELANGER–CAMPEAU COMMISSION

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

In the wee hours of the morning today a vote was taken at the Belanger–Campeau Commission in Quebec which could set the stage for the end of Canada.

At a time when leadership means standing to be counted, the Prime Minister and his party abstained in the vote.

Why did the Prime Minister refuse to stand and be counted for Canada?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, as usual my friend, the Acting Leader of the Opposition is, to put it charitably, only partly right.

In the wee hours of this morning there was not one vote. There were many votes taken at the Belanger–Campeau Commission, including the key vote which asked the members to endorse sovereignty as the preferred choice of Quebecers. The member of this government, Mr. Hogue, along with a member of her party, voted solidly against that petition.

With regard to what evolved as the ultimate package, and it having become clear that this might be endorsed by a larger number of people and become the basis of the negotiating position of the Government of Quebec, it was in respect of that appropriate that Mr. Hogue, who is the only member there as a member of the federal government that may be called upon to begin negotiations at an appropriate point in time, neither speak for nor against what is their bargaining position.

An hon. member: Their bargaining position?

Mr. Mulroney: Their bargaining position, exactly. It is one that would be set out by the Government of the Province of Quebec.

I find it very interesting that last week the Acting Leader of the Opposition rose and asked all parties in the House to depoliticize the question of national unity and today, quite in error and with mischief, is trying to politicize something that should be depoliticized.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, the timeframe agreed upon by the majority of the Bélanger–Campeau Commission to give Canada an ultimate chance is much narrower. That is why we could not approve the report.

But everyone agrees that the status quo is no longer satisfactory. We need a thorough reform if we want this country to survive.

Given the tight schedule we are stuck with, whether we like it or not, when will the Prime Minister show national leadership and disclose his own agenda so that a consensus can be achieved as to the necessary reforms for a new Canada?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Indeed, Mr. Speaker, my friend is absolutely right. The status quo is no longer satisfactory and has not been since the Constitution was patriated in 1981–1982. In-depth changes were needed and some, although modest, were agreed upon in the Meech Lake Accord which my friend supported.

In spite of these modest changes endorsed by the Liberal Party as well as the New Democratic Party, a Premier, the Premier of Newfoundland, failed to have them confirmed by a vote in the legislature of his province.

The fact remains nonetheless that deep changes are needed as I advocated in a speech I made in Buckingham. As a matter of fact, that is one of the reasons for setting up the Spicer Commission as well as the Edwards–Beaudoin Special Joint Committee. It is also one of the reasons why the government House leader gave notice to the hon. members last week that they will be involved more closely in a parliamentary process aimed precisely at preparing reforms for Canada.

• (1420)

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is accusing me of politicizing the debate. I say that if anyone in this House is politicizing the debate, that person, is right across the way. When the time comes to make a critical decision on a question as

fundamental as the unity of Canada, people understand yes, they understand no, but they don't understand abstention.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Copps: The Prime Minister's representative abstained on a matter as fundamental as the future of this country. People have a right to know why the Prime Minister asked his representative on the Bélanger-Campeau Commission to abstain. Why didn't he show more leadership?

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I did not accuse my hon. friend of politicizing the debate. I merely reminded her that last week, she asked us to depoliticize this issue, and by starting off with this question today in the House, she was putting a negative slant on the activities of a member of the government party. I explained firmly and clearly why Mr. Hogue, who voted against sovereignty and took part in every vote, abstained from this particular vote for entirely legitimate reasons. And when the hon. member accuses me of stalling, today, in some parts of this country, I am suffering the consequences of having had the guts to stand firm during the debate on the Meech Lake Accord. It wasn't easy.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Mulroney: I knew at the time that it would be difficult and that our constitutional proposals were not necessarily popular with everyone, but we knew they represented a very clear and tremendous advantage for a united Canada. In fact, this view was shared by my hon. friend, the hon. member for Hamilton East and by the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard, according to an article in the *Toronto Star* published on June 4—an important date, Mr. Speaker—which read as follows:

[*English*]

Mr. Martin and Ms. Copps said the following. Mr. Martin said on June 4, "Jean, for the love of God, you want to become Prime Minister of Canada but you give no indication of where you are going"—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: I think we will have to move along. The hon. member for LaSalle—Émard.

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

When is the Prime Minister going to stop reading mouldy newspaper clippings and give this country some leadership?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, the Allaire report and the proceedings of the Bélanger-Campeau Commission provide a bitter commentary on the failure of this government's economic policies. Look around Montreal. Thirty per cent unemployed in East Montreal, and 50 per cent below the poverty line in the southwest. This government's economic policies are a major handicap for those who want to save this country. My question is this: At a time of national crisis, does the Prime Minister really think his pitiful performance is going to be an incentive for Canadians to meet the necessary challenges and stay together?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Just the same, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has reported some significant economic progress which translated in a major reduction of over 4 points in interest rates since April of last year. But my hon. friend says:

[*English*]

"When are you going to give leadership on the question of national unity?" I am not quoting just anybody, I am quoting the man who just stood up to reproach me, who said of the person who became his leader: "Jean, for the love of God, you want to become Prime Minister of Canada, but you give us no indication where you are going". And Ms. Copps said: "Jean, you have not understood Quebec and you are gambling dangerously with the future of Canada. One does not find the future by looking in a rear view mirror".

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Mr. Speaker, what I should have said is: "Brian, for the love of God, will you think of the country".

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard): The turmoil in Quebec is about non-confidence in this government's handling of the economy and of the country. Interest rates, set by John Crow, a dollar set by the United States, no

industrial policy, no hope. The true crisis in Confederation is that this nation—

Mr. Speaker: Will the hon. member put the question.

Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard): My question is this. What does it take before this government realizes that if Ottawa is going to continue to abstain on the major issues of the day, then Canadians and Quebecers will look elsewhere for leadership, because this government has given them no choice, no chance.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, we are not abstaining from the great issues of the day. This government has taken a position in regard to the unity of Canada. We obtained the signature of all of the premiers, of the three leaders of the House of Commons, a great statement of Canadian unity and my friend says; "I should have said, Brian, what are you doing"? But that is not what you said. You said: "Jean, what are you doing? You are going to ruin Canada, Jean". That is what you said in June 1990. You said it, because the Leader of the Liberal Party turned his back—

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. It is clear that a referendum will be held in Quebec in 1992. Many people believe that we will not have enough time to respond in a constructive fashion. I think it is possible, but only if there are a legitimate process and a government with the necessary mandate to achieve it. My question to the Prime Minister is this: How does the Prime Minister intend to secure this mandate from Canadian men and women?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, Canada was not founded by a Parliamentary committee. It was built by men and women who wanted a better future for themselves and their children. It is not a Parliamentary committee which will decide today whether our children will be entitled to the same privileges as Canadian citizens. The purpose of the Meech Lake Accord was to bring Quebec back into the Canadian constitutional fold. Its failure will not prevent us as Parliamentarians and Canadians eager to preserve the integrity and the unity of our great country to make the necessary effort in order to ensure the participation of Parliamentarians who will give a new direction to a strong and united Canada.

• (1430)

[*English*]

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I agree that of course parliamentarians are very important in this debate. However, the Constitution of a country is not between parliamentarians, it is not between governments, but it is between a nation and its people.

I want to say to the Prime Minister that we cannot be put in the position of last year, where we had a crisis kind of week and there is not now an elected federal leader in this country, including myself, which has the mandate to fundamentally restructure the country.

I say to the Prime Minister that the kind of work that has to be done will require the support, not just of parliamentarians, not just of provincial and territorial leaders, but of the people of Canada.

How does the Prime Minister propose to get that support and that mandate from the Canadian people for a new Constitution and Canadian unity?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, is my hon. friend putting in doubt the traditions of the British parliamentary system whereby a government seeks a mandate and is elected for a given period of time? The NDP says it is archaic. Go tell Bob Rae it is archaic. He says he has a mandate that lasts five years and he plans to exercise it. That is what I am going to do.

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister knows, Canadians know, that this government has no mandate from the Canadian people to fundamentally restructure this country.

It is essential, if we are not going to go through the high stakes, high pressure tactics used last summer, and be thrust into next summer before a referendum in Quebec, through some kind of Russian roulette crisis tactic again, that this Prime Minister and this government seek a mandate from the Canadian people for a vision of Canadian unity and a Canada that can go into the 21st century.

I say to the Prime Minister, how long is this government prepared to wait before it gets the confidence and support of the Canadian people?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I do not know why my hon. friend is being so critical of what took place last year because she, further to some meetings we had, stood in front of 24 Sussex and said that the crisis was not one of the federal government's making and that the crisis, by and large, was being handled well. If she has changed her mind on that, fair ball, but that is my recollection of what she had to say.

With regard to how we involve the Canadian people, we involve the Canadian people through the Parliament of Canada. We already have two commissions going and we propose to directly involve—

Mr. Speaker, I am answering a question from the NDP leader which I am trying to treat seriously, but her members will not allow me to answer. The only way to do it, as best I know, is to involve the members directly in parliamentary work that will give rise to solutions to this great problem we are confronting. Otherwise, I would have to conclude that my hon. friend would want me to call an election.

I cannot do that because after the election the NDP members are usually pretty hard on their leader.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister. The Leader of the Opposition spoke in favour of a united Canada before the Bélanger-Campeau Commission, but the Prime Minister of Canada did not have the courage to appear and support Canada before the commissioners. Worse still, his representative refrained from voting. So here is my question: How can Canadians feel confident that this Prime Minister will maintain Canadian unity, whereas he prevents his own member from voting in favour of Canada?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, that is a typically Liberal stunt. We have just heard a statement to the effect that in the wee hours of the morning Mr. Hogue, faced with a proposition supportive of sovereignty, voted against. Today, because of a subsequent vote, they want to suggest, for the reasons I have just explained, that this makes the Progressive Conservative Party or the government an enemy of Canada. Well, Mr. Speaker, my friend who was once a loyal supporter of our latest consitutional initiative will remember what some people described as the degrading spectacle at Calgary when we saw Mr. Wells congratulating Mr. Chrétien who was heard to say "Clyde, thank you for all your good work".

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard): Mr. Speaker, the silence of the member for Outremont over the final report of the Bélanger-Campeau Commission might have very serious consequences. My question to the Prime Minister is very simple: When will you stop playing poker with Canada? Stop playing poker!

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, my friend knows that very well, for as parliamentarians we were together in the long struggle in favour of Canadian unity.

Mr. Lapierre: That's over!

Mr. Mulroney: No, it is not over. The hon. member for Shefford—as it happened, at the time he was campaign manager for the member for LaSalle—Émard—was supportive of Canadian unity. To the member for Shefford I say that we may have lost it for a few moments, but we will get it back later on.

[*English*]

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister.

Does the Prime Minister agree that there should be a referendum in Quebec on its sovereignty; in other words, separation from Canada as early as 1992? If he does not agree, then why did he instruct his representative on the committee to abstain and not vote against this proposal? The people of Canada deserve a clear and definite answer.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I have given an answer. Perhaps I could ask my friend to check the premise of his own question.

Subsequent to that decision, Mr. Remillard, Quebec's inter-governmental affairs minister, made it clear that a referendum on sovereignty is not cast in stone. At 5:20 this morning I was listening to the CBC, as I do every morning, and he said: "If we receive proposals from the rest of Canada and if we decide to hold a referendum on them, and if Quebecers say yes, that means that we will have to postpone the sovereignty referendum."

The Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs is already acknowledging that there may not be a referendum on sovereignty. The objective of all parliamentarians, including this member, should be to work constructively to make sure that there is not that referendum on

sovereignty, but that we come together with proposals that will keep Canada solidly bound together.

• (1440)

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that before the Prime Minister heard Mr. Remillard on television, he instructed his representative on the commission to abstain and not to vote against a proposal to have a referendum on sovereignty in Quebec as early as 1992. And he has not explained that fact.

I ask the Prime Minister, why did he instruct his representative on the Belanger–Campeau commission to abstain on the final vote, and therefore to take a position which indicated indifference to the future of Canada? That is not leadership; that is not fighting for unity.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, this may be quite embarrassing for my hon. friend. He is suggesting that there is something really extraordinarily anti–Canadian to have voted in favour of that proposal. He will have to explain to his Liberal colleagues in Quebec his chagrin at their conduct, because all of the provincial members voted in favour of it.

Has the member told Mr. Bourassa how offended he is at his anti–Canadian conduct? The last time this gentleman rose in the House it was to say that Mr. Bourassa's proposals guaranteed Canada a solid last chance to come together in one united nation. And that is exactly what we are trying to do.

Now, I did not give any instructions to the member. That only happens in other parties. But I can tell him this—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Mulroney: Mr. Speaker, I simply mention that my hon. friend's question is predicated on the assumption that what Mr. Remillard has already said is false.

Mr. Remillard is quoted very directly as saying that indeed there may not be a referendum on sovereignty. I think that if my Liberal friends can put aside their partisanship for a minute, they will agree that the avoidance of that referendum would be important for all Canadians.

* * *

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): My question is to the Prime Minister, who has had no mandate to do what he has done to the CBC.

At a time when this nation is at a crossroads, at a time when our collective future is at stake, the Prime Minister with a swing of his financial broad axe has decimated the CBC as an instrument of national identity.

I want to ask the Prime Minister, when will he finally begin to listen to the people of Canada? When will he learn that the bludgeoning of the CBC will only jeopardize Canada's future as a nation? And, when will he give back to the CBC the level of funding that it deserves to serve as the heartbeat of Canada?

You've got no mandate to do what you've done. No wonder we are on life support.

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Yes, Mr. Speaker, all of us did listen to the CBC this morning and do appreciate what they do.

But, Mr. Speaker, the budget of $1.4 billion, global receipts which have been increasing constantly since 1985, is apparently enough from what I read, the chairman–designate of the CBC having said so in the month of February. Now, this is only one month later. I am assuming he must still feel the same way.

The CRTC has been holding some hearings. Today is its last day. I imagine that we would want to give them a chance to report on their hearings.

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): The members continue to laugh. But CBC president Gerard Veilleux has warned that the next round of cuts and the loss of 500 more jobs will make it impossible for the CBC to do its job as Canada's national voice. Then it is going to be up to the government to decide the fate of the CBC.

With the Federal Court's decision today that the political will to maintain the CBC in fact rests with

Parliament, will the Prime Minister assure this House that the government will provide stable, multi-year funding for the CBC? And will he stop abdicating his responsibility toward the people of Canada and stand up for the CBC?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of people standing up for the CBC, all of us who have come to respect and appreciate the work that it has been doing. Yes, it has been receiving more money, not less, constantly since 1985.

One might want to reflect that there is certainly an awful lot of public money that is going into the production of some of the work that the CBC is showing on its channels. One should not forget other organizations like Telefilm, the National Film Board and indeed other public money that is available from other levels of government.

Certainly there has been a very serious significant contribution that has been constantly available to the CBC.

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BELANGER-CAMPEAU COMMISSION

Mr. David Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the right hon. Prime Minister. Canadians want desperately our Prime Minister to speak with one voice and they want that statement to be the same in both official languages and in all regions of the country.

Would the Prime Minister, tell Canadians why he instructed or refused to instruct his colleague on the Belanger-Campeau Commission to abstain from this very important vote in this very important report. Why has the Prime Minister failed to seize the opportunity and to exercise real judgment not only in Quebec, but throughout Canada?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I know that it is the duty of the opposition to score as many political points as it can, but I think Canadians would hope that it would try to avoid scoring cheap points at the cost of national unity.

I have already explained to the colleagues of my hon. friend that there were a number of votes. At all times, particularly in regard to the specific vote that came forward, I believe it was some time during the late evening or early morning when they were called upon to vote on whether the proper orientation for Quebec would be a sovereign one, that some 17 members, including Mr. Hogue, voted solidly against. That was a strong statement of commitment to the unity of Canada.

Inasmuch as Mr. Hogue is the only member of that group who is also a member of the Government of Canada which must play an important part in negotiations, it is important that he not be associated with or seek to denigrate the work of those with whom he will be called upon to dialogue. That is the entirely legitimate reason why Mr. Hogue made a very, very strong commitment to the unity of Canada and yet, as a procedural matter, indicated that because we will be called upon to initiate these discussions, he did not want to place a yea or a nay on the document that comes from the Government of the Province of Quebec.

Mr. David Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): Obviously, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is trying to have it both ways.

I ask the Prime Minister, through you Mr. Speaker, as to why the Prime Minister has failed to seize this opportunity to show real leadership in the province of Quebec and throughout Canada? Why has he abdicated his responsibility to Canadians from coast to coast? Why has he refused to instruct his member of Parliament to vote again this report or is it because the minister of industry—

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I should remind my hon. friend that the best way that I could show leadership in the province of Quebec, as Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party and this government, was to enter the province of Quebec as a candidate in the last election and get myself elected by Quebecers to the House of Commons.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

* * *

• (1450)

BILL C-80

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

Today we presented in Parliament 25 boxes of petitions organized by the students at Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal containing over 500,000 signatures asking the

government to act quickly on strict gun control laws to protect Canadians against violence with guns.

When will the minister take steps to amend Bill C-80 to include the improvements recommended in the petitions presented today, and also the improvements recommended by the special committee which reported on February 15? When will this be done?

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. I know he has been very actively involved in this issue.

When I visited the students at Ecole Polytechnique last spring, I had the opportunity to discuss with them their proposals and to receive symbolically the petitions which were delivered to Ottawa today.

I have had, as he knows, the benefit of the advice of the special committee. In the week of March 11, my special national advisory council on firearms met and also considered the committee's report.

I am hoping to table before the House, very quickly, my response to the committee's recommendations. They are excellent recommendations. Some of them have suggested things that I think need to be dealt with and thought out in a little bit more detail.

I am anxious to get on with Bill C-80. I am not sure whether we will have a chance to begin second reading before we rise. If we do not, I will table before the House my response to the committee report, and ask my department to redraft the bill to be tabled in an amended form, and therefore to permit quicker passage when we come back.

At the very soonest moment, I want to advise the members of the House exactly what I propose to bring forward as a new and improved bill. I thank the hon. member for his participation in the process which is going to give us better gun control.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, in the petitions tabled today, over 500,000 Canadians asked the government to designate semi-automatic paramilitary rifles as restricted weapons. Is the government ready to act upon this recommendation or not?

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, the answer is yes. We have already studied this recommendation, but what is missing is a set of criteria to identify military and paramilitary rifles. I set up my own advisory board, and its first task will be to make a list of the characteristics by which these can be identified. We already have the power to implement such recommendations and I hope to be able to do so.

* * *

[*English*]

TRADE

Mrs. Louise Feltham (Wild Rose): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of State for Grains and Oilseeds.

As recently reported by the Canada West Foundation, the Canada-U.S. trade agreement is working, and working well. The U.S., which imports about one million tonnes of vegetable oil and 400,000 tonnes of meal each year, represents a potentially large market for Canadian canola producers.

Can the minister advise the House what the government is doing to provide the Canadian producers with increased access to this U.S. market?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister of State (Grains and Oilseeds)): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the Liberals hold so little regard for a well regarded research institution located in western Canada. They might be interested in knowing that the research institute located in Calgary found that Canada increased its high-tech imports to the United States considerably over the last two years, while imports remained flat.

With regard specifically to the member's question, the opposition might also be interested in knowing that as a result of the free trade agreement, at the beginning of next year Canadian canola, a very high quality food that is associated with healthy living standards, will be going into the United States tariff free. This has the potential to not only increase our exports to the United States, but it should make us more competitive to the tune of about $25 to $30 a tonne, which is good news for farmers in these difficult times.

BILL C–78

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, last year the Minister of the Environment had a difficult time with the government's environmental assessment legislation and guidelines. He introduced Bill C–78 in an attempt to alleviate some of those problems.

In doing so, the Minister of the Environment said Canada needed new environmental assessment legislation badly. He said: "It is a tool that this country cannot do without."

My question is to the Minister of the Environment, who has admitted that he is prepared to amend Bill C–78, but he has ignored the legislative committee of this House for the past three months. What has happened to his commitment toward environmental assessment? Does he really believe that this country needs assessment legislation, or is he losing the battle to the big business colleagues in cabinet?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is quite right. When I introduced the legislation last June, I made it clear that I was very interested in seeing what recommendations would come from Canadians being heard during the committee proceedings.

We heard quite a bit from Canadians and from the opposition parties during those hearings.

We are still very much committed to the legislation and we will be proposing to the legislative committee a number of amendments to try to improve the legislation and make sure that this legislation is just the best in the world.

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the Minister of the Environment.

It was December 11, in answer to a question I put in this House, that the minister said he would accept amendments to C–78. Today, I have presented 111 amendments to Bill C–78 and presented them to the Minister of the Environment this morning.

I ask the Minister of the Environment, as a supplementary question, is he prepared to accept those amendments, which include such logical and reasonable things as an environmental auditor and intervenor funding?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, it might have been helpful to advance this file if the hon. member opposite had given me a copy of the 111 amendments that he is proposing to Bill C–78.

* * *

CONFIDENCE MOTIONS

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Given the negative impacts of very strict party discipline on representative democracy and public confidence in our parliamentary institutions, for instance the events which took place last week over an opposition motion on medicare, would the government be prepared to introduce the following motion: "That in the opinion of this House, a defeat of a government motion should not be considered as sufficient reason for the resignation of the government unless followed by a vote of lack of confidence", or does the Prime Minister perceive such parliamentary reform to be contrary to the British parliamentary procedure?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, prior to that member's election, upon the election of this government, the McGrath commission was introduced by this Prime Minister which increased the opportunities for members to participate. The rule changes debate, which will be commencing this afternoon, in fact further enhance that.

I look forward to discussions involving how we might meet the objectives. I would wonder how one could reconcile signing a document saying: "All candidates of the Reform Party must strictly adhere to the policies of the Reform Party with free votes." If the question is in support of the policies of the Reform Party then clearly you could not, by oath, vote the way the member herself chose to do.

• (1500)

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is also for the Prime Minister.

The British House of Commons, which is the matriarch of parliaments, has adopted procedures which permit members to defeat a government motion without necessarily defeating the government as a result of the backbenchers in the British system exerting their constitutional rights and responsibilities.

Would the Prime Minister at least consider instructing his House leader to study the possibility of adopting such a procedure here and reporting the results of such a study to the House at the earliest possible convenience?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I believe the hon. member is accurate in terms of what should constitute confidence motions. I would also suggest to her that if we are going to get to this question of individual members being free to express their views, we are going to have to get at the question of partisanship and party blocs in the House.

For example, in the British system all members, backbenchers and opposition, have an equal opportunity to ask questions. They are selected by lot. We would have to start there. We would have to change our voting system, but I think that would be an improvement. I would be willing to engage in those kinds of discussions.

* * *

MAPLE LEAF FUND

Mr. David Walker (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration.

The Maple Leaf Fund in western Canada, approved by the minister of immigration, has been exposed by the media as being nothing more than a front for a Winnipeg Tory fundraiser who has taken advantage of investor immigrants to build up his business empire.

Will the minister indicate to the House that the government will put an immediate stop to this abuse and protect new Canadians from Tory bagmen?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I simply do not accept the premise of the question.

Let me say that the government has introduced the investor program as a way of ensuring that in different regions of Canada there is access to investment funds through the immigration process. We have maintained high standards of monitoring on this program throughout.

The economic benefits of each particular fund are determined by the provinces, and everyone who functions as an investor immigrant is subject to the securities laws of provinces.

I simply do not accept either the premise or the conclusion that the hon. member states.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I want to rise on a point of order to ask that you rule that Motion No. 30 on the Order Paper before the House is in whole or in part improperly before the House and in whole or in part is out of order.

My concern is centred on two distinct elements of this motion before us. The first is found in paragraph 30, which proposes to amend the right of the Crown to debate Supply before it is granted to the Crown.

Mr. Speaker: I wonder if I could say to the hon. member for Kamloops that I will hear him in a moment on the point of order.

Mr. Andre, seconded by Mr. Epp, moves:

That the Standing Orders of the House of Commons in force on the date of notice of this motion be amended as follows:

1. That Standing Order 24 be deleted and the following substituted therefore:

Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Speaker: I should say to the House that the motion which has been brought before the House by the government is a very long one. Hon. members can see that it is nearly an inch thick in pages. The usual convention in this place is that in circumstances like this the courtesies are extended and usually the Speaker is allowed to dispense with the reading of the entire motion.

I am going to ask the House again if the House will give me the courtesy to dispense with reading nearly three-quarters of an inch of documents.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I would like to indicate to the Chair that we do feel it is a long motion and we would be more than happy to offer our co-operation in allowing the Chair to dispense rather than read it into the record. All members can read it.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I think on every occasion to date when we have had a lengthy motion, a bill, or anything for consideration of that size we have asked that we simply have it tabled. We are talking about changing the fundamental ways that this House operates. It is of specific interest to every member.

Since you have been in the chair, Mr. Speaker, I would submit to you that for you to read it would be inappropriate. I notice that you have your hon. colleague standing by who probably has rested during Question Period and ought to be prepared. I think on behalf of my caucus we would like to hear the details of the proposals being brought forward.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, may I just beg the indulgence of members of the NDP. We have had this motion printed twice in the Order Paper every day for a while. We have it printed twice in the Order Paper today. I have read it. They have read it. Why don't we proceed?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lapierre: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I can also tell the Chair that, unlike the majority of members who are part of national caucuses, we were not consulted at all, while we know that somemembers and House leaders have been for nearly a year. But these rules apply as much to us as to the main political parties. We were not afforded the same treatment. The government leader did not even have the courtesy of at least notifying us. He acted in a sneaky way. So, Mr. Speaker, we want to have the benefit of listening and thinking while this document is read to us, because we did not have as much time as the other members to examine it.

[*English*]

Mr. Nowlan: Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. Very quickly I must say I have read the 30 pages of material on the Standing Orders. Obviously it is a very important matter, but the whole reason this House is in such a state of disrepute is the necessity of going through reading it. Frankly, this is the type of thing that all members could have read. You cannot understand it until you relate it and correlate it to the Standing Orders as amended. This is what makes this place such a farce.

I would hope that perhaps the hon. House leader of the government might add another clause, if you are going to get into debate and procedures, to make sure that we can prevent this type of hocus-pocus and get on to the substance.

There are many matters of substance to be discussed and debated on these matters of procedure, rather than this business of a preliminary procedural ambush and stating with a straight face that your counterpart can read, when we all know that if ever there were a motion not to be read, which does not make sense unless you have the Standing Orders, this is it.

I am really disappointed by these paragons of procedural virtue to my left who try to pretend one thing and practise another.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge some of the comments made by my hon. colleague. We have to recognize that we are here as the elected representatives of the people of Canada. The people of Canada who are watching this performance are obviously interested, but I simply have to remind the House that when the question is put it must be put and, I might add, in both of Canada's languages.

We would expect the motion to be read in English and then in French.

• (1510)

Mr. Murphy: Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point, because I think it is important for people to understand what is going on.

We have a motion which was put before this House on March 22. This is March, 26 and we have not yet started debate on it. People do not realize that this government has said publicly time after time that it wants to ram these changes through.

We want to point out how massive and how destructive these changes are. I think that point can be made very well by having the Speaker read exactly how many rules

of this House the government wants to change with almost no debate.

Mr. Speaker: The House has certainly expressed its feelings on this issue. So that everybody understands, there is a right under the rules to have the motion read. In the absence of the House's consent to allow me to dispense with reading it all, it will of course be read. The hon. member is correct; it will be read in both official languages of our country.

I shall commence to do that in a few minutes.

I cannot help but point out that, as the afternoon wears on and as fatigue overtakes my efforts and the efforts of others, we might resort to a long-standing tradition of this House that invites hon. members to come forward and take the chair. There is no question about where I will be looking first, if that should become necessary.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Andre, seconded by Mr. Epp, moved:

1. That Standing Order 24 be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"24.(1) The House shall meet on Mondays at 11.00 o'clock a.m., on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays at 10.00 o'clock a.m. and on Wednesdays at 2.00 o'clock p.m. unless otherwise provided by Standing or Special Order of this House.

(2) At 1.00 o'clock p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays, the Speaker shall leave the Chair until 2.00 o'clock p.m.

(3) At 6.00 o'clock p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, at 8.00 o'clock p.m. on Wednesdays and at 4.00 o'clock p.m. on Fridays, the Speaker shall adjourn the House until the next sitting day."

2. That section 27(1) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"27.(1) On the tenth sitting day preceding June 23 a motion to extend the hours of sitting to a specific hour during the last ten sitting days may be proposed, without notice, by any Minister during routine proceedings."

3. That section 28(2) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"(2) When the House meets on a day, or sits after the normal meeting hour on a day, set out in column A, and then adjourns, it shall stand adjourned to the day set out in column B.

Column A;	Column B:
The Friday preceding Thanksgiving Day	The Second Monday following that Friday.
The Friday preceding Remembrance Day.	The second Monday following that Friday.
The second Friday preceding Christmas Day.	The first Monday in February.
The Friday preceding the week marking the mid-way point between the first Monday in February and the Friday preceding Good Friday.	The second Monday following that Friday.
The Friday preceding Good Friday.	The Monday following Easter Monday.
The Friday preceding the week marking the mid-way point between the Monday following Easter Monday and June 23. (This shall not apply for calendar year 1991.)	The second Monday following that Friday or, if that MOnday is the day fixed for the celebration of the birthday of the Sovereign on the Tuesday following that Monday.
June 23 or the Friday preceding if June 23 falls on a Saturday, a Sunday or a Monday.	The second Monday following Labour Day."

4. That section 30(3) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"(3) At 3.00 o'clock p.m. on Mondays and Wednesdays, at 10.00 o'clock a.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and at 12.00 o'clock noon on Fridays, the House shall proceed to the ordinary daily routine of business, which shall be as follows:

Tabling of Documents (pursuant to Standing Orders 32 or 109)

Statements by Ministers (pursuant to Standing Order 33)

Presenting Reports from Inter-parliamentary Delegations (pursuant to Standing Order 34)

Presenting Reports from Committees (pursuant to Standing Order 35)

Introduction of Government Bills

Introduction of Private Members' Bills

First Reading of Senate Public Bills

Motions

Presenting Petitions (pursuant to Standing Order 36(6))

Questions on *Order Paper*."

5. That section 30(6) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"(6) Except as otherwise provided in these Standing Orders, the order of business shall be as follows:

(Monday)

(Before the daily routine of business)

Private Members' Business—from 11.00 o'clock a.m. to 12.00 o'clock noon:

Public Bills, Private Bills, Notices of Motions and Notices of Motions (Papers).

Government Orders.

(After the daily routine of business)

Government Orders.

(Tuesday and Thursday)

(After the daily routine of business)

Government Orders.

Private Members' Business—from 5.00 to 6.00 o'clock p.m.:

Public Bills, Private Bills, Notices of Motions and Notices of Motions (Papers).

(Wednesday)

(After the daily routine of business)

Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers.

Government Orders.

Private Members' Business—from 7.00 to 8.00 o'clock p.m.:

Public Bills, Private Bills, Notices of Motions and Notices of Motions (Papers).

(Friday)

(Before the daily routine of business)

Government Orders.

(After the daily routine of business)

Government Orders.

Private Members' Business—from 3.00 to 4.00 o'clock p.m.:

Public Bills, Private Bills, Notices of Motions and Notices of Motions (Papers).

(7) Notwithstanding Standing Order 24(3), if Private Members' Business is to be taken up on a day, other than a Monday, appointed for the consideration of the business of supply, the time provided therefor shall be delayed by one hour; provided that it shall be further delayed by the time required for the completion of any division arising out of the business of supply or any deferred division set down for that day. Upon the completion of Private Members' Business, the Speaker shall adjourn the House until the next sitting day."

• (1520)

[*English*]

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I know how seriously you are approaching this.

It seems to me that while it has always been tradition for a Speaker to stand when reading the motion being considered by the House, I think you will find that there will be unanimous consent to at least permit you to sit down and read the motion.

Mr. Speaker: I may take the hon. member's suggestion.

I certainly appreciate the concern that is being expressed for the Speaker. I must say that the point of order taken by the hon. member for Kamloops has caused me to lose my place.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: I may start over again.

Mr. Soetens: Mr. Speaker, I think it very commendable for the opposition to make that suggestion.

In light of the fact that it is costing about $500,000 every hour for you to do this, and your suggestion that you were going to call on members of the House to relieve you when you become fatigued—I know you have indicated that you are going to call on those members opposite who object to it being tabled—I would prefer that you become fatigued very quickly so that you can call on the opposition members who will continue to stand to read the particular motion that is in front of the House.

I would prefer you to continue standing so that we can then encourage them to stand and waste taxpayers' money at the rate of $500,000 per hour.

Mr. Dingwall: Mr. Speaker, on a brief point of order, I listened to the comments of members opposite as to

what is taking place. Let us be perfectly clear that when they are referring to the opposition, they are not referring to the Official Opposition of this House.

Let that be very clear. If members opposite wish to refer to the opposition, I think they should specify as to whom they are referring and not blanket us all with the same brush.

Mr. Soetens: Mr. Speaker, on the same point, I do want to apologize for leaving the impression that it may be all members of the opposition.

I guess where I was lost was the fact that all of the independents are not here. Some of them requested that you read the motion.

There are some members of the NDP here and certainly they are the people I was referring to, and I hope you will call on them very soon to stand and read.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker:

6. That Standing Order 35 be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"35.(1) Reports to the House from committees may be made by Members standing in their places, at the time provided pursuant to Standing Order 30(3) or 81(4)(c), provided that the Member may be permitted to give a succinct explanation of the subject-matter of the report.

(2) Upon presentation of a report accompanied by supplementary or dissenting opinions or recommendations pursuant to Standing Order 108(1), a committee member of the Official Opposition representing those who supported the opinion or opinions expressed in the appended material may also rise to give a succinct explanation thereof."

7. That section 36(6) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"(6) Any Member desiring to present a petition, in his or her place in the House, may do so on "Presenting Petitions", a period not to exceed 15 minutes, during the ordinary daily routine of business."

8. That section 37(3) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"(3) A Member who is not satisfied with the response to a question asked on any day at this stage, or a Member who has been told by the Speaker that the question is not urgent, may give notice that he or she intends to raise the subject-matter of the question on the adjournment of the House. The notice referred to herein, whether or not it is given orally during the oral question period provided pursuant to Standing Order 30(5), must be given in writing to the Speaker not later than one hour following that period the same day. Unless previously disposed of, the said notice shall be deemed withdrawn after the forty-fifth sitting day from the day of notice."

9. That sections 38(1) and 38(2) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"38.(1) At 6.00 o'clock p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, the Speaker may, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Orders 24(3) and 67(2), deem that a motion to adjourn the House has been made and seconded, whereupon such motion shall be debatable for not more than thirty minutes.

(2) No matter shall be debated during the thirty minutes herein provided, unless notice thereof has been given by a Member as provided in Standing Order 37(3). No debate on any one matter raised during this period shall last for more than six minutes."

10. That section 38(5) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"(5) The Member raising the matter may speak for not more than four minutes. A Minister of the Crown, or a Parliamentary Secretary speaking on behalf of a Minister, if he or she wishes to do so, may speak for not more than two minutes. When debate has lasted for a total of thirty minutes, or when the debate on the matter or matters raised has ended, whichever comes first, the Speaker shall deem the motion to adjourn to have been carried and shall adjourn the House until the next sitting day."

11. That section 39(5) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"(5)(a) A Member may request that the Ministry respond to a specific question within forty-five days by so indicating when filing his or her question.

(b) If such a question remains unanswered at the expiration of the said period of forty-five days, the Member who put the question may rise in the House under "Questions on *Order Paper*" and give notice that he or she intends to raise the subject-matter thereof on the adjournment of the House."

12. That Standing Order 41 be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"41.(1) At the ordinary hour of daily adjournment of the House, at 2.00 o'clock p.m. on Mondays, at 11.00 o'clock a.m. on Fridays or at the mid-day interruption, unless otherwise provided, the proceedings then under consideration shall stand over until the next sitting day or later the same sitting day after the period provided pursuant to Standing Order 30(5), as the case may be, when it will be taken up at the same stage where its progress was interrupted.

(2) If debate on any Order of the Day be interrupted by the House being adjourned by motion or for want of a quorum, such motion or Order shall be allowed to stand and retain its precedence on the *Order Paper* for the next sitting, provided that if debate on any item of Private Members' Business not selected pursuant to Standing Order 92 is so interrupted, it shall thereupon be dropped from the *Order Paper*."

13. That Standing Order 43 be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"43.(1) Unless otherwise provided in these Standing Orders, when the Speaker is in the Chair, no Member, except the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, or a Minister moving a government order and the Member speaking in reply immediately after such Minister, shall speak for more than twenty minutes at a time in any debate. Following each twenty-minute speech, a period not exceeding ten minutes shall be made available, if required, to allow Members to ask questions and comment briefly on matters relevant to the speech and to allow responses thereto.

(2) The Whip of a party may indicate to the Speaker at any time during a debate governed by this Standing Order that one or more of the periods of debate limited pursuant to section (1) of this Standing Order and allotted to Members of his or her party are to be divided in two."

14. That the following new Standing Order be added after Standing Order 44:

"44.1.(1) The Clerk of the House shall cause to be kept at the Table a Register of Paired Members, in which any Member of the government party and any Member of an Opposition party may have their names entered together by their respective Whips, to indicate that they will not take part in any recorded division held on the date inscribed on that page of the Register; provided that independent Members of Parliament may sign the Register in their own right.

(2) On any day on which one or more recorded divisions have taken place, the names of the Members so entered shall be printed in the *Debates* and the *Votes and Proceedings*, immediately following the entry for each of the said divisions."

15. That sections 45(5) and 45(6) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"(5)(a) When the Speaker has put the question on any debatable motion, including any votable Opposition motion on an allotted day (except on the last allotted day in a supply period), except as provided pursuant to section (3) of this Standing Order, the bells to call in the Members shall be sounded for not more than thirty minutes; provided that, while the Members are being called in, either the Chief Government Whip or the Chief Opposition Whip may approach the Speaker to request that the division be deferred, in which case, the Speaker shall defer the said division until a specified time, but, in any case, not later than the ordinary hour of daily adjournment on the next sitting day thereafter, when the bells to call in the Members shall be sounded for not more than fifteen minutes, except as provided for under section (6) of this Standing Order or Standing Order 126(2); and

(b) When a recorded division is deferred pursuant to paragraph (a) of this section, the House shall continue with the business before it, pursuant to Standing Order 30(6).

(6) Notwithstanding any other Standing Order, if a division on any debatable item of Government Business or Private Members' Business is demanded on a Friday, and on any votable opposition motion on an allotted day, (except on the last allotted day of a supply period), falling on a Friday, either pursuant to section (1) or in a Committee of the Whole, or has been deferred on a Thursday pursuant to section (5), the calling in of the Members shall be deferred until the ordinary hour of daily adjournment on the next sitting day thereafter, when the bells to call in the Members shall ring for not more than fifteen minutes. Where any division has been previously deferred, except on a Thursday, it shall not be further deferred, notwithstanding section (5) of this Standing Order. Where it is provided in any Standing Order that any business shall be forthwith disposed of or concluded in any sitting and the calling in of the Members has been deferred pursuant to this section, the business specified by such Order shall be forthwith disposed of or concluded immediately after the deferred division has been taken. Any recorded division on a motion for concurrence in a bill at the report stage, pursuant to Standing Order 76(9), or for the consideration of the report stage of a bill from a Committee of the Whole, pursuant to Standing Order 76(12), may be deferred.

(7) If, pursuant to any Standing or Special Order of the House, two or more recorded divisions are to be held successively without intervening debate, the division bells shall be sounded to call in the Members only once."

16. That section 50(1) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"50.(1) The proceedings on the Order of the Day for resuming debate on the motion for an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne and on any amendments proposed thereto shall not exceed six sitting days."

17. That sections 50(6), 50(7) and 50(8) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"(6) On the fourth of the said days, if any amendment be under consideration at thirty minutes before the ordinary hour of daily adjournment, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and forthwith put the question on any amendment or amendments then before the House.

(7) The motion for an Address in Reply shall not be subject to amendment on or after the fifth day of the said debate.

(8) On the sixth of the said days, at fifteen minutes before the ordinary hour of daily adjournment, unless the said debate be previously concluded, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and forthwith put every question necessary to dispose of the main motion."

18. That section 52(10) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"(10) When a request to make such a motion has been made on any day, except Friday, and the Speaker directs that it be considered the same day, the House shall rise at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment and resume at 8.00 o'clock p.m."

19. That Standing Order 54 be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"54. Forty-eight hours' notice shall be given of a motion for leave to present a bill, resolution or address, for the appointment of any committee, for placing a question on the *Order Paper* or for the consideration of any notice of motion made pursuant to Standing Order 123(4); but this rule shall not apply to bills after their introduction, or to private bills, or to the times of meeting or adjournment of the House. Such notice shall be laid on the Table, or filed with the Clerk, before 6.00 o'clock p.m. (2.00 o'clock p.m. on a Friday) and be printed in the *Notice Paper* of that day. Any notice filed with the Clerk pursuant to this Standing Order shall thereupon be deemed to have been laid on the Table in that sitting."

20. That the following new Standing Order be added after Standing Order 56:

"56.1.(1)(a) In relation to any routine motion for the presentation of which unanimous consent is required and has been denied, a Minister of the Crown may request during Routine Proceedings that the Speaker propose the said question to the House.

(b) For the purposes of this Standing Order, "routine motion" shall be understood to mean any motion, made upon Routine Proceedings, which may be required for the observance of the proprieties of the House, the maintenance of its authority, the management of its business, the arrangement of its proceedings, the establishing of the powers of its committees, the correctness of its records or the fixing of its sitting days or the times of its meeting or adjournment.

(2) The question on any such motion shall be put forthwith, without debate or amendment.

(3) When the Speaker puts the question on such a motion, he or she shall ask those who object to rise in their places. If twenty-five or more Members then rise, the motion shall be deemed to have been withdrawn; otherwise, the motion shall have been adopted."

21. That Standing Order 57 be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"57. Immediately before the Order of the Day for resuming an adjourned debate is called, or if the House be in Committee of the Whole, any Minister of the Crown who, standing in his or her place, shall have given notice at a previous sitting of his or her intention so to do, may move that the debate shall not be further adjourned, or that the further consideration of any resolution or resolutions, clause or clauses, section or sections, preamble or preambles, title or titles, shall be the first business of the Committee, and shall not further be postponed; and in either case such question shall be decided without debate or amendment; and if the same shall be resolved in the affirmative, no Member shall thereafter speak more than once, or longer than twenty minutes in any such adjourned debate; or, if in Committee, on any such resolution, clause, section, preamble or title; and if such adjourned debate or postponed consideration shall not have been resumed or concluded before 11.00 o'clock p.m., no Member shall rise to speak after that hour, but all such questions as must be decided in order to conclude such adjourned debate or postponed consideration, shall be decided forthwith."

22. That section 68(2) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"(2) A motion for leave to introduce a bill shall be deemed carried, without debate, amendment or question put, provided that any Member moving for such leave may be permitted to give a succinct explanation of the provisions of the said bill."

23. That section 69(1) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"69.(1) When any bill is presented by a Member, in pursuance of an Order of the House, the question "That this bill be read a first time and be printed" shall be deemed carried, without debate, amendment or question put."

24. That sections 73(2) and 73(3) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"(2) Unless otherwise ordered, in giving a bill second reading, the same shall be referred to a legislative committee, except as provided in sections (3) and (4) of this Standing Order.

(3)(a) After consultation, a Minister of the Crown may, in proposing the second reading of a bill, give notice that he or she intends to move that the bill be referred after second reading to a standing or special committee.

(b) The question on such motion for referral shall be put immediately. When the Speaker puts the question on such a motion, he or she shall ask those who object to rise in their places. If fewer than five Members then rise, the motion shall be deemed to have been adopted. If five or more Members rise, the question shall be deemed not to have been put at that time, but shall be put to the House for its decision immediately upon the adoption at second reading of the bill to which it refers. If, in the latter case, the proposed referral is rejected by the House, the bill shall stand referred to the appropriate legislative committee.

(4) Any bill based on a Supply motion shall, after second reading, stand referred to a Committee of the Whole.

(5) When an Order of the Day is read for the consideration of any bill respecting borrowing authority, a maximum of two sitting days shall be set aside for the consideration of the bill at second reading. On the second of the said days, at fifteen minutes before the ordinary hour of daily adjournment, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings then in progress and, notwithstanding Standing Order 71, shall put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment, every question necessary for the passage of the second reading stage of the bill."

25. That Standing Order 74 be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"74.(1) When second or third reading of a government bill is being considered, no Member except the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition shall speak for more than:

(a) forty minutes if that Member is the first or second speaker;

(b) twenty minutes following the first two speakers, if that Member begins to speak within the next five hours of consideration; and following the speech of each Member a period not exceeding ten minutes shall be made available, if required, to allow Members to ask questions and comment briefly on matters relevant to the speech and to allow responses thereto; and

(c) ten minutes if a Member speaks thereafter.

(2) The Whip of a party may indicate to the Speaker at any time during a debate governed by this Standing Order that one or more of the periods of debate limited pursuant to paragraphs (1)(b) and (c) of this Standing Order, and allotted to Members of his or her party, are to be divided in two."

26. That sections 76(1) and 76(2) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"76.(1) The report stage of any bill reported by any standing, special or legislative committee shall not be taken into consideration prior to the second sitting day following the presentation of the said report, unless otherwise ordered by the House.

(2) If, not later than the sitting day prior to the consideration of a report stage, written notice is given of any motion to amend, delete, insert or restore any clause in a bill, it shall be printed on a *Notice Paper*."

27. That Standing Order 77 be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"77.(1) Twenty–four hours' written notice shall be given by a Member proposing any motion respecting Senate amendments to a bill.

(2) In cases in which the Senate disagree to any amendments made by the House of Commons, or to which the House has disagreed, the House is willing to receive the reasons of the Senate for their disagreeing or insisting (as the case may be) by message, without a conference, unless at any time the Senate should desire to communicate the same at a conference.

(3) Any conference between the two Houses may be a free conference.

(4) When the House requests a conference with the Senate, the reasons to be given by this House at the same shall be prepared and agreed to by the House before a message be sent therewith."

28. That sections 78(2) and 78(3) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"(2)(a) When a Minister of the Crown, from his or her place in the House, states that a majority of the representatives of the several parties have come to an agreement in respect of a proposed allotment of days or hours for the proceedings at any stage of the passing of a public bill, the Minister may propose a motion, without notice, during proceedings under Government Orders, setting forth the terms of the said proposed allocation; provided that for the purposes of this section of this Standing Order an allocation may be proposed in one motion to cover the proceedings at both the report and the third reading stages of a bill if that motion is consistent with the provisions of Standing Order 76(10). The motion shall not be subject to debate or amendment, and the Speaker shall put the question on the said motion forthwith. Any proceeding interrupted pursuant to this section of this Standing Order shall be deemed adjourned.

(b) If a motion pursuant to this section regarding any bill is moved and carried at the beginning of Government Orders on any day and if the order for the said bill is then called and debated for the remainder of the sitting day, the length of that debate shall be deemed to be one sitting day for the purposes of paragraph (a) of this section.

(3)(a) A Minister of the Crown who from his or her place in the House, at a previous sitting, has stated that an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of sections (1) or (2) of this Standing Order in respect of proceedings at the stage at which a public bill was then under consideration either in the House or in any committee, and has given notice of his or her intention so to do, may propose a motion during proceedings under Government Orders, for the purpose of allotting a specified number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at that stage; provided that the time allotted for any stage is not to be less than one sitting day and provided that for the purposes of this paragraph an allocation may be proposed in one motion to cover the proceedings at both the report and the third reading stages on a bill if that motion is consistent with the provisions of Standing Order 76(10). The motion shall not be subject to debate or amendment, and the Speaker shall put the question on the said motion forthwith. Any proceeding interrupted pursuant to this section of this Standing Order shall be deemed adjourned.

(b) If a motion pursuant to this section regarding any bill is moved and carried at the beginning of Government Orders on any day and if the order for the said bill is then called and debated for the remainder of the sitting day, the length of that debate shall be deemed to be one sitting day for the purposes of paragraph (a) of this section."

29. That paragraph 81(4)(b) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"(b) on the sitting day immediately preceding the final allotted day, but in any case not later than ten sitting days following the day on which any motion made pursuant to paragraph (a) of this section is adopted, at not later than the ordinary hour of daily adjournment, the said committee shall report, or shall be deemed to have reported, the main estimates for the said department or agency; and"

30. That section 81(8) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"(8)(a) In any calendar year, five sitting days shall be allotted to the business of supply for the period ending not later than December 10; seven additional days shall be allotted to the business of supply in the period ending not later than March 26; and eight additional days shall be allotted to the business of supply in the period ending not later than June 23; provided that the number of sitting days so

allotted may be altered pursuant to paragraph (b) or (c) of this section. These twenty days are to be designated as allotted days.

[*English*]

On a point of order, the hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge River.

Mr. Lee: Mr. Speaker, if I as a member of this House am going to be forced to submit to this hijacking, this lunacy, this waste, this hypocrisy foisted upon this House by the House leader of the New Democratic Party, then I simply want to ask the House if it would consider giving unanimous consent to dispensing with the reading of the matters before us.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Is there unanimous consent to dispense me of reading the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Consent is not unanimous. Therefore, I shall read on.

(b) Notwithstanding paragraph (a), if the House does not sit on days designated as sitting days pursuant to Standing Order 28, the total number of allotted days in that supply period shall be reduced by a number of days proportionate to the number of sitting days on which the House stood adjourned, provided that the number of days of the said reduction shall be determined by the Speaker and announced from the Chair.

(c) Notwithstanding paragraph (a), if the House sits on days designated as days on which the House shall stand adjourned pursuant to Standing Order 28, the total number of allotted days in that supply period shall be increased by one day for every five such days during which the House sits."

31. That section 81(10) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"(10) When concurrence in any final supplementary estimates relating to the fiscal year that ended on March 31 is sought in the period ending not later than June 23, three days for the consideration of the motion that the House concur in those estimates and for the passage at all stages of any bill to be based thereon shall be added to the days for the business of supply in that period."

32. That paragraph 81(12)(a) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"(12)(a) Forty-eight hours' written notice shall be given of motions to concur in interim supply, main estimates, supplementary or final estimates, to restore or reinstate any item in the estimates. Twenty-four hours' written notice shall be given of an opposition motion on an allotted day or of a notice to oppose any item in the estimates, provided that for the supply period ending not later than June 23, forty-eight hours' written notice shall be given of a notice to oppose any item in the estimates;"

33. That section 81(14) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"(14) In each of the periods described in section (8) of this Standing Order, not more than three opposition motions shall be motions that shall come to a vote, provided that not more than eight opposition motions in total shall be motions that shall come to a vote during the three supply periods provided pursuant to section (8) of this Standing Order. The duration of proceedings on any such motion shall be stated in the notice relating to the appointing of an allotted day or days for those proceedings. On the last day appointed for proceedings on a motion that shall come to a vote, at fifteen minutes before the ordinary hour of daily adjournment, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and forthwith put, without further debate or amendment, every question necessary to dispose of the said proceedings."

34. That section 81(16) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"(16) On the last allotted day in the period ending June 23, the House shall consider any motion or motions to concur in the main estimates, provided that:

(a) unless previously disposed of, at not later than 10.00 o'clock p.m., the Speaker shall interrupt any proceedings then before the House, and shall first put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment, every question necessary to dispose of the said motion or motions, and forthwith thereafter put successively, without debate or amendment, every question necessary to dispose of any business relating to the final estimates for the preceding fiscal year or for any supplementary estimates, the restoration or reinstatement of any item in the final or supplementary estimates or any opposed item in the final or supplementary estimates and, notwithstanding Standing Order 71, for the passage at all stages of any bill or bills based on the final, main or supplementary estimates; and

(b) the Standing Orders relating to the ordinary hour of daily adjournment shall remain suspended until all such questions pursuant to paragraph (a) have been decided."

• (1600)

Mr. Jourdenais: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The hon. member for Laprairie, on a point of order.

Mr. Jourdenais: I was listening carefully to the motion, but I wonder whether the hon. member for Shefford—I know we are not supposed to say members are not present but he is invisible—I wonder whether the member who says he supports the interests of Quebec really

thinks it is in the interests of Quebec to have the Chair read 109 pages of a motion that all opposition members and opposition and government leaders have read. If we didn't have to read those 109 pages, we would be able to have more debate and thus further the interests of Quebec. I think the hon. member for Shefford, the great crusader and his seven or eight friends, should be the first to set an example.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois):

35. That section 83(2) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"(2) An Order of the Day for the consideration of a Ways and Means motion or motions shall be designated at the request of a Minister rising in his or her place in the House. When such an Order is designated for a Budget presentation, the Minister shall specify the date and time thereof and the Order shall be deemed to be an Order of the House to sit beyond the ordinary hour of daily adjournment, if required. At the specified time, the Speaker shall interrupt any proceedings then before the House and such proceedings shall be deemed adjourned; and the House shall proceed forthwith to the consideration of the Ways and Means motion for the Budget presentation. When a motion for the adjournment of the debate on the Ways and Means motion has been made by a Member of the Official Opposition, it shall be deemed adopted without question put; whereupon the Speaker shall adjourn the House to the next sitting day."

36. That section 84(2) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"(2) The proceedings on the Order of the Day for resuming debate on such Budget motion and on any amendments proposed thereto shall not exceed four sitting days."

37. That sections 84(5) and 84(6) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"(5) On the third of the said days, if an amendment be under consideration at fifteen minutes before the expiry of the time provided for government business in such sitting, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and forthwith put the question on the said amendment.

(6) On the fourth of the said days, at fifteen minutes before the expiry of the time provided for government business in such sitting, unless the debate be previously concluded, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and forthwith put the question on the main motion."

38. That sections 87(1) and 87(2) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"87.(1)(a) At the beginning of a Session, the Clerk of the House, acting on behalf of the Speaker, shall, within two sitting days of the placing on the *Order Paper* of separate items of Private Members' Business from at least twenty Members, notify the Members involved of the time, date and place of a random draw of twenty Members' names to establish the order of precedence for twenty separate items.

(b) To the extent that there is a sufficient number of eligible motions and bills, the draw shall be conducted so that there shall be in the order of precedence an equal number of motions and public bills originating in the House of Commons.

(c) The names of Members with bills and those of Members with motions shall be drawn separately to produce the appropriate number of bills and motions. The names first drawn separately shall then be combined and drawn out again to determine the order of precedence for those items.

(d) Not later than the ordinary hour of daily adjournment on the second sitting day after the day on which the draw is conducted, each Member whose name has been drawn, and who has given notice of more than one motion, shall file with the Clerk an indication as to which motion is to be placed in the order of precedence. If a Member does not file such an indication within the time specified, the first motion standing on the *Order Paper* in the name of that Member under Private Members' Business will be included in the order of precedence. This requirement applies equally to each Member whose name has been drawn for a public bill.

(2) The Clerk of the House, acting on behalf of the Speaker, shall, when necessary during a Session, conduct a random draw to establish an order of precedence for not more than ten additional items of Private Members' Business, in the manner set down in section (1) of this Standing Order. No Member having an item listed in the order of precedence at the time of the draw shall be eligible to have his or her name chosen. Not later than two sitting days prior to the conduct of the draw, the Clerk shall inform the Members involved of the time, date and place of the said draw."

39. That section 87(5) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"(5) The House shall not consider any order for the second reading and reference to a standing, special or legislative committee or for reference to a Committee of the Whole House of any bill, nor any Notices of Motions or Notices of Motions (Papers) unless the said item has been placed in the order of precedence."

40. That Standing Order 91 be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"91. Notwithstanding Standing Order 30(6), the consideration of Private Members' Business shall be suspended and the House shall continue to consider any business before it at the time otherwise provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business until an order of precedence is established pursuant to sections (1) and (2) of Standing Order 87 and the Standing Committee on House Management has made a report on its selection of votable items, pursuant to Standing Order 92(1)."

41. That section 92(1) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"92.(1) The Standing Committee on House Management shall meet as soon as practicable after the order of precedence has been established pursuant to sections (1) and (2) of Standing Order 87, but in any case not later than ten sitting days after that day, and from time to time thereafter, and may select after consultation with, among others, the Members proposing the items, not more than three motions and three bills from among the twenty items in the order of precedence and an appropriate number from among any subsequent items for which the order of precedence is established and such selected items shall be designated as "votable items". In making its selection, the Committee shall not take into account the number of Members jointly seconding an item, but shall allow the merits of the items alone to determine the selection and shall report thereon, from time to time. At no time shall there be more than three motions and three bills among the selected items on the order of precedence."

42. That Standing Order 93 be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"93. Unless previously disposed of, selected public bills at the second reading stage or selected motions shall receive not more than three hours of consideration and, unless previously disposed of, an item having been once considered, shall be dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence and again considered only when it reaches the top of the said order.

Provided that, unless otherwise disposed of, at not later than fifteen minutes before the end of the time provided for the consideration of the said item, any proceedings then before the House shall be interrupted and every question necessary to dispose of the selected motion or of the selected bill at the second reading stage, shall be put forthwith and successively without further debate or amendment."

43. That section 94(2) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"(2)(a) When a Member has given at least forty-eight hours' written notice that he or she is unable to be present to move his or her motion under Private Members' Business on the date required by the order of precedence, the Speaker, with permission of the Members involved, may arrange for an exchange of positions in the order of precedence with a Member whose motion or bill has been placed in the order of precedence; and

(b) in the event that the Speaker has been unable to arrange an exchange, the House shall continue with the business before it prior to "Private Members' Hour"."

44. That section 96(1) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"96.(1) The proceedings on any item of Private Members' Business which is not a votable item selected pursuant to Standing Order 92 shall expire when debate thereon has been concluded or at the end of the time provided for the consideration of such business and shall be dropped from the *Order Paper*."

45. That Standing Order 99 be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"99.(1) The proceedings on Private Members' Business shall not be suspended except as provided for in Standing Orders 30(4), 50(4), 52(14), 91 and 94(1)(b) or as otherwise specified by Special Order of this House. No Private Members' Business shall be taken up on days appointed for the consideration of business pursuant to Standing Orders 53 and 84(2) nor on days, other than Mondays, appointed for the consideration of business pursuant to Standing Order 81(16).

(2) Whenever Private Members' Business is suspended or not taken up on a Monday, the House shall meet from 11.00 o'clock a.m. to 12.00 o'clock noon for the consideration of Government Orders."

46. That Standing Order 104 be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"104.(1) At the commencement of the first session of each Parliament, the Standing Committee on House Management, which, notwithstanding section (2) of this Standing Order, shall consist of fourteen Members, and the membership of which shall continue from session to session, shall be appointed to act, among its other duties, as a striking committee. The said Committee shall prepare and report to the House within the first ten sitting days after its appointment, and thereafter, within the first ten sitting days after the commencement of each session and within the first ten sitting days after the second Monday following Labour Day, lists of Members to compose the standing and legislative committees of the House pursuant to Standing Orders 104(2) and 113(1), and to act for the House on standing joint committees; provided that the Committee shall not present a second report pursuant to this Standing Order between the second Monday following Labour Day and the end of that calendar year.

(2) The standing committees, which shall consist of not less than seven and not more than fourteen Members, and for which lists of members are to be prepared, except as provided in Standing Order 104(1), are grouped into five envelopes, as follows:

(a) *Management*: the Standing Committees on:

(i) House Management; and

(ii) Public Accounts;

(b) *Human Resources*: the Standing Committees on:

(i) Aboriginal Affairs;

(ii) Health and Welfare, Social Affairs, Seniors and the Status of Women;

(iii) Human Rights and the Status of Disabled Persons;

(iv) Labour, Employment and Immigration; and

(v) Multiculturalism and Citizenship;

(c) *Natural Resources*: the Standing Committees on:

(i) Agriculture;

(ii) Energy, Mines and Resources;

(iii) Environment; and

(iv) Forestry and Fisheries;

(d) *Economics*: the Standing Committees on:

(i) External Affairs and International Trade;

(ii) Finance;

(iii) Industry, Science and Technology, Regional and Northern Development; and

(iv) Transport; and

(e) *Departmental*: the Standing Committees on:

(i) Communications and Culture;

(ii) Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Government Operations;

(iii) Justice and Solicitor General;

(iv) National Defence and Veterans Affairs; and

(v) Official Languages.

(3) Lists of members are also to be prepared for eight legislative committees, pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 113(1).

(4) The Standing Committee on House Management shall also prepare and report a list of eight Members to act for the House on the Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations, provided that a sufficient number of members of the said joint committee shall be appointed so as to keep the same proportion therein as between the memberships of both Houses."

47. That sections 106(1) and 106(2) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"106.(1) Within ten sitting days following the adoption by the House of a report of the Standing Committee on House Management pursuant to Standing Order 104(1), the Clerk of the House shall convene a meeting of each standing committee whose membership is contained in that report for the purpose of electing a Chairman, provided that forty-eight hours' notice is given of any such meeting.

(2) Each standing and special committee shall elect a Chairman and two Vice-Chairmen, of whom two shall be Members of the government party and the third a Member in opposition to the government, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 116, at the commencement of every session and, if necessary, during the course of a session."

48. That section 107(2) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"(2) Within five sitting days of the meeting of the last standing committee to elect its Chairman pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), but in any event no later than the twentieth sitting day after the adoption of the report of the Standing Committee on House Management presented pursuant to Standing Order 104(1), the Clerk of the House shall convene a meeting of the Chairmen, together with any Members of the House elected as Chairman or Vice-Chairman of any joint committees for which such elections have then been held, for the purpose of electing a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman of the Liaison Committee."

49. That Standing Order 108 be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"108.(1) Standing committees shall be severally empowered to examine and enquire into all such matters as may be referred to them by the House, to report from time to time and to print a brief appendix to any report, after the signature of the Chairman, containing such opinions or recommendations, dissenting from the report or supplementary to it, as may be proposed by committee members, and except when the House otherwise orders, to send for persons, papers and records, to sit while the House is sitting, to sit during periods when the House stands adjourned, to print from day to day such papers and evidence as may be ordered by them, and to delegate to subcommittees all or any of their powers except the power to report directly to the House.

(2) The standing committees, except those set out in sections (3)(a), (3)(b), (3)(d), (3)(e) and (4) of this Standing Order, shall in addition to the powers granted to them pursuant to section (1) of this Standing Order and pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), be empowered to study and report on all matters relating to the mandate, management and operation of the department or departments of government which are assigned to them from time to time by the House. In general, the committees shall be severally empowered to review and report on:

(a) the statute law relating to the department assigned to them;

(b) the program and policy objectives of the department and its effectiveness in the implementation of same;

(c) the immediate, medium and long-term expenditure plans and the effectiveness of implementation of same by the department;

(d) an analysis of the relative success of the department, as measured by the results obtained as compared with its stated objectives; and

(e) other matters, relating to the mandate, management, organization or operation of the department, as the committee deems fit.

(3) The mandate of the Standing Committee on:

(a) House Management shall include, in addition to the duties set forth in Standing Orders 104(1) and (3), and among other matters:

(i) the review of and report on, to the Speaker as well as the Board of Internal Economy, the administration of the House and the provision of services and facilities to Members provided that all matters related thereto shall be deemed to have been permanently referred to the Committee upon its membership having been established;

(ii) the review of and report on the effectiveness, management and operation, together with the operational and expenditure plans of all operations which are under the joint administration and control of the two Houses and other related matters as the Committee deems fit;

(iii) the review of and report on the Standing Orders, procedure and practice in the House and its committees; and

(iv) the selection of items of Private Members' Business pursuant to Standing Order 92, and the consideration of business related to Private Bills;

(b) Human Rights and the Status of Disabled Persons shall include, among other matters strictly pertaining to Canada:

(i) the review of and report on the reports of the Canadian Human Rights Commission, which shall be deemed permanently referred to the Committee immediately after they are laid upon the Table; and

(ii) the proposing, promoting, monitoring and assessing of initiatives aimed at the integration and equality of disabled persons in all sectors of Canadian Society;

(c) Multiculturalism and Citizenship shall include, among other matters:

(i) the monitoring of the implementation of the principles of the federal multiculturalism policy throughout the Government of Canada and in order

—to encourage the departments and agencies of the federal government to reflect the multicultural diversity of the nation; and

—to examine existing and new programs and policies of federal departments and agencies to encourage sensitivity to multicultural concerns and to preserve and enhance the multicultural reality of our nation; and

(ii) the review of policies, programs and their administration, in the areas of citizenship, citizenship development and promotion and related programs which provide opportunities for fuller participation in the educational, economic and social life of Canada;

(d) Official Languages shall include, among other matters, the review of and report on official languages policies and programs including the annual reports of the Commissioner of Official Languages, which shall be deemed, for the purposes of the House, permanently referred to the Committee immediately they are laid upon the Table; and

(e) Public Accounts shall include, among other matters, review of and report on the Public Accounts of Canada and all reports of the Auditor General of Canada which shall be severally deemed permanently referred to the Committee immediately they are laid upon the Table;

and any other matter which the House shall, from time to time, refer to the Standing Committee.

(4) So far as this House is concerned, the mandate of the Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations shall include, among other matters, the review and scrutiny of statutory instruments which are permanently referred to the Committee pursuant to the provisions of section 26 of the *Statutory Instruments Act*, provided that both Houses may, from time to time, refer any other matters to the joint committee."

50. That Standing Order 112 be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"112. At the commencement of each session the Speaker shall appoint, for each envelope except the Management envelope, as many as six Members, and from time to time additional Members as required, to act as Chairmen of legislative committees, provided that a proportionate number of Members from both the government party and the opposition parties shall be so appointed. Each group of Members appointed under the provisions of this Standing Order, together with the Deputy Speaker and Chairman of Committees of the Whole, the Deputy Chairman of Committees of the Whole and the Assistant Deputy Chairman of Committees of the Whole, shall constitute a Panel of Chairmen for the legislative committees belonging to each respective envelope."

51. That sections 113(1), 113(2) and 113(3) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"113.(1) Each of the envelopes created pursuant to Standing Order 104(2), with the exception of the Management envelope, shall include two legislative committees, of not more than fourteen members each, to be designated as follows:

(a) *Human Resources*: Legislative Committees A and B;

(b) *Natural Resources*: Legislative Committees C and D;

(c) *Economics*: Legislative Committees E and F; and

(d) *Departmental*: Legislative Committees G and H.

Some hon. members: Dispense!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Shall I dispense with reading the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Is there unanimous consent? I shall dispense.

[*English*]

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, it was clearly audible that there was not unanimous consent to dispense. We would expect you to continue on.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I am very sure that I did not hear a no, and I thought the question was in order.

An hon. member: You were not even in the House.

Mr. Whittaker: Mr. Speaker, I clearly yelled out "no" when the Speaker asked whether there was consent. As soon as I heard the final question translated and realized what the Speaker was doing, I clearly yelled out "no."

I want it recorded. I want it very clearly recorded that I did not consent to have this dispensed with.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, when the Chair originally sought unanimous consent to dispense with the reading of the motion, it was clear at that point that it was not the intention of a large number of members in the House. It seemed to me, that in the same spirit—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Riis: I am sorry, I stand to be corrected, only the members of the New Democratic Party, and I think there were some independent members as well, indicated that they wanted to clearly hear the motion read by the Speaker. Obviously the intention of the House was clear at that time and I think it would be inappropriate for you, on the point of order that was raised by my hon. friend, to not give at least a moment to ensure that in fact unanimous consent was not given.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I am prepared to hand down my ruling. First of all, I must confess I recognized the hon. member for Saint-Maurice although he was not in his seat, and I should not have given him the floor, since this is against our Standing Orders, and furthermore, I am not sure I heard no "nays". Of course, when in doubt, I am supposed to give the other person the benefit of the doubt—in that case, I would prefer to stick to the *status quo* and continue reading the motion, or has the House decided to give its unanimous consent?

[*English*]

Does the House give unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, we have been enjoying your reading of the motion, noticing of course that to date virtually all of the motion has been read in French. I am assuming that at the conclusion of the motion being read in French, that you or others will then read the motion in English, as per Standing Order 65.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I think the Chair has made it clear that unless the House—as you know, the Speaker is the servant of the House, but it is possible—since the House is the master of its own proceedings—for the House to give its consent to dispense. However, unless otherwise directed, the Chair intends to apply the Standing Orders and read, in both official languages, the motion before the House.

(2) Without anticipating the decision of the House, within five sitting days after the commencement of debate on second reading of a bill which is to be referred to a legislative committee, the Speaker shall appoint a Chairman to the said committee for the study of the said bill, from the Panel of Chairmen established pursuant to Standing Order 112 for that envelope.

(3) Any legislative committee to which a bill has been referred pursuant to Standing Order 73(2) shall meet within two sitting days after the adoption of the motion for the second reading and reference to the legislative committee of the bill."

52. That sections 113(5) and 113(6) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"(5) Any legislative committee shall be empowered to examine and enquire into the bills referred to it by the House, to report the same with or without amendments, and except when the House otherwise orders, to send for officials from government departments and agencies and crown corporations and for other persons whom the committee deems to be competent to appear as witnesses on technical matters, to send for papers and records, to sit when the House is sitting, to sit when the House stands adjourned, and to print from day to day such papers and evidence as may be ordered by it.

(6) Any legislative committee may delegate to a subcommittee on agenda and procedure, its power to schedule meetings of the committee and to call for officials from government departments and agencies and crown corporations and for other persons whom the committee deems competent to appear before it as witnesses on technical matters, or to send for papers and records to be presented to the committee in relation to the bill before the committee, provided that the committee shall retain the power to approve such arrangements."

53. That sections 114(1), 114(2) and 114(3) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"114.(1) The membership of legislative, standing and joint committees shall be set out in the report of the Standing Committee on House Management, which shall prepare lists of Members in accordance with Standing Orders 104 and 113(1). Once the report of the committee is concurred in, the membership shall continue from session to session within a Parliament, subject to such changes as may be effected from time to time.

(2)(a) Within five sitting days of the organization of any legislative, standing or standing joint committee, and from time to time thereafter, every member of every such committee shall file with the clerk of the committee a list of not more than seven Members selected from Members of his or her own party in the envelope to which that committee has been assigned, who may substitute for him or her during a meeting of the said committee, according to the

procedure set out in paragraph (b) of this section, provided that they shall not become permanent members of the committee. In the event of a Member having neglected to file such a list within the prescribed time, the clerk of the committee will so notify in writing the Chief Whip of the Member's party, (or, in the case of independent Members, the Chief Whip of the Official Opposition) and the Member's name shall be struck from the list of members of the committee, and the Standing Committee on House Management shall select another Member to take his or her place on the permanent membership of the committee. Provisions of this Standing Order shall not apply to the House Management or Public Accounts Committee. Members on these two Committees may draw their lists of seven replacement Members from any envelope.

• (1630)

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker: I will certainly hear the parliamentary secretary, but I want to say something first, and then I will hear the hon. member.

Well over an hour ago, the government introduced a motion. It is a long motion, and as I indicated the pages are about three quarters of an inch thick. I am not persuaded that anyone was particularly taken by surprise with the motion.

Under these circumstances it has been a tradition in this place that the Speaker is allowed to dispense with the reading of the entire motion. As hon. members know, and those who have been listening and watching know, the motion is a series of amendments to the rules of this place. There is some division of opinion in the House with respect to whether the amendments meet with everybody's satisfaction. That is the sort of thing that is expected.

That in itself is not the problem. At the time I asked the House if it would dispense with the necessity of myself and others reading the entire motion, both in French and in English. For reasons which I will not comment upon, the New Democratic Party withheld that consent and, I think, also at least one independent member did.

This has been going on for quite a long time now. I am just wondering if the House would be in a mood to allow me to dispense with reading the rest of this motion?

The hon. member for Kamloops.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, in your usual fashion you referred to the traditions of the House of Commons and the fact that there has been a tradition that when such a motion has been put, it has been the will of the House to forgo the actual reading of the motion that is before us.

Yes, that tradition has been challenged. The reason it has been challenged is that what we are about to begin debate on, changes to the Standing Orders, are also an abandonment of a whole variety of traditions, so I am proposing—

Mr. Speaker: I do not want to get into debate on the substance of the motion. I know the hon. member for Kamloops would not want to do that either.

What I am bringing to the attention of the House is my concern of the use of the rules. They are used often as tactics. I have been on both sides of the House and I understand that. It would seem to me that there are occasions when having used a rule to make a point there might be an appropriate time to not press it too far.

With respect to the rule itself, it is very hard to persuade anyone in the country that it is necessary for the functioning of this place to read all of these amendments, which of course are meaningless, as an hon. member pointed out, without having the annotated rules in front of one.

In any event, I put it to the House again: Is the House prepared to dispense?

The hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond and then I will hear the hon. member for Kamloops.

Mr. Dingwall: Mr. Speaker, perhaps this matter can be dispensed with relatively quickly if you would allow me the opportunity to pose a very succinct question to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader. Does the government intend to proceed today with giving notice of a closure motion on the changes to the rules?

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I have been very clear in all negotiations with my hon. friend, the House leader of the Official Opposition and the House leader of the New Democratic Party that it was not the government's intention to move notice of closure under Standing Order 57(1).

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my hon. friend's comment. We also were concerned that the government intended to move, if not closure, then some form of closure. There are many ways and means of closing off debate.

I would like two clarifications. If there is an affirmative on both of these, I think there would be an inclination from all sides to dispense with further reading of the motion.

The questions are the following. I would like to ask my friend, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader to indicate clearly that the government does not plan to use any form of closure or time allocation to limit this debate.

Second, in the time remaining, I would hope that some time would be set aside to hear the point of order that I was planning to raise at three o'clock before we got into this process.

Mr. Cooper: First, Mr. Speaker, I would hope that the Chair would take into account the time that we have wasted this afternoon because of the hon. member's persistence when hearing any point of order he may or may not have.

Second, I am not sure what the hon. member means "by any form of closure" and I therefore want him to be more specific. Certainly we as a government have every right to keep all of our options open. I have indicated privately on more than one occasion to the hon. member it was not our intention to move notice of closure today and I indicated the same to the House leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Dingwall: Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, just to carry this a bit further with the parliamentary secretary who is I think trying to be accommodating here. Is he indicating to the House that he is not intending to proceed with time allocation or notice of closure on this particular motion which is before us?

• (1640)

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, as you know, we are always hesitant to enter into negotiations on the floor. We have had considerable negotiations in private, which have obviously broken down. I have indicated very clearly that it was not our intention to give notice of closure today.

What the government may want to do at some future date I am not in a position to predict. I can only say that we have clearly seen an abuse of House time today and, as a result of that, the House has not been able to proceed with the legislation before it.

We were very clear that we had no intention of moving that notice today. We wanted to debate the issue and we are ready to debate the issue.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I think we are making progress. If the government House leader, who has now arrived, would indicate that the government does not plan to give notice of closure, to move time allocation or to extend the hours, we would be quite prepared to permit the motion to proceed without completing the reading.

I would like to hear some indication, as to whether you are prepared to entertain a few minutes of argument in terms of the inappropriateness of proceeding with this motion at all.

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, I can certainly support what my parliamentary secretary said. I had no intention of bringing in closure at this point in time, as we have been discussing for upward of a year, but certainly more intensely lately. I did not expect unanimity in support of all elements of the package, but I did expect we would have a reasoned debate where points of view would be put forward and we would reach a decision by vote at an appropriate time.

That was the intent and that is the intent.

Mr. Speaker: It might be helpful if hon. members discuss the matter further. In the meantime, I take it that I do not have the consent of the New Democratic Party to dispense.

As a consequence, according to the rules, we shall have to proceed.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to have not made my point clear. I sought clarification that no notice of closure would be given today, and that there would be no steps toward time allocation or extending the hours, three simple requests.

If I may, I would like to be able to proceed with an argument on the inappropriateness of this particular motion before us.

Mr. Speaker: If I understand the hon. member for Kamloops correctly, he is saying that there is agreement and we shall dispense with the further reading. I shall hear the hon. member on his point of order.

[*Translation*]

[*Editor's Note: The rest of the motion is as follows:*]

(b) substitutions in the membership of any legislative or standing committee or, so far as the House is represented, on any standing joint committee shall be effective the day after notification thereof is forwarded, by the permanent member of the committee, to the Chief Whip of his or her party (or, in the case of independent Members, the Chief Whip of the Official Opposition) for signature who, in turn, will forward the substitution to the clerk of the committee;

(c) at any time when no notice has been received by the clerk of the committee pursuant to paragraph (b) of this section, the Chief Whip of any recognized party may effect substitutions by filing notice thereof with the clerk of the committee, having selected the substitutes from among all the Members of his or her party in the envelope to which that committee was assigned; and such substitutions shall be effective immediately once they are received by the clerk of the committee; and

(d) when a permanent member of a legislative, standing or standing joint committee gives notice in writing to the Chairman of the Standing Committee on House Management of his or her intention to give up his or her membership, that Member's resignation shall be effective when a report of the Standing Committee on House Management naming a replacement for him or her has been concurred in by the House.

(3) Changes in the membership of standing or legislative committees which involve the appointment to a committee of a Member not already a member of a committee in the same envelope shall be effective when a report of the Standing Committee on House Management to that effect is concurred in by the House."

54. That section 115(2) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"(2) During periods coinciding with the hours of sittings of the House, priority shall be given to the meetings of legislative committees over those of standing committees in the same envelope."

55. That the following new section be added after section 115(3) of the Standing Orders:

"(4)(a) Each group of committees within an envelope shall have priority of use in two committee rooms, which shall be designated from time to time by the Standing Committee on House Management, provided that the committees of the Management envelope shall sit and have priority in one room only.

(b) In those rooms which have been assigned to the envelope within which they are grouped, committees shall have an absolute priority over all other users."

56. That the following new Standing Order be added after Standing Order 119:

"119.1.(1) Any committee wishing to use the facilities of the House of Commons for the broadcasting of its meetings shall first obtain the consent of the House thereto.

(2) The Standing Committee on House Management shall establish, by report to the House of Commons, experimental guidelines governing the broadcasting of committee meetings. After concurrence by the House in such a report, any committee may permit the presence of the electronic media at its meetings, subject to the said guidelines."

57. That section 123(1) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"123.(1) In addition to the powers granted, so far as this House is concerned, to the Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations, pursuant to Standing Order 108(4), the said Committee shall be empowered to make a report to the House containing only a resolution which, if the report is concurred in, would be an Order of this House to the Ministry to revoke a statutory instrument, or portion thereof, which the Governor in Council or Minister of the Crown has the authority to revoke."

58. That Standing Order 125 be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"125. Except as otherwise provided in any Standing or Special Order of the House, and unless otherwise disposed of, at not later than the ordinary hour of daily adjournment on the fifteenth sitting day following the date on which a notice of motion made pursuant to Standing Order 123(4) appeared on the *Order Paper*, the same shall be deemed to have been moved and adopted by the House."

59. That paragraph 126(1)(c) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"(c) unless the motion or motions be previously disposed of, not later than the end of the said hour of consideration, the Speaker shall interrupt any proceedings then before the House and put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment, every question necessary to dispose of the said motion or motions, provided that any division or divisions demanded in relation thereto shall stand deferred until no later than the ordinary hour of daily adjournment in that sitting, when the bells to call in the Members shall be sounded for not more than fifteen minutes. Any remaining questions necessary to dispose of proceedings in relation to such motion or motions, on which a decision has been deferred until after the taking of such a division, shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment."

60. That Standing Order 132 be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"132. Petitions for private bills shall only be received by the House if filed within the first six weeks of the session, and every private bill originating in the Commons shall be presented to the House within two weeks after the petition therefor has been favourably reported upon by the Examiner of Petitions or by the Standing Committee on House Management."

61. That sections 133(2), 133(3) and 133(4) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"(2) Petitions for private bills, when received by the House, are to be taken into consideration by the Examiner who shall report to the House in each case the extent to which the requirements of the Standing Orders regarding notice have been complied with; and in every case where the notice is reported by the Examiner to have been

insufficient or otherwise defective, or if the Examiner reports that there is any doubt as to the sufficiency of the notice as published, the petition, together with the report of the Examiner thereon, shall be taken into consideration, without special reference, by the Standing Committee on House Management, which shall report to the House as to the sufficiency or insufficiency of the notice, and where the notice is deemed insufficient or otherwise defective, shall recommend to the House the course to be taken in consequence of such deficiency or other defect.

(3) All private bills from the Senate (not being based on a petition which has already been so reported on) shall be first taken into consideration and reported on by the Examiner of Petitions, and when necessary by the Standing Committee on House Management in like manner, after the first reading of such bills, and before their consideration by any legislative committee.

(4) No petition praying for the incorporation of a railway company, or of a canal company, or for an extension of the line of any existing or authorized railway or canal, or for the construction of branches thereto, shall be considered by the Examiner, or by the Standing Committee on House Management, until there has been filed with the said Examiner a map or plan, showing the proposed location of the works, and each county, township, municipality or district through which the proposed railway or canal, or any branch or extension thereof, is to be constructed."

62. That section 135(1) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"135. (1) All private bills are introduced on petition, and after such petition has been favourably reported upon by the Examiner of Petitions or by the Standing Committee on House Management, such bills shall be laid upon the Table of the House by the Clerk, and shall be deemed to have been read a first time and ordered to be printed, and to have been ordered for a second reading when so laid upon the Table, and so recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*."

63. That Standing Order 140 be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"140. No motion for the suspension or modification of any provision of the Standing Orders applying to private bills or to petitions for private bills shall be entertained by the House until after reference is made to the Standing Committee on House Management, and a report made thereon by the Committee and, in its report, the Committee shall state the grounds for recommending such suspension or modification."

64. That section 141(4) of the Standing Orders be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"(4) It is the duty of the committee to which any private bill may be referred by the House, to call the attention of the House specially to any provisions inserted in such bill that do not appear to have been contemplated in the notice or petition for the same, as reported upon by the Examiner of Petitions or by the Standing Committee on House Management; and any private bill so reported shall not be placed on the *Order Paper* for consideration until a report has been made by the Examiner as to the sufficiency or otherwise of the notice to cover such provisions."

That a message be sent to the Senate to apprise their Honours of the change to Standing Order 108(4);

That the Standing Orders as amended take effect on the first sitting day of the Third Session of the 34th Parliament;

That for the purposes of Standing Order 104(1) and Standing Order 112, the first sitting day of the Third Session of the 34th Parliament shall be deemed to be the commencement of the first session of a Parliament;

That all outstanding Orders of Reference be deemed referred to the new appropriate and corresponding standing committees;

That, where appropriate, budgets of committees be transferred to the new appropriate and corresponding standing committee;

That the Clerk of the House be authorized to renumber the Standing Orders as may be deemed necessary, making such technical and consequential changes to the Standing Orders, as well as such changes to the *Order Paper and Notice Paper*, as may be required; and

That the Clerk of the House be instructed to print a revised edition of the Standing Orders of the House.

[*English*]

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to ask you to rule that the motion before us, No. 30 on the Order Paper, is in whole or in part improperly before the House and is in whole or in part out of order. My concerns are focused on two distinct elements of this motion.

The first is found in paragraph 30, which proposes to amend the right of the Crown to debate supply before it is granted to the Crown.

The second is found in paragraph 20, which is the proposal to introduce a new Standing Order which can override the failure of a minister to obtain unanimous consent from the House.

My arguments, put very concisely, will seek to establish the following points:

First, that these provisions seek to erode the historic authority of the House and the rights of its members and are thus contemptuous of the House as they will tend to diminish its dignity and impede members in the discharge of their functions.

Second, these proposals exceed those limits imposed by the Constitution and by statute and the power of the House to regulate its internal affairs.

Third, adoption of these proposals would be a *de facto* amendment to those limiting statutes and are thus an attempt to achieve by simple motion changes which should both be statutory and constitutional.

Fourth, in light of the above, I submit that our traditions and practise require that they be found out of order. It is clear to me that the proposals in paragraphs 30 and 20 will erode the authority of the House and impede members in the discharge of their functions.

In paragraph 30 the government proposes that;

> —if the House does not sit on days designated as sitting days pursuant to Standing Order 28, the total number of allotted days in that supply period shall be reduced by a number of days proportionate to the number of sitting days on which the House stood adjourned—

I have no procedural concerns with other proposals in that section, namely to reduce the number of supply days in an ordinary session from 25 to 20. Those proposals will diminish the ability of the House to examine and debate the Crown's request for expenditure, but this change is quantitative, not qualitative. I would just further note that in the British House, to which our privileges and authorities are constitutionally and statutorily linked, the number of allotted days is also limited to 20.

It is the proposal to reduce the number of allotted days proportionately with the reduction in the number of sitting days which, I submit, is a qualitative change to the rights of the House over supply.

This reduction in supply debate assumes that opposition or allotted days are a share of House time, is provided for business which does not originate with ministers of the Crown, and that this share should be linked to the length of the session.

It denies the historic linkage between allotted days and the granting of supply to the government.

It denies the historic authority of the House over supply.

It denies the historic rights of members to debate supply.

It forgets that for this House of Commons, the contemporary form of members' historic right to air their grievances and petition the Crown before supply is granted is during the opposition days that we normally refer to.

A simple reading of this motion may not reveal this flaw. It is better understood through hypothetical examples.

If, for example, the Crown forcibly adjourns the House, we could arrive at a situation whereby our own Standing Orders would have us sitting only on June 23 to entertain one day of debate on supply and to pass the Appropriation Act.

More realistically perhaps is a scenario where, in the next few weeks, a minister of the Crown could force through the House a motion to adjourn to an indefinite call, recall the House for June 23 and obtain consent on supply.

If this motion passes, our Standing Orders would permit this but the conventional and historic control of supply by the Commons would not be upheld.

As our own *Precis of Procedure* points out:

> A fundamental element of the principle underlying the financial procedures of Parliament is the idea that Parliament does not grant supply until the opposition has had the opportunity to demonstrate why it should be refused.

Or, as the late Eugene Forsey wrote in his recent manuscript, *The Question of Confidence in Responsible Government:*

> The historic House of Commons was in Bolingbroke's phrase and emphasized by Edward Blake, "the grand inquest of the nation". Its principal concern was with the voicing of grievances and scrutinizing the financial and administrative measures of the Crown.

Certainly, at the time of Confederation, the power of the House to debate and withhold supply was clearly understood. As Bourinot wrote in his fourth edition on page 404:

> The rules of the house with respect to the expenditure of public money and the impositions of burthens upon the people are in conformity with the practice of its English prototype. All the checks and guards which the wisdom of English parliamentarians has imposed in the course of centuries upon public expenditures now exist in their full force in the parliament of the dominion.
>
> The cardinal principle, which underlies all parliamentary rules and constitutional provisions with respect to money grants and public taxes is this—

I underscore his words "principle which underlies all parliamentary rules and constitutional provisions with respect to money grants" and will return to these constitutional provisions in a moment.

He continued:

> When burthens are to be imposed on the people, every opportunity must be given for free and frequent discussion, so that parliament may not, by sudden and hasty votes, incur any expenses or be induced to approve of measures, which may entail heavy and lasting burthens upon the country. Hence it is ordered that the Crown must first come down with a recommendation whenever the government finds it necessary to incur a public expenditure, and that there should be full consideration of the matter in committee and in the house, so that no member may be forced to come to a hasty decision, but that every one may have abundant opportunities afforded him of stating his reasons for supporting or opposing the proposed grant.

What greater indignity to the Commons would there be, than to have to deny its right to withhold supply until grievances have been heard.

What greater insult to the authority of the House than for a government to claim supply without hearing grievances. That is my first point and very succinctly I will put my second.

• (1650)

Similarly offensive to the rights of the House and its members is the proposal to override unanimous consent. Clause 20 of this motion proposes to change our notion of unanimous consent and to enable the rules of procedure and operations of the House to be changed by an agent of the Crown unless 25 members of the House object. It is significant that this proposal establishes two classes of members, those who by virtue of being ministers of the Crown can obtain unanimous consent as long as 25 members do not object, and those ordinary members for whom unanimous consent means no one objects.

Surely this is tipping the balance of power between the government and the Commons which significantly diminishes the authority of the House and by sharply narrowing the scope of their duties is this an impediment of the ability of the members to perform those duties as currently defined.

Let us consider just for a moment what this proposed rule would and could involve. With this rule a minister of the Crown could propose that the House pass all legislation, grant all moneys for the year, diminish the ability of the committees of the House to examine government's expenditures and operations, and adjourn until further recall.

Unless 25 members, that is 10 per cent of all private members are present to oppose, these suggestions would automatically be adopted without debate, without the ability to amend.

The question I put to you, Mr. Speaker, is not whether or not this is right, or just, or fair play. Those questions, you will agree, should be saved for another time. The question I put is whether or not this is a qualitative substantial alteration to the privileges of members and a qualitative and substantial reduction in the authority of the House to debate and decide upon proposals put forward by ministers of the Crown.

Surely when an agent of the Crown can deny 24 members the right to speak to a motion this is an infringement on the rights of the House as defined by Redlich. He recognized these as:

> The sum of the fundamental rights of the House and of its individual members as against the prerogatives of the Crown.

That is from *Procedure of the House of Commons*, Volume 1.

Surely this would be an infringement of the privileges of members as described by Erskine May as:

> —the peculiar rights enjoyed by—members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their duties.

A former law clerk of this House, Joseph Maingot, wrote:

> A distinctive mark of a privilege is its ancillary character—it is a means to accomplish a purpose or fulfil a function—The members of the legislative body enjoy these rights and immunities because the legislature cannot act or perform without the unimpeded use of the services of its members.

I am reminded of the importance to members of the right to deny unanimous consent by the events last summer when Elijah Harper could speak for his community by refusing to allow the rules to be broken.

You may hear arguments from those who feel that the House is the master of its own proceedings, and that if the House shares my concerns about the curtailment of the privileges of the House and its members contained in these proposals, then the House will reject them.

You may hear arguments that these are questions of debate, not of procedure.

My argument is that first, the House has never been fully master of its own proceedings and second, we acknowledge this in our daily operations.

It is the Constitution of Canada which is, in its own words, "the supreme law of Canada". It is supreme to all other laws, supreme to the Standing Orders of this House.

We cannot, by unanimous consent or by motion, reduce the number required for quorum below 20.

That is because our Constitution, in Section 48 of the BNA Act, requires that quorum be set at 20.

Similarly, we cannot, by unanimous consent or by motion, enable private members to propose taxes or expenditures.

That is because our constitution and our parliamentary conventions prohibit it. To do so would be to enlarge the authority of the House beyond its constitutional limits.

You, Mr. Speaker, would rule that any such motions would be clearly out of order.

The same Constitution and law which established our quorum at 20 and which require a royal recommendation on any expenditure or tax proposal contains another requirement on this House.

Section 18 of the Constitution says, and the language is repeated in the Parliament of Canada Act:

> The privileges, immunities and powers to be held, enjoyed and exercised by the Senate and by the House of Commons, and by the Members thereof respectively, shall be such as are from time to time defined by any Act of the Parliament, but so that any Act of the Parliament of Canada defining such privileges, immunities or powers shall not confer any privileges, immunities or powers exceeding those at the passing of such Act held, enjoyed and exercised by the Commons House of Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and by the Members thereof.

In our *Parliamentary Privileges in Canada*, we find the following:

> A Privilege may not be diminished, prejudicially affected or repealed save by express statutory enactment to that effect.

Any change to our privileges, immunities and powers requires an act of Parliament, not a change to our Standing Orders.

In Britain, the sources of parliamentary privileges are in the usages and customs of Parliament. In Canada, privilege is founded upon this section of the Constitution Act.

In summary, this motion contains two proposals which, I submit, are out of order as they seek to amend the powers and privileges of this House.

The Constitution insists that any proposals be contained in an act of Parliament. The Parliament of Canada Act insists on this. So too must we.

To adopt these changes, the House will be making a *de facto* change to the Parliament of Canada Act by amending our privileges, and to the Constitution by amending our privileges by using simple Standing Order changes, not an act of Parliament.

Last week, Mr. Speaker, you ruled that the House could not change statutes by way of a bill based on the estimates. In essence, you said that the House could not do by the back door what must be done through legislative change. You ruled a proposal to do that out of order, and declared that there would be no further proceedings on any such proposal.

I submit the same approach would require that a portion of the proposal before us today ought to be declared null and void. I trust you will similarly rule, that there can be no further proceedings relating to any proposal which seeks to change the privileges, immunities and powers to be held, enjoyed and exercised by the House of Commons until a legislative change is made to permit such a change.

A contemporary parliamentarian John Stewart wrote: "The procedures by which our House of Commons does its work are, in a sense, a part of Canada's Constitution. They are part of the process by which we are governed. When the House of Commons makes a major change in the way it operates, the constitutional process, the governing of Canada, has been altered, perhaps not fundamentally, but certainly to some degree. There is a close, causal relationship between how a body works and what that body does."

Mr. Speaker, I thank you and my colleagues for their indulgence.

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, it is strange that for months and months of discussion, there was not one word of this.

Perhaps it is because citation 4 of Beauchesne's states very clearly:

> 4. Beyond the vast legacy of tradition implanted in Canada by the preamble to the Constitution Act, one section above all affects procedure. Section 18 permits the adoption in Canada of all of the privileges of Parliament current in the British House of Commons. Few of these are of greater importance than the right to regulate the internal proceedings of the House, or more specifically, to establish binding rules of procedure.

Clearly, that is precisely what is happening. Nothing more sinister. The suggestion that the House could meet one day a year and get supply is absurd. Prior to the rule changes of 1969, the Appropriations Act was a stand-alone act. It could have been closed off in one day.

The changes in 1969 brought forward a lot of days during which members of the opposition had an opportunity to challenge items in the estimates.

I ask the hon. House leader of the New Democratic Party to show me once where his party used those allotted days to challenge the estimates. Not once did his party challenge supply. To now stand up and say that it is a sacred right that is somehow being infringed is an absurdity that goes in the face of the practices of his own party.

In terms of the rule providing for changes in Standing Orders or the kind of consent motions we seek by unanimous consent, the hon. member neglected to mention it is proscribed by having it possible to introduce them only during Routine Proceedings when this House is habitually full.

Therefore, the 25 member requirement is a significant and major inhibition to abuse of that. To suggest that can be used somehow during Routine Proceedings to commit the heinous crime he has suggested is equally absurd.

In any event, I am now departing into the realm of debate on the rules which, if we had not had the childish behaviour of the New Democratic Party earlier today, we could have had that debate in substance, which is what the people of Canada expect from mature politicians who represent them here in Parliament, not the kind of childish behaviour we saw from the New Democratic Party today and continue to see.

• (1700)

Mr. Speaker: Before proceeding perhaps I might indicate that I will of course hear further argument on this matter. The hon. government House leader may want to address the Chair further. I certainly will hear that at an appropriate time.

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, the reason I halted my remarks is that having wasted all the time this afternoon it is now Private Members' Hour and there is no longer an opportunity. The combination of this initial procedure and now going on to another day to debate this point of order to further delay and obstruct this House, I have serious concerns about that.

I would rather have that debate on the procedural argument right now if there were consent to do that. If there is agreement, let us present our arguments on this point of order now, have it ruled on, and then we can proceed with orderly business tomorrow. That is certainly my preferred option.

I would ask if there is agreement at this point in time.

Mr. Speaker: Just so that everybody understands, the hon. government House Leader put it to the House that we would continue this argument into Private Members' Hour. If there had been consent we could have done that. All I am making clear is that I certainly will hear members further on it at an appropriate time.

It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Algoma—Mining; the hon. member for Okanagan—Shuswap—The Environment; the hon. member for York West—Air Transportation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): It being five o'clock, the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

CENTENNIAL FLAME RESEARCH AWARD ACT

MEASURE TO ENACT—CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

Mr. Patrick Boyer (Etobicoke—Lakeshore) moved the second reading of, and concurrence in, amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-258, an act respecting the establishment of the Centennial Flame Research Award

to publicize the contributions to Canadian public life of persons with disabilities.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I know that the hon. member for Mississauga South has a private member's bill to be debated. He has indicated that I might, with leave of the House, just for a moment at this time bring before the House the bill that I had previously brought here as a private member, Bill C-258, which was unanimously passed by the House of Commons on December 10 last, dealing with the Centennial Flame and the disabled.

This bill was amended in the Senate to add some references to the Senate. It is therefore now necessary for the House of Commons to re-enact it as amended. I have spoken with representatives from all parties and groups and, as there is consent, I would like to do so.

Motion agreed to, amendments read the second time and concurred in.

* * *

CRIMINAL RECORDS ACT

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed from Monday, December 3, 1990, consideration of the motion of Mr. Blenkarn that Bill C-314, an act to amend the Criminal Records Act and the Criminal Code in consequence thereof, be read a second time and referred to a legislative committee.

Mr. Benno Friesen (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I begin by commending the member for Mississauga South on the initiative he is taking in presenting this private member's bill having to do with the rights of those who have had their charges taken care of, to have their records disposed of.

First of all, this bill strikes a very responsive cord in the hearts and minds of anyone interested in fairness and justice in our legal system. I am attracted to it. It makes me reflect on the days quite a few years ago when I first sponsored a bill that dealt with parental kidnapping. I had never heard of the phenomenon—I suppose that is the best use of the work I could make—before a constituent of mine told me about her child having been abducted by her estranged husband. She had found that there was no protection for her or her child in the Criminal Code as it stood at that time.

I began in 1976 to sponsor a bill dealing with parental kidnapping. It was a very short and simple bill which simply expressed that reality, but I did not receive passage of that bill at that time. As a matter of fact, it took six years for me to see that bill move from a private member's bill by an opposition member to be accepted by the government of the day in 1982 as part of the legislative package of the government.

By 1982 it had become a very complex bill, because I as an ordinary layman recognized the problem but did not realize its complexity or the complexity of the solution that would have to be presented to solve that problem. By the time the bill was passed, it was several pages long.

In looking at the proposal put forward by my friend and colleague from Mississauga South, I am reminded of that. He has presented a relatively simple bill to deal with what appears to be a very simple problem, and he would like to see it dealt with. I compliment him for that.

I am told by those who understand the intricacies of criminal law better than I do that the problem and the solution are far more complex than the bill which he has presented. Therefore, I want to begin by complimenting him and ask him to make certain that he carries this crusade forward to ensure that all the exigencies of this particular phenomenon are dealt with.

By identifying a specific provision of the law which adversely affects constituents who have been in contact with the member, and by proposing solutions as he has done, the member upholds the finest traditions of public service which all members of this House should seek to emulate.

It seems to me that all too often we address issues at the macro level and, I might add, at a kind of transient level. We address them once and then tend to forget them. In our busy schedules there remains scant time to respond in such a meaningful way to the concerns of individual Canadians.

This can be even more problematic for those citizens who do not have experience in dealing with the mechanisms of government, who feel powerless in the face of bureaucratic rules, and who do not have an organized or sophisticated proponent to speak loudly for their rights.

It is in responding to the needs and aspirations of these citizens that the role of the private member in identifying inequity and in proposing legislative solutions is so important.

My hon. colleague has fulfilled this most important obligation of the private member in the initiative before us today.

• (1710)

What is the problem he has identified? The member seized upon the issue when he became aware that a young man who had received an absolute discharge as a dispensation of case before the courts was nonetheless left with a criminal record. This person was required therefore to obtain a pardon to remove the record of the conviction.

I might add that simply getting a pardon is not necessarily always the end of the problem for someone in a case like this because, for example, if he were to cross over the international border between Canada and the United States many times, even though the Canadian authorities may have expunged the record and given him a pardon, it is not necessarily true that the American authorities have done that.

As the hon. member quite rightly points out, the purpose of granting an absolute or conditional discharge is to ameliorate the negative effects of the occurrence. My colleague points out that when the Criminal Records Act was proclaimed more than 15 years ago, it provided that the consequences of a finding of guilt which resulted in an absolute or conditional discharge should be dealt with as if a criminal record had been created although no conviction was registered.

My hon. friend displays his usual perception and acuity of thought when he notes that this provision of the act appears inconsistent with the implicit intent that the purpose of a discharge is to be less deleterious to the offender than if no discharge had been granted.

The decision to grant a discharge is made by a judge, having regard for the nature of the offence, the circumstances surrounding its commission, and a decision about the offender and whether his personal circumstances are such that he requires this exceptional treatment.

Arguably, being required to apply for a pardon for a crime that has not resulted in a conviction creates an anomaly which should be rectified. With no harm to the public safety, measures may be taken to redress this inequity. The hon. member has suggested one such way.

I know the member has informed himself on the history and development of the Criminal Records Act and will therefore be aware that the provision of immediate concern was put in the legislation as the only way to compel the sealing of the various and disparate components of their record, which will still exist even when no conviction is registered.

For instance, in our system which shares federal–provincial responsibilities for the provision of justice services, records of a sort exist at the police level, within the administrative mechanisms of our courts, under the authority of both federal and provincial officials responsible for corrections, and within the national police information data base named the CPIC system.

Regardless of the disposition, reference to the particulars of the case may exist in any of these locations and under the control of these various authorities. It was considered expedient and efficacious to treat the discharges as if a conviction had occurred, to expedite the sealing of these various records. In fact, at the time it was considered to be the only realistic mechanism to provide the protection to the ex–offender which the hon. member seeks today.

As successive governments benefited from the experience of administering the provisions of the act, this and several other unforeseen consequences of the legislative provisions were identified as requiring reform and the legislation was targeted for amendment.

The suggestions before us today pin–point two of those problems and seek to provide corrective solutions. While the problems have been well identified, I must tell my hon. friend that his suggested reforms are but one course of action among several which have been proposed.

In addition, if the House adopts the measures before us today, there would remain several additional issues requiring our attention. While it has been said that perfect is the enemy of the good, in this case I would suggest, with respect and deference to my friend's interest and hard work, that it may be possible to bring

about more comprehensive and needed changes to the act.

If the outcome of the member's work is that the government is to initiate a review of outstanding issues, focusing particularly on the principle of fairness which my friend has raised, I would suggest that this would be an indication of the close collaboration between private members and the government.

In fact, this would amount to a clear indicator of the positive effect that one member speaking for the rights of a private citizen and a constituent can have in changing the laws of Canada.

I know you are signalling me to stop, Mr. Speaker. I will finish with just two sentences.

Without being trite or waxing too eloquent, I would say that if the member's work proves to be a catalyst for reform in this area, he should be proud of his efforts and complimented by all of us who feel strongly about the important role each member may play in the political life of this country.

I want to end by complimenting the member on the work he has done and encourage him that even though time might run out on this particular measure, he take the occasion of the experience he has gained in this measure to work on the measure to ensure that the bill in some form does receive passage of this House.

Mr. Ross Belsher (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity to join in the second reading of the debate on Bill C-314, an act to amend the Criminal Records Act and the Criminal Code.

Many of our constituents have strong opinions on the way our criminal justice system should work. I welcome this discussion of some of the legislation that frames the system. I would like to outline for my fellow members and interested Canadians who may be following these proceedings some of the background that must be considered each time reform of the laws governing criminal misconduct is undertaken.

The acts that the hon. member for Mississauga South proposes to amend are only two of many interrelated statutes that have evolved to guide us in our daily conduct and to exact punishment when societal norms and values are violated. The Young Offenders Act, the Income Tax Act, the Fisheries Act, the Narcotic Control Act, and the Official Secrets Act are only a sampling of the federal statutes that exist to control behaviour and to exact punishment when their provisions fail to deter.

In addition, there exists a plethora of provincial statutes and municipal laws of which one may run afoul and a good number of Canadians have been dealt with by the courts for their misdeeds. More than one in ten of our adult citizens has a criminal record.

It is important that the record shows who these offenders may encounter on their way from the commission of an offence to the determination of their penalty. In a typical case an individual may be arrested by a municipal police officer who, although operating in accordance with local policies and procedures, is ultimately answerable to a provincial government, which through the provisions of our Constitution Act exercises responsibility for the administration of the Criminal Code and related federal statutes.

The case may then proceed within the provincial jurisdiction to a Crown attorney who takes the facts to court. If the judge determines guilt and the sentence is a fine, probation or incarceration for less than two years, the offender may never encounter the federal sector of the criminal justice system directly.

Should the sentence be of two or more years duration, however, he or she will become the responsibility of the Solicitor General of Canada and will enter the purview of the Correctional Service of Canada and finally, the National Parole Board. Most of those convicted will at some stage encounter one or more voluntary organizations that often assist in the supervision of those who are conditionally released and other assistance in rehabilitation programs to prepare offenders for their reintegration into the community.

The system is not simple. From municipal to provincial jurisdiction, from the federal system to the voluntary sector, the whole process is most often begun when the police act on a complaint of a private citizen who has been victimized. Of course the media may show an interest in any particular crime or court case. It is important that we keep in mind the number of diverse players in the criminal justice game.

To conclude my preamble, I will note that the imaginary criminal that I have described and every other Canadian whose deeds have led to a sentence being handed down by a court, including those who have been granted conditional or absolute discharge, will thereafter bear a criminal record.

• (1720)

Furthermore, this record may not be limited to the record of an arrest or a transcript of a trial but may exist in many forms and in various locations.

In preparing for this debate, I tried to become familiar with the bill that the hon. member for Mississauga South has put forward and the legislation that has prompted his initiative. There is a lesson for all of us here. Legislation that has been duly considered, passed by this House, and promulgated with the best of intentions may in the passage of time prove to be imperfect.

The Criminal Records Act is an example of legislation that may have created certain inequities, anomalies and administrative difficulties and yet has endured for some 20 years without significant amendment. I would suggest that one of the amendments that is long overdue for consideration is the one proposed by the hon. member for Mississauga South.

Bill C–314 would correct an anomaly that apparently has led to undue hardship in a number of cases and would simplify the application of the provisions of the Criminal Records Act. As I have already implied, any efforts to simplify the area of criminal legislation would meet with my approval. Efforts to reform the Criminal Records Act should not, however, be limited to a single change, even if the amendment may address the most obvious or the most important flaw in the legislation.

Let me outline some of the other facets of the Criminal Records Act that have attracted suggestions for reform over the years.

Every pardon, however minor the crime for which a citizen has been convicted—including those non-convictions resulting in conditional or absolute discharge that are troubling our colleague—may only be granted through the concurrence of the Governor in Council. This approval is granted on the advice of the Solicitor General who has in turn relied on the agencies within his ministry for their recommendation respecting each and every application for a pardon.

As an example of an area in which the opportunity for reform is obvious, removing the requirement of the Governor in Council to approve all pardons would reduce an administrative burden. Alternatively, a lesser degree of relief could be realized if the Governor in Council authority could be directed toward a more manageable group, such as the serious offences contained in schedule 15 of the Parole Act, while others could be in the jurisdiction of the Solicitor General.

To follow this line of reasoning further, another administrative shortcut that could be considered might be that the Solicitor General delegate the authority to the chairman of the Parole Board to grant pardons directly in certain circumstances. Although pursuit of these options would appear to entail only technical and procedural change, it would require legislative amendments to be brought before this House.

A number of issues and suggestions for reform have been presented during reviews of the Criminal Records Act that have been conducted over the last decade. These are now being studied by a committee of officials in the Ministry of the Solicitor General to determine their continued relevance. While these outstanding issues may not require action in the short term, they may continue to be supported by the groups that propose them and any limited legislative reforms which are brought before Parliament may result in renewed calls for more extensive reform from interest groups and the public.

Past suggestions for reform have included the following issues. What options might be entertained in the determination of those who would be eligible for a pardon under future legislation? Questions remain as to whether the eligibility period for a pardon should relate directly to the penalty imposed, to the nature of the crime itself or should be, as it now is in cases where pardon is granted, a standard period for all offences in each of several specified categories.

What consideration will need to be given to developing criteria to be used in determining an ex-offender's status as a law-abiding member of the community? To investigate loosely defined indications of character, as is now authorized by the Criminal Records Act, during community assessments may be contrary to modern concepts of the right to privacy and equality. It has been argued that

to deny relief on the basis of non-criminal behaviour is to impose an additional disadvantage on an offender by virtue of his status as an offender.

What should be the extent of the relief obtained when a pardon is granted? It has been noted that a conviction carries with it numerous disabilities which can profoundly influence an offender's subsequent contacts with the criminal justice system; self-image, social interactions, occupational pursuits, travel possibilities, and much more. Unfortunately, the Criminal Records Act offers at best, only a partial remedy for such problems. The act provides only that records will be sealed when a pardon is granted.

There is a very important clause in Bill C-314, which calls for the destruction of pardoned records in the circumstances outlined by the bill. This highlights the problem that the benefits of the current legislation are limited with respect to the most serious disabilities which flow from the creation, control and dissemination of a criminal record and collateral information. To be completely clear about this, as it now stands, an individual who has been pardoned can answer "no" if asked: "Have you ever committed an offence for which you have not received a pardon", but cannot deny that an offence was committed.

It is my opinion that any reform of the current legislation should address, at a minimum, the question of whether an offender shall be afforded the right of deniability of the criminal convention upon grant of the pardon.

If it should prove impossible to destroy, rather than seal records once a pardon has been granted, to what if any use may these residual records be put? Consultations have suggested that there is no final consensus among interested groups on the appropriate use of or access to the sealed records of pardoned offenders, nor is there agreement on the proper procedure which should be followed for the eventual destruction of records.

I must admit, some quite persuasive suggestions have been made that records should be available to the police for investigative purposes; to Crown attorneys for use in prosecutions of a pardoned offender for a new offence or to judges in determining sentences.

A strong body of opinion expresses support for applying a bona fide employment exemption to permit access to records. This would allow access for certain employers to records of convictions relevant to the job responsibilities.

For example, a pardoned record of conviction for predatory sexual offences against children might remain accessible to day care operators, school boards or adoption agencies.

These are just some of the examples that really should be studied very thoroughly. I am sorry, I have run out of time, so I will have to close.

Mr. George S. Rideout (Moncton): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure, as always, to rise in this House and discuss legislation which, in this particular case, is well intended and well directed. One can see this very easily in the explanatory notes.

"The purpose of this bill is to provide that where a person is discharged under the Criminal Code in respect of an offence, all records relating to that offence must be destroyed." That is the proper purpose and proper intent. We really do not have any problem with this legislation going to a committee to be looked at or to be rethought and brought back, whichever the government prefers.

We have some basic problems in about four areas. They could be accommodated in committee by amendment or the legislation could be redrafted. The intent, from our point of view, is a good and proper.

When a court grants an absolute discharge or a conditional discharge, the purpose of the judge making that decision is in effect to say that in an absolute situation that somebody broke the criminal law, probably by mistake and probably unknowingly or the effects are going to be so great that the court wants to say that the offence did not in fact take place.

The other intent is to say on a conditional basis that: "Yes, you probably knew what you did was wrong, but we do not want to see you penalized for the rest of your life. So this is a condition. You do this, this and this, and then the offence will disappear". But the record is not disappearing. The intent of the legislation is to get rid of that record and really do what the court wanted done.

Our concerns are very simply put in the area of specifics. There is really no definition of what constitutes a criminal record. For the legislation to work properly there must be a clear definition of what actually falls into

the record and what is going to be destroyed, so that the intent and purpose indicated in this bill are accomplished. All that requires is a good definition of "criminal record".

Section 5 in the bill also appears to remove the defence of *autre fois convict* in circumstances after the passage of time. I do not think that defence should ever be removed. It should be there and available no matter what happens. It appears to create a situation that could see a person recharged because the record is destroyed. Therefore we need some advice and some direction as to how to get around the conundrum of having the record disappear and then, at the same time, having somebody who could be recharged under the same offence because there is no record. So this requires more thought and direction, but could again be accomplished by amendment.

• (1730)

The other area of concern for us is the fact that the records are normally very incomplete and scattered among different courts. People could be residing in one province and the conviction is in another. It creates numerous problems in trying to determine just exactly what should be destroyed and where it is. The definition would determine what should be destroyed but it still might be in circumstance where no one knows where the record is. We need to come up with a system where that is controlled, or at least deals with it, so that everything which is intended to be destroyed is in fact destroyed.

The final thing that gives us some concern is in the area of the actual process of destruction in which it is required that the person be notified, giving that person the right to be in attendance. Again we think that that is well intended, but it could be reworked and changed so that it could accomplish the purpose that if the person did want to be in attendance he could be. On the other hand we do not want to see that as a mandatory situation that the person be in attendance and the legislation does not seem to say that.

The other concern is that the person may not be able to be notified for whatever reason and is assuming that his or her record is going to disappear after a passage of time, does not leave his address, and therefore is not notified. Consequently the record may not be destroyed. We think there should be a little fine tuning in that particular section.

But for those exceptions, the general intent is one which we support. We are leaving it to the government to determine whether it wants this to go to committee or whether it wants to not support its own member and, in effect, its own proposal which would bring benefit to individuals who have absolute or conditional discharges.

That is why I do not want to take my full time in speaking on this but to have clearly on the record our concerns, the things we would like to see looked at and could be done by committee. It is up to the government to decide what they want to do.

Mr. Lee Clark (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to say a few words on the bill before us. I would like to begin by expressing my respect for the hon. member for Mississauga South for his very close attention to what is obviously a very important matter.

The information I would like to bring to the attention of the House this afternoon relates to the historical background of the legislation which is before us. Although the hon. member for Mississauga South is well aware of that historical background, I suspect other members of the House and the public at large may not be. They may not be aware that there seems to be some parallels between the bill which is here today and the actions of a former member Donald Tolmie who was responsible for the original genesis of the legislation.

The origin of the current Criminal Records Act was in fact a private member's bill. It was introduced in June 1966, and referred to the justice committee at that time. The justice committee held four meetings between March 21, 1967, and November 2, 1967. Various witnesses appeared at these meetings of the committee, and the whole process appears to be both an instructive and a helpful one.

The justice committee subsequently made its report to the government of the day. The government, in the interim, had developed a bill of its own and the committee proceeded with study of the government initiative.

In introducing the government bill, the then solicitor general, the hon. George McIlraith, commented on the purpose of the proposed legislation, and I would like to quote that:

> In this whole subject there is the problem of striking a proper balance among the different needs.
>
> It seems to me that our prime and paramount need, and indeed the whole purpose of seeking to legislate on this subject, is to provide some means of removing from a person, who has been convicted and subsequently re-entered society and rehabilitated himself, that rather vaguely defined but nonetheless real stigma that he seems to have to carry with him in later life in those circumstances it would seem to all that it is unjust. That is the primary need. But consistent with that I suppose it is only responsible to say that we must not in correcting that evil, create another by removing the proper need relating to the identification of criminals who are still engaged in criminal activity. It is a delicate matter of adjustment to get a proper balance because that latter need, while not the paramount one in this type of legislation, is nonetheless an important one which cannot be brushed aside or ignored.

It would seem to me that we face, in the current situation, the same fundamental question that was posed when the legislation was first introduced in 1967. What is the legitimate balance between the objective of assisting those who have transgressed the law to reform and lead crime free lives and equally legitimate needs of the policing authorities and the community at large to be protected from a recurrence of criminal activities.

In truth, I must say that the question is one that requires very serious thought. Certainly, it is worth the time of this House to ensure that all the opinions on a very important issue have been canvassed.

We must not rush to make one change to a complex piece of legislation which may have far-reaching and unforeseen consequences on the other parts of the system. Has sufficient study been done, is a question which we must ask. Have the opinions of the interested parties been sought and secured? Ideas for change in this area were first presented to the House in the form of a private members' bill, as I have already indicated. That is much like the proposal which is before us today.

The government of that day apparently recognized the importance of implementing change in this area and encouraged to act on that initiative by Mr. Tolmie, proceeded to study options for reform and to present to the House, a government bill. That bill proposed comprehensive reform, and resulted from a consensus of those with knowledge of the subject.

It may well be that we are faced with a similar situation today. My preference would therefore be to see a substantive review of the issues take place, leading to a presentation of a comprehensive set of recommendations, based on the bill which is before us.

If I may draw an allusion, I would suggest the introduction of the current measures, like that of the original private member's bill presented in 1966, should be followed by a period of reflection.

I would suggest that perhaps during the period of reflection, the hon. member for Mississauga who presents the bill, might be pleasantly surprised, given time, at just how far reaching his actions may prove to be.

In fact, I understand that officials within the Ministry of the Solicitor General are presently studying the very reforms suggested in my friend's bill. I also understand that this review of the issues will consider other possible reforms as well.

If I may for a moment return to the historical review of the debate at the time of first passage of the Criminal Records Act, I believe hon. members will be struck by the continuing parallels to the task which faces us today.

The justice committee at that time was fully informed on the complexity of balancing the various dictates posed by the objectives of the legislation. They were cognizant of the need to create an act which would remove as much as possible the residual stigma which remained for those offenders who successfully rehabilitate themselves.

They were also aware of the need to consider the complications to the actual functioning of this act, created by the split in criminal justice responsibilities between federal and provincial government.

Our learned predecessors were sensitive to the fact that the vagaries of public sentiment often discriminate against persons with a criminal record. This was most true then, as it is now, in the vital area of employment.

However, are we to forsake entirely our responsibility to ensure that people who are hired for sensitive positions are adequately screened before being offered a position of such trust?

For example, I am particularly concerned that some provision remain which would allow a person who is an employer or prospective employer of any person whose duties involve the instruction or supervision of children to inquire as to whether or not the applicant for employment has been found guilty of any offence against a child.

You may say, Mr. Speaker, that in the bill before us, we are only referring to those offenders who have received a discharge, who have not been convicted. Might I remind the House, however, that in many provinces there are child abuse registries that record even suspicions of abuse and this record is made available in certain controlled circumstances.

Should the federal Parliament, therefore, provide less protection to the children of Canada?

• (1740)

I am not sure what the answer to that question should be, but I do believe we have a responsibility as parliamentarians to study very thoroughly the options which are available for reform in this area.

In the bill which is before us today, my hon. friend has suggested we should violate the principle of ascertaining a period of crime-free behaviour in the community as proof of a reformed character and behaviour before granting a pardon to those persons who have been found guilty of a crime but who have received a discharge of some sort.

I believe we may want to think seriously about this proposal before proceeding. By changing one, but only one, aspect of a law, will we create an imbalance similar to that of which I spoke to earlier? I for one am prepared to wait to hear the results of a review of these issues before committing myself unequivocally to any one course of action.

If I may, I would like again to return to the original debates and to provide the House with a flavour of the types of collateral issues which were identified by the experts who testified in committee. Several questions were raised:

Would the statute have an effect on whether reference to a pardoned record would be ordered expunged from credit reports?

Would it appear on insurance applications?

Could employers receive access to information on a pardoned record?

Would a bonding company be able to ask for such information?

Could a witness be cross-examined in court on facts relating to a sealed record?

Further questions were raised as to how the Criminal Records Act would affect provisions governing military recruitment and service. As well, concern was raised over the effect of pardons on disqualifications for membership in self-governing professional bodies.

There is a provision in the bill before us today to allow for the destruction of the record and to encourage the offender to be present. This point has been discussed by others already during the course of the present debate. I thought it would be most interesting for the House to recognize that once again our discussions today closely parallel those which preceded the passage of the original legislation.

I wish to quote from the official *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence* of the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs from Tuesday, April 14, 1970. The committee was discussing the proposed Criminal Records Act.

At that time, in April 1970, Mr. Hogarth made the following comments on the nature of criminal records in Canada.

He said, and I quote:

> I was just thinking of the number of places where a criminal record appears and what really you have to effectively seal in order to seal a criminal record.
>
> You have the court record in the first instance. In the Agostino Case on a habeas corpus application they use nothing more than the entry in the court journal that the man was convicted to prove his conviction.
>
> So you have several court records on the first level. You have the entry in the daily journal of the courts, then the court docket or file, you might well have a third record that is kept separate and apart from these first two that I have mentioned. Then you have three, four or even five levels of courts to deal with. You have the juvenile court perhaps and I do not think we are going to be faced with that problem, because I think those records can be dealt with. You have the Magistrate's level; you have the County Court level; you have the district court, Queen's Bench, King's Bench or Superior Court level of the province; you have the Court of Appeal levels; you have the Supreme Court of Canada level—all these people might well have records of the conviction.
>
> You then get into the police records. You have the local police who arrested the man. They might well have a record of his subsequent conviction coming back to them from the police force that they turned him over to on the warrant they arrested him on. Or any one or more detachments of one police force, particularly with the gazetting of criminal records. If you notice the number of police cards that come out with a photograph of the accused, his conviction, the fact that he was convicted, what he was sentenced to so they can keep indices, several types of records kept in the individual police forces at the local level.

I continue to quote:

> Then you get into the subdivision records; then you get into the central crime index records in Ottawa. Then you get into prison records, and international records. The fact he may have been reported as convicted to the American authorities or the British authorities.
>
> Apart from all the official records, then you have newspaper records and when it comes to sealing a criminal record, in order to make sure that no one can get at it, you are going to have an awful lot of documentation in this country to deal with if you want to do it effectively.

That is the end of the quotation.

I am suggesting, in conclusion, as is evidenced from the debates which have already taken place, that this is an exceedingly complex issue, perhaps more complex than some of us realize. I think it is important that the Minister of Justice and her officials use the legislation, use the bill which is before us, as an opportunity to examine this very important but very complex issue.

Mr. Peter L. McCreath (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): I am pleased to take part in this second reading debate of Bill C–314, an act respecting amendments to the Criminal Records Act and related legislation.

The member for Mississauga South has done his homework and intends to correct a long–standing anomaly through direct action.

The part of the Criminal Records Act that is the subject of Bill C–314 is an area that has been identified previously as problematic. I therefore commend the hon. member's good intentions.

I would point out that the government has also done its homework in this area. A wide variety of questions raised concerning reform to the Criminal Records Act has led to far–reaching consultations with concerned interest groups, government officials and affected citizens.

The most extensive consultations occurred during the clemency review initiative in 1983 when the distribution of a discussion paper, the circulation of a questionnaire and in–person meetings took place with all provinces and territories. Provincial officials in the departments of the Attorneys General, social services, corrections and justice took part. Many private sector agencies active in criminal justice were contacted, as were criminal justice professionals and concerned citizens. A total of 93 responses were received after the distribution of the discussion papers. Representatives of other federal departments, regional and national parole board members, police forces and associations, correctional officials and the judiciary and counsel, the private sector and individual inmates and inmate representatives were included in the consultation process.

The full 18–member constituency of the national associations active in criminal justice responded. These responses included those of the St. Leonard Society, the John Howard Society, The Salvation Army, the National Association of Friendship Centres, the Church Council on Justice and Corrections, and the Canadian Association of Social Rehabilitation Agencies.

The expectation that changes to the Criminal Records Act were imminent was raised among this wide spectrum of individuals and groups. Proposals for change that came forward were closely scrutinized by those who became actively engaged in this consultation.

A more limited consultation took place in 1986. Provincial deputy ministers responsible for criminal justice were informed, as were selected non–government organizations including the large group of national voluntary organizations which belong to national associations active in criminal justice. The Canadian Bar Association, the Uniform Law Conference, and the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police were contacted.

When new proposals are brought forward, it should be expected that a very large number of concerned and interested constituencies may wish to address the issues. It seems likely that this will be the case regardless of how limited or extensive the proposed reforms are.

In the present case of Bill C–314, the lack of major change will be contrasted to previous expectations and demands for broader change will almost certainly be raised. Should proposals for broader and more general reforms be brought forward, the many substantive issues

would attract the attention of various constituencies on different sides of the issue.

When Bill C–314, or any other bill that might affect the Criminal Records Act goes forward to committee, several groupings of possible reaction and interest can be identified. They include, first, governments: federal, provincial, municipal and international. Within the federal government a substantial number of departments and officials have a special interest in possible changes to the Criminal Records Act.

The Department of Justice will in all likelihood be interested in any amendments which may have an impact on the judicial system by allowing an ex–offender to deny the existence of a pardoned record.

The Department of Defence has been involved in consultations in the past, and would be interested any changes to the present legislation which could affect the disciplinary procedures of the department, as well as have an impact on its record–keeping system. The agencies of the Solicitor General have an obvious interest in the matter. The Canadian Security Intelligence Service clearly has an interest regarding access to pardoned records for both national security and intelligence purposes.

The financial and person–year implications for the National Parole Board and RCMP will need consideration and careful study, since they are the bodies that conduct investigations relating to pardon applications.

There would be other interested departments and agencies, I am sure. In addition to the direct changes proposed by Bill C–314 for the Criminal Records Act and the Criminal Code, other federal statutes which preclude an offender under the circumstances from working in a federal department will need review.

An example of this is the lifetime bar to employment with in a customs office for any employee convicted of accepting a bribe or assisting in the smuggling of any product into Canada. Similar provisions exist in a range of many other federal legislation and regulatory statutes. Changes in the law may also have an effect on the Canadian Human Rights Commission and may need to be congruent with provisions to the Access to Information and Privacy Acts. This latter concern may be particularly relevant in discussions with victim advocate groups.

• (1750)

Provincial governments and municipalities have a strong interest in changes to the Criminal Records Act in those areas which affect policing at the local or provincial level. Any measures which require provincial compliance or co–operation in the administration or delivery of criminal justice services which will be affected by possible changes will require thorough consultations. Changes to the legislation may have an impact on provincial human rights commissions, particularly in Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia, Manitoba and the Yukon, where protections exist against discrimination on the grounds of a criminal conviction for which a pardon has been granted. A large number of provincial licensing and permit authorities may be affected by provisions of a new act.

International consultations would be useful to ensure that any changes to the act do not diminish the credibility of a Canadian pardon in the eyes of foreign jurisdictions. If reservations were expressed, this might lead to a lower rate of voluntary acceptance of the pardon as a certificate of good behaviour for the purposes of travel by Canadian citizens to other countries.

Second, there is the voluntary sector— victim advocates, offender aid groups. Any proposed changes to the act become the focus for debate among voluntary associations active in criminal justice. Many of these groups have been consulted during the past and all can be expected to strongly represent the views and interests of the particular constituency which they represent. The sometimes conflicting goals of increased protection of the public and assistance to deserving ex–offenders will need to be carefully balanced. Any attempt to isolate a single category of offender to be held to more or less rigorous eligibility requirements for example may cause a reaction from some who will suggest the inclusion of convictions for other crimes as further categories which should require a longer or briefer period before a pardon can be granted.

Offender support groups can be expected to argue strenuously for major reforms which they have been advocating for some time. Special victim interest groups will each support proposals which address their particular concern.

The third group is the private sector. Such business groups as the Chamber of Commerce may expect to comment on any proposed changes to the act that might affect an employer's right to know the background of his employees. Professional associations governing the affairs of lawyers, doctors, accountants or real estate personnel will have an interest in any legislation which would remove their right to regulate entry to the profession by ex-offenders. School boards, camps, nurseries, and day care providers will have a particular interest in ensuring that changes to the law do not inhibit their ability to screen prospective employees who may pose a threat to the children under their care.

Credit bureaus should be involved in defining the protection which can be provided to ex-offenders regarding the confidentiality of information which is on the public record.

Finally, the public, the fourth group. The general public will be interested in any proposed changes to the act and strategies will need to be developed to disseminate factual information identifying the problems with the current legislation and how any proposed changes will better protect the public, help deserving ex-offenders and create a more efficient system.

While the benefits of Bill C-314 to certain individuals who presently have records is obvious, it would appear that efficiencies would also result. I see little in these proposals to address the concern that the public should not be subjected to undue risk. Specific members of the public may have concerns about how legislation may affect the right for example of children's aid societies to screen prospective foster or adoptive parents. Others may raise questions of whether change procedures for pardon will allow dangerous offenders easier access to firearms, driving privileges, or positions of trust following a conviction and prohibition being imposed.

Finally, the fifth category, the media. Provisions of the act which would change the rules regarding the disclosure of information to the public concerning a pardon conviction and the possible destruction of records has special repercussions for those involved in publishing and research. Consideration is required of how non-disclosure rules would affect the publication of law reference books, what access researchers may have to protected records and what protection would be available to limit the disclosure of information contained in the newspaper and the electronic media data banks and files. The interests of both academic and official government archivists must be considered before a final decision is taken on the best procedure and timing which should govern the destruction of records following a further waiting period after a pardon has been granted.

To conclude, I view Bill C-314 as an example of a positive effort by a member of the government side to take personal responsibility for an action he believes not only to be necessary, but overdue. I admire and support his actions in this regard.

I do suggest, however, that even a well thought out initiative such as the one put forward by my hon. colleague for Mississauga South can open up a consultative process of an intensity and duration that far exceeds that which might be anticipated in light of the modest attempt of the proposed amendments.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Marc Robitaille (Terrebonne): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I welcome this opportunity to take part in the debate on Bill C-314, a Private Members' bill whose purpose is to correct an obvious discrepancy in our legislation which so far has been overlooked.

The hon. member for Mississauga South has drawn our attention to the fact that individuals whose offences did not justify sentencing by the courts were nevertheless labelled as criminals for periods from between one to three years; this does not include the time required to process their requests for rehabilitation.

I know the hon. member did not want to give the House the impression that everyone who tries to have every trace of a guilty verdict erased from his criminal record and get an absolute discharge has to wait five years, as he said in December.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, it seems quite possible that people who have just obtained an absolute or conditional discharge believe— that their run-ins with the justice system are finished as soon as they leave the courtroom. This misconception may never cause problems, but it is also quite possible that a few years from now, they will be denied a job, security clearance or access to a country or they may suffer some kind of embarrassment or inconvenience.

People who are unaware their name and criminal record have been preserved or who are not familiar with the procedure under the Criminal Records Act to have their file sealed, are vulnerable to suspicions which may at any time compromise their reputation and their job.

It is reported that the significant increase in applications for rehabilitation has had the effect of slowing down response time. In fact, as was mentioned by another member, the Nelson Task Force felt that the rehabilitation process provided under the Criminal Records Act was costly, unwieldy and unefficient. However, in line with the tenor of the task force report and thanks to excellent co-operation between the National Parole Board and the RCMP, the process was drastically revamped so that a significantly heavier workload could be taken on without significantly increasing the resources allocated to this activity.

Several changes were responsible for this increased efficiency. The first change concerns the documents collected by applicants. A person applying for rehabilitation must now include with his application all the necessary documentation: a certified copy of his criminal record obtained from the RCMP, a certificate of the court sentence obtained where the case was heard; and, if necessary, a record of military conduct obtained from the registry or the commanding officer.

The kit provided for an application for rehabilitation contains all the necessary information and everything applicants need to transmit their fingerprints to the RCMP and receive a copy of their record. The RCMP's Criminal Identity Service apparently has no trouble sending criminal records directly to applicants during the initial stages. This administrative reform has speeded up the process and helped the RCMP accelerate retrieval of the records in question. The number of applications it can process went up to 10,028 in 1984-85.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps I may conclude very briefly. I believe that by tabling C-314 in this House, the hon. member for Mississauga South has given us food for thought. In fact, judicious interventions of this type often form the basis for wide-ranging legislative reform.

• (1800)

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The time provided for Private Members' Business has now expired.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 96(3), the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[*English*]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

MINING

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, on March 11, I put a series of questions to the Minister of Employment and Immigration concerning the lay-offs at Denison Mines in Elliot Lake.

A week ago last Friday, Denison Mines laid off approximately 1,050 employees in that community, in addition to the 2,200 people laid off last July and August by Denison and by Rio Algom. The situation in that community has resulted in something like 80 per cent of the miners in the work force being laid off at the present time. The existing lay-off of 1,050 is for a six-week period, but that will be repeated in July and August when the same number will be laid off. Out of that group it is projected that some 400 will be permanently laid off.

Since that time we have had word from the president of Denison Mines, Mr. Bill James, that the likelihood of the company continuing on a permanent basis beyond the end of 1992 is very questionable because of the arrangements between Ontario Hydro and the mining company for the supply of uranium to Ontario Hydro. It is impossible to overemphasize the gravity of the situation.

One of my questions to the minister was along the following lines: Can the minister speed up the payments of UI benefits?

I had visited the community the week before that, and the reports were that it would take seven or eight weeks for the benefits to be paid because of the backlog with hundreds of thousands of people receiving UIC benefits in the province of Ontario.

I have received some assurance from the minister, but I would like to have the parliamentary secretary reaffirm that those benefits will start to flow during the fourth week from the time of the lay-off. It is essential that these miners receive benefits a lot sooner than the seventh week as was projected.

The second area concerns the funding for job training, retraining, and upgrading of workers. There was a budget last year of approximately $6 million. A program was put before the minister's department several months ago for a new budget under the Community Futures Program for manpower retraining, for job search, and for community adjustment as well as industrial adjustment activities within the community. We are still awaiting a decision with regard to that Community Futures budget. It is the East Algoma Community Initiatives Incorporated group that carry it out, but the funding for those workers comes from the Community Futures Program budget.

Those are some of the concerns that are weighing heavily on this community, whether the government is going to provide those funds for retraining and upgrading. At the present time, we have something like 500 people in pre-vocational training and upgrading and 200 in technical.

• (1805)

The additional lay-offs and uncertainty being created will require many more dollars this year for training. As well there will be another 500 people who were receiving UIC before this current lay-off. We really end up with something like 700 people in training programs and around 1,500 receiving UIC during this six-week period. I assume that will be repeated this summer, in July and August, when there will be a seven-week lay-off.

That brings to the fore the other requests and demands I am making of the minister, that we be provided with additional assistance at the Elliot Lake Canada Employment Commission Centre. That centre, with an ongoing staff since the lay-offs last year of about 17 people, is simply not capable of coping with all the counselling problems or the management of 2,200 people in training, on UI, or in upgrading courses. I am hopeful that the government will move to provide an additional five people at the Canada Employment Centre in Elliot Lake to cope with the massive load required during this coming calendar year and in the year ahead.

There are many other initiatives the government needs to move on such as funding for the Retirement Living Program, the decentralization of government offices to the community, as well as a number of initiatives being put forward by the province. However, these with regard to manpower are urgent and need to be resolved. We need to have reassurance that the government is going to support, encourage and assist the community in this the most difficult time almost in its history.

Mr. Bill Kempling (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Employment and Immigration, I am pleased to have the opportunity to discuss the initiatives the government has taken to help laid off workers in Elliot Lake.

Most recently, Employment and Immigration Canada has responded to the latest lay-offs at Elliot Lake by making arrangements with the employer to facilitate the preparation of records of employment and to assist the affected workers in filing their claims for unemployment insurance benefits in Elliot Lake.

Over 900 claims were filed on March 15 and another 100 were filed on March 22. It is expected that the claims will be processed promptly as the Sudbury Canada Employment Centre will assist the Canada Employment Centre in Sault Ste. Marie.

It is anticipated that the claimants will receive their first reporting cards within the next week or two, and should receive their benefits within the normal four to five week period after filing and not eight weeks, as the hon. member has indicated.

In addition to financial assistance through the unemployment insurance system, Employment and Immigration is ensuring that laid off employees have access to the full range of employment and training programs.

First, our industrial adjustment service committee in Elliot Lake is working with Denison Mines and Rio Algom Ltd. Management and the United Steelworkers Union concerning lay-offs this year and last.

By the end of 1990, of the 427 employees then laid off at Denison Mines, 351 had positive plans for employment or training and 53 were taking early retirement.

The government is also helping Elliot Lake through the Community Futures Program.

In August 1990 a $1 million training program and relocation assistance were allocated to Elliot Lake under this program.

In November 1990 the Minister of Employment and Immigration announced additional funding of $1.7 million. This meant more training programs, relocation and adjustment assistance for workers who lost their jobs.

For the fiscal year now ending our total commitment to Elliot Lake and nearby communities is well over $9 million.

The member is aware that an application for further funding under the Community Futures Program has been submitted. It is now being reviewed by the minister's office and every consideration will be given to this application.

• (1810)

Finally, the member should be aware that beginning in April 1991, the claimant re-employment strategy will be in operation in all our Canada Employment Centres. A claimant re-employment strategy is a simple yet efficient procedure that will be delivered through our Canada Employment Centres to assist workers.

This process enables UI recipients to meet with employment counsellors and discuss in detail their particular training and employment assistance needs. This assistance will be there right at the very beginning of the employment period.

Anybody can see that Denison Mine workers who were laid off will and have received assistance to help them through this difficult period.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, the question that I raised some time ago, as a matter of fact it was back in November 1990, was a question regarding the future of the Fraser River Estuary Management Program. For the information of the House and people listening, the Fraser River Estuary Management Program was a five-year joint federal-provincial program of which there were five different funding components. The majority of those components were through different ministries of the federal government as well as ministries of the provincial government.

That funding has essentially come to an end and the reason that I posed the question in November 1990 was that the funding was essentially wrapping up in December of that year. The five-year funding was essentially grinding to a halt. That funding has now come to a halt, although I understand there have been some limited extensions of that funding.

I might point out that the reason for the Fraser River Estuary Management Program was to look at the environmental health of the Fraser River and to try to come up with a system of monitoring the environmental parameters as well as monitoring the health of the foreshore around the river.

It has been fairly successful. It has been a program that has worked and has worked reasonably well. There has been a lot of scientific data that have been brought to use as a result of the last five years that the program has been in place. The problem is, and now we have passed that December deadline, that essentially the funding has now run its course. The five-year mandate was up in December 1990.

I understand that there is a retroactive clause which can be applied and under which funding can be extended to some degree. I understand that there has been a three-month extension for the program. That three-month extension I might add comes to an end on March 31, 1991, and we are now at March 26 of that year. We have only a matter of days left before in fact that extension has run its course.

I understand there have been a number of deliberations between the Fraser River Estuary Management officials as well as the federal and provincial governments looking at extending the funding. I want to point out that in the recent green plan, which is the environmental document of the federal government, with regard to the Fraser River basin there is very little mentioned. In fact nothing is really mentioned in terms of ongoing funding for the Fraser River Estuary Management Program. It does give reference to it. It says co-operative mechanisms such as the Fraser River Estuary Manage-

ment Program have made progress on pollution prevention in recent years.

Despite this program, many parts of the river basin are in need of urgent clean-up action. For example, high levels of heavy metals have been found in non-migratory fish in the lower Fraser River close to waste treatment plants and industrial sites.

The document, which is supposed to be the federal government's bible of environmental clean-up initiatives, remains essentially silent on the future of the Fraser River Estuary Management Program. Nothing is mentioned there about a commitment to continue the funding of the program. There has been no recognition with regard to the development of management strategies for other parts of the Fraser River basin. There have been no specifics in the document as to the assignment of powers of enforcement which could be applied to the Fraser River Estuary Management Program.

• (1815)

To make my point once again, there is no commitment in this green plan for the federal government to continue to fund the Fraser River Estuary Management Program and no commitment for the government to in fact expand the mandate of the program.

I might add that in a detailed document, which my colleagues and I and the New Democratic Party released on November 29, 1990, we did in fact call for an integrated management structure to create agencies similar to the current Fraser River Estuary Management Program, which should be developed, as we pointed out, for all areas of the Fraser River. The FREMP only takes care of the lower part of the Fraser River and we have called for the development of parallel or similar agencies to look at the mid-Fraser and the upper reaches of the Fraser River that are also affected by industrial and domestic sources of pollution.

The reason that I wanted to pursue the question further today is to ask the government whether it has made any final decisions as to the ongoing funding and financing of what has been a very, very valuable environmental initiative, one whose future is currently up in the air. The program has had to wind down because at this point, at least to my knowledge, there has been no final commitment to put that funding into place, nor has there been any final commitment, as I mentioned, to expand the mandate of the program to create similar agencies.

Perhaps the member who will be presenting the rebuttal in just a moment will want to discuss just what plans the government has in place for the ongoing funding of the current FREMP and what possible initiatives it is willing to commit itself to at this time in terms of demanding or developing an expanded mandate for these kinds of environmental initiatives.

Mr. Lee Clark (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to say a few words on the very important issue of the environmental well-being of the Fraser River system and in response to the hon. member's question.

First of all, I would like to assure the hon. member that the government is well aware of the environmental needs of the Fraser River system and is well aware of the stress under which it is operating.

I would like to take the opportunity, if I may, to thank my caucus colleagues from the province of British Columbia who have been very, very diligent in ensuring that the minister and his officials and myself, as parliamentary secretary, are kept constantly informed on the needs of the river system. I might say, in return, that I appreciate their ongoing commitment to the environmental agenda of the Government of Canada.

As the hon. member who asked the question is well aware, there have indeed been ongoing talks with the province of British Columbia, particularly with the new minister who is responsible in British Columbia for the environment. We are currently negotiating a three year renewal of the Fraser River Estuary Management Program. It is a program that should include an expanded budget and an expanded membership. I would anticipate that there would be some hard information provided as a result of those talks in the very near future.

I think, as most members of this House understand, the Fraser River Estuary Management Program really addresses only a small part of a very major issue. Although it is a major achievement in itself in terms of interjurisdictional co-operation, it is really the entire Fraser River ecosystem that must be considered and that is very much what is on the agenda at the moment. The

hon. member did refer to the green plan. I was pleased that he did so, but I do not think he really did justice either to the green plan or to the attention it has paid to the Fraser River system. I think you will see, Mr. Speaker, and I am sure that all members of the House will applaud, that there will be an expanded program in place in the not too distant future with respect to the Fraser River ecosystem.

• (1820)

We are looking at curbing pollution throughout the entire basin using increased enforcement, if that is necessary; the question of the cleaning up of waste sites, the restoration of wildlife and fishery habitats and the improvement of water quality. That can be done only with the co-operation of all levels of government.

I am sure the hon. member will contribute toward that co-operation.

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pursue this evening in the few minutes allotted to me a question I posed in the House to the Minister of Transport on March 18. It concerned the open skies negotiations that will be taking place in a few short weeks. The open skies negotiations refer quite simply to the revisiting of the existing air agreement between Canada and the United States that was last amended and modified in 1974.

The major dilemma in the open skies negotiations, from Canada's perspective, is the whole concept of cabotage, which is a fancy term for simply saying, do we allow American carriers to go beyond simply coming into Canada, as they do now, and dropping off passengers? Do we go the extra step and allow American carriers the ability to pick up Canadian travellers in point *a* and bring them to another Canadian destination? That is what is meant by the word cabotage, which in essence would allow the American carriers to freely access Canadian points and probably offer reciprocal cabotage rights to our Canadian carriers.

The problem is that our industry is very different from that of the Americans. It is a lot smaller and the feeling among the air industry in Canada is that if we granted American carriers cabotage, that is to say if we allowed American carriers to roam freely in and around Canada, we would probably not have a Canadian industry as we know it in very short order.

In fact, when the government appointed a special parliamentary committee to investigate the dossier in anticipation of the negotiations, we found two things. First, by and large the Canadian industry and the many witnesses who came before us advocated that when we enter into negotiations, we clearly tell the Americans that cabotage should not be on the table as far as it is concerned toward giving the American carriers those rights in Canada. If we enter into negotiations and want to raise cabotage, it should only be done in the context of granting it to the smaller Canadian carriers in the United States, but not reciprocal.

Second, we had an agreement that was unanimous. In fact, members of Parliament from the Conservative, Liberal and NDP parties signed the unanimous committee report that said quite clearly to the minister that we should not pursue giving cabotage rights to the Americans and that if we want to pursue cabotage, it is only for Canadian carriers in the United States.

The minister at the outset of that special committee suggested that he would take the committee report very seriously and that he would listen enthusiastically to the recommendations of the report. Therefore, it came as somewhat of a surprise and also as a frustration on my part, as the transport critic for the Liberal Party, to hear the Minister of Transport going to Washington and giving a major speech on February 12 which put cabotage clearly on the table.

Therefore, my question on March 18 was to have the minister give his undertaking to the House and to the Canadian industry that cabotage for American carriers would not be advanced by our Canadian negotiators.

• (1825)

If it was placed on the table by the American side, we would clearly say no, that as a bare minimum and as a bottom line there would be no deal if it involved giving American carriers the right to travel anywhere they please in Canada.

We said so because the industry is going through some troubling times. We have seen the lay-offs of thousands of workers. Presently we have a monopoly between Air Canada and Canadian. We have the regional interests that want to maintain a sense of quality service. While some cities in the regions have had an additional number

of flights, many of those cities no longer have jet service so one can debate whether the quality of air service to those regions is getting better.

Therefore, the whole question of allowing cabotage for American carriers puts in jeopardy an industry that is already going through some difficult times.

I hope the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport will give his assurance on behalf of the minister and the government that when the minister talks about protecting the viability of the Canadian industry, we want to know what that means.

We believe that protecting the Canadian viability of our industry means being prepared to say and to have the courage to say to the Americans, no, to cabotage.

We want to improve our air treaty. We want to improve the access points between Canadian and American cities. We want to continue to do business with each other. That is fine. But if it is going to mean cabotage, then it means we are not interested and we are going to walk away from the table, not as sore losers, but in a very pro-Canadian industry way that says: "Our bottom line is the integrity and the independence of our own system. Cabotage would infringe on that, and therefore, we would rather make no deal than make a bad deal."

I hope the parliamentary secretary will give the House this assurance because it is certainly anticipated in the Canadian industry that if we enter negotiations and we are weak on cabotage, I think we are going to come out in a worse situation that we were in when we went in.

Mr. Ross Belsher (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I find it most unfortunate that my hon. friend opposite from York West would take this kind of approach to negotiations.

We were both members of the Special Committee on the Canada-U.S. Air Transport Services. We both participated in the preparation of the unanimous report of that committee. Indeed, the report of the special committee gave an endorsement to an early negotiation of a new liberalized air agreement.

I would have thought that my hon. friend would have left it at that, but he is insisting that we turn around put very strict restrictions on various things before the negotiations even commence.

The Minister of Transport has repeatedly said that he is committed to getting the best deal possible for Canada in the interest of the travelling public, communities that are served, airports, businesses, the airline industry and its workers.

The hon. member will also know that while he has been rehashing his arguments about cabotage over and over, the Minister of Transport has been meeting with, among others, the airline presidents of our two major carriers.

The meeting of Claude Taylor of Air Canada and Rhys Eyton of Canadian Airlines was part of the continuing consultations to ensure that the minister and the Canadian negotiating team have a full understanding of the concerns of the airlines, Canadian consumers, communities and business and tourism interests before entering into formal negotiations.

The airlines understand that we need a new agreement. Certainly the communities we hear from on our travels want a new agreement. Indeed, some presenters were quite aggressive in their demands for a new agreement.

The Minister of Transport has been very clear, whether in Washington, Ottawa, Edmonton or Toronto, that he is not prepared to sign a deal that does not ensure the continued viability of the Canadian airline industry.

We know these will not be easy negotiations. The special committee acknowledged that as well, when it refrained from "tying the negotiators hands", to quote from the report. Cabotage is just another market entry tool, as are gates and slots, et cetera.

I am sure that my hon. friend has not forgotten that the airlines will be at the table. I certainly do not expect them to sit passively on the sidelines.

We on this side of the House firmly believe, contrary to the apparent position of my hon. friend opposite, that through continued consultations, hard work and tough bargaining, an agreement can be reached that responds to the needs of both consumers and the aviation industry in Canada.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m, pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

The House adjourned at 6.30 p.m.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, March 27, 1991

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 31

[*English*]

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Bob Wood (Nipissing): Mr. Speaker, the people of my riding of Nipissing feel victimized by the pricing practices of the large gas companies. In fact we might say that they are fuming.

I must confess that I find it difficult to account for price differences of over 10 cents a litre between urban and rural points in my riding and over 20 cents a litre between northern and southern Ontario. The people want to know: How could such large differences exist within a relatively small geographic domain and isn't it odd that the retail price of gas reacts very quickly to increases in production costs and very slowly to decreases?

What is even more perplexing is that there are no mechanisms in place to ensure that consumers are not ripped off for such a vital and necessary commodity. In fact, we are at the mercy of this virtual monopoly and what it can get away with in the marketplace.

The Minister of Finance said in his budget that he wanted to be tough on inflation. Indeed, he threatened the Public Service with job losses and back to work legislation. I wonder if the minister will be just as tough on his corporate friends when they give us unwarranted price increases, for this too causes inflation. Or, is it one set of standards for his friends and another for everyone else?

* * *

WORLD CURLING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Mr. Brian White (Dauphin—Swan River): Mr. Speaker, the city of Winnipeg, the curling capital of the world, is this week the site of the 1991 Canada Safeway World Curling Championships.

Ten teams in each of the men's and women's divisions are battling it out for a berth in Sunday's finals where world champions will be crowned.

Support from the fans has been extraordinary. A crowd of 11,349 last night at the Winnipeg arena raised the four-day attendance mark to 121,931, which eclipses the previous week-long record set at the 1978 world championships held in Winnipeg.

The combination of competitive curling, strong fan support, an army of dedicated volunteers, corporate sponsorship and excellent television coverage by TSN makes this week's curling in Winnipeg a truly unforgettable world-class event.

* * *

GUN CONTROL

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, this House accepted over half a million signatures for gun control.

Recently, too, an Angus Reid poll found that 80 per cent of Canadians and 88 per cent of women oppose easy access to arms in this country. The petitions and the poll raise the question of democracy: a concept in which the justice minister has been citing her belief throughout the Bill C-80 saga.

She fails to mention that her own Advisory Council on Firearms consists overwhelmingly of gun users. But, as the head of Canadians for Gun Control points out, "owning a gun does not make you any more of an expert on gun control than having a disease makes you a physician".

New Democrats say to the justice minister: physician, heal thyself, include the majority of Canadians in the advisory process: the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Bar Association, the Canadian Chiefs of Police, and not just a biased minority of gun users.

Canadians want democracy. Canadians want strong and effective gun control.

* * *

THE STUDENTS' COMMISSION

Mr. Ken James (Sarnia—Lambton): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring to the attention of all members and indeed all Canadians a national students' conference entitled "The Students' Commission". It will bring together four grade 10 and 11 students from all 295 federal ridings to one of our national workshops in Fredericton, Montreal, Toronto or Saskatoon during May and June of this year.

Thereafter, 96 representatives will travel to Ottawa to hammer out one final set of recommendations which will be presented to the Prime Minister on July 1.

The Students' Commission will be a viable forum through which our youth can express their ideas on a number of important issues facing our country today, such as national unity, the environment, the transition from school to work, drug abuse, the job market, as well as problems and promises of education, all as seen through the eyes of a cross-section of young people.

In particular, the commission offers our youth an opportunity to tell us, members of their federal government, what type of Canada they would like to see and what direction our country should take.

I know that all members will want the youth of their ridings to have every opportunity to know about The Students' Commission and to let it know of their interest and support.

* * *

HUNGER

Mr. John Manley (Ottawa South): Mr. Speaker, no problem can be more immediate yet at the same time have such lasting consequence as the inability of a growing number of people in our society to find enough food to eat.

While permanent solutions to this human suffering lie in the creation of a lasting world peace, investment in the individual, and environmentally sustainable development, we must find the time and the means to address the fact that today and every day in Canada and around the world people are going hungry.

On Saturday, April 6, we in Ottawa South are organizing the second annual "Stop Hunger—Fast", a non-partisan hunger awareness event that features a 24-hour liquid only fast. Over this day we hope to collect food, pledges and volunteers for the Ottawa Food Bank and UNICEF. "Stop Hunger—Fast" will be held at the Herongate Mall in Ottawa, and we are hoping that our residents will take the time to learn about how we can stop hunger.

Hunger need not exist. Children need not be denied their future for a lack of food and senior citizens, for all their years of work and care, should not have to live in poverty today.

* * *

NATIONAL UNITY

Mr. Terry Clifford (London—Middlesex): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are facing the question of national unity. Now is the time for all good people to come forward and speak up for Canada.

One such patriot who has and continues to speak up for Canadians is Don Cherry. I am please to inform you, Mr. Speaker, that Mr. Cherry is here in the House today witnessing our democracy in action.

The pride we take in hockey, our home game, is a reflection of the pride we have for Canada. Don Cherry has recognized this fact and is vocal about his feelings.

The upcoming Stanley Cup finals and the Canada Cup are fine examples of Canadian spirit. If Canadians could put as much effort into issues of national unity as they do their hockey, our country could stand together.

As Mr. Cherry says: "Unity is like a bunch of grapes; disunity is the pits".

* * *

KUWAIT

Mr. George Proud (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, last week the federal government announced further measures for Canadian companies to participate in the reconstruction of Kuwait.

The key word here is companies. The Kuwaiti government will not issue individual working visas. Our government has indicated that it will not issue a list of Canadian companies awarded contracts.

I ask: How do Canadian workers access this wonderful employment opportunity that this government speaks of daily?

Canadian workers who have been laid off due to the made-in-Canada recession and plant closures are desperately seeking employment opportunities. Many of my constituents are willing to relocate to the Middle East, yet they are frustrated with the lack of co-operation and initiatives from the federal government.

• (1410)

This government is sending mixed signals to the Canadian people. This government is giving Canadian companies exclusive control over the contracts, and this government once again is ignoring the wants and needs of our own employable people.

* * *

DECENTRALIZATION

Hon. Alan Redway (Don Valley East): Mr. Speaker, have you ever heard your constituents say that we can solve Canada's problems by decentralizing government? I have heard politicians and academics say that but not my constituents.

Some politicians say that we need to disentangle government, that we are over-governed, that we need to get the decision-making process closer to the people, and that that will eliminate waste and inefficiency. It all seems to make sense.

However, if we decentralize, what happens to our national social safety net? What happens to national standards? What happens to the equality of all Canadians? Should the city of Toronto's works department, for instance, really look after the Trans-Canada Highway? If it did, would that eliminate waste and inefficiency?

Personally I think we still need a strong national government.

S. O. 31

EXPO 92

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, I rise again today to ask the Secretary of State for External Affairs to tell Canadians the truth about the boondoggle known as the Canadian pavilion at the World Exposition in Seville, Spain.

Yesterday I referred to a departmental document that said that the budget would rise by $10 million. Now it appears that the actual rise is even higher, from $33 million to at least $46.7 million, a $13.7 million overrun so far.

I have another document in my possession, also from external affairs, dated October 6, 1989, which shows that the minister's officials knew the construction budget for the pavilion had been underestimated by 50 per cent. This clearly shows that the massive cost overruns plaguing this project are not just the result of unforeseen disasters in the past six months. It has been going on for a year and a half.

Yet at the same time that the government is spending more and more money on a pavilion in Spain which will be demolished at the end of the fair, the external affairs department has said that 306 positions will be cut in the next six months as a result of the federal budget.

I ask the minister responsible to confirm just how much the disposable pavilion will cost and how many jobs in external affairs will have been sacrificed to finance this apparently bottomless pit.

* * *

SECRETARY OF STATE

Mr. Fernand Jourdenais (La Prairie): Mr. Speaker, today I have the pleasure to honour a colleague, a compatriot and a great Canadian. This man is a warm and kind friend to many and certainly a friend to all that is right and just in this country.

I am here to praise the man for whom the Canadore College Gerry Weiner Scholarship was named. This scholarship, which will be awarded in perpetuity, and for the first time in the fall of 1991, will serve to recognize the contribution and leadership of a student in the social service program in the area of human rights.

I understand that the person responsible for scholarships and programs took this decision while listening to an inspiring speech of the Secretary of State in North Bay on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, March 21. It was not a prepared speech, but it came from the heart.

[*Translation*]

We are doing everything we can to promote national unity, and I know that people in my riding and other ridings in Canada will do so as well. Congratulations to our Secretary of State.

* * *

[*English*]

EASTERN ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Bob Kilger (Stormont—Dundas): Mr. Speaker, the 7.6 per cent unemployment rate for the economic region of eastern Ontario is totally inaccurate.

Unemployment in Cornwall is over 15 per cent with 3,400 people looking for work. Many have lost their jobs due to plant closings and bankruptcies. The number of weeks needed to qualify for UI in Cornwall is 18, whereas only 10 weeks are required in regions where unemployment is at 15 per cent. In addition, only 21 weeks of UI benefits are provided to the jobless in Cornwall who do qualify for UI instead of the 37-week coverage allotted in a 15 per cent region.

When will this government stop using inaccurate data to mask the real picture of unemployment in Cornwall and other communities in eastern Ontario? When will this government improve the UI system which sets unemployment rates? When will it implement an economic development program to help the economy of eastern Ontario so that UI is not needed? The people want answers now.

* * *

[*Translation*]

COMMENTS MADE BY RIGHT HON. PIERRE ELLIOTT TRUDEAU

Mr. Maurice Tremblay (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, in a speech at the University of Toronto last Thursday, the former Prime Minister of Canada stated quite bluntly that after the patriation process in 1981–82, sorcerer's apprentices persuaded Quebec it had been left out.

Now he accuses the Supreme Court, and the majority justices he himself appointed, of manipulating the evidence. This is not only contempt of court, it is an argument unworthy of a man who in the past was so quick to condemn injustice.

Furthermore, he justifies his Machiavellian policy by claiming he enjoyed the support not only of federal members from Quebec but of the majority of Quebecers as well. That is false. In March 1981, only 27 per cent of Quebecers supported patriation and 54 per cent were opposed. A year later, the figures had hardly changed: 26 per cent in favour and 55 per cent opposed.

If the former Prime Minister of Canada had tried to understand the aspirations of Quebecers instead of wanting to sabotage them, his policies would have had a better chance of surviving into the next century.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker: Before starting Question Period, I just want to share something with all hon. members.

Hon. members will know that we have customarily, for some time now, been coming in to open Parliament and to take prayers early. The reason for that is not to lose any time in either members' statements or in Question Period.

I am in your hands. I cannot proceed without a quorum, and I would hope that over the break you would all be determined to be here just a minute or two early when we come back so that we can get on with the business of the day.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*English*]

CANADIAN UNITY

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): That is certainly a good point, Mr. Speaker, given the fact that we all need some prayers at this crucial time in our country.

My question is for the Prime Minister.

[*Translation*]

There is one point on which there is a consensus in this House: it would be better to renew Canada than to have a referendum on sovereignty.

Yesterday, referring to his constitutional policy, the Prime Minister said outside the House that he had a very good idea of what he wanted to do and of the timeframe in which he wanted to do it.

Is the Prime Minister prepared to reveal to the House today what that timeframe is, since every hour wasted is an hour lost for Canada?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, as I said before, we appointed the Spicer Commission and the Special Joint Committee, the Beaudoin–Edwards committee, with very specific objectives. I said that at a given time we intended to put all this together with what transpired from the work being done by the Government of Ontario, the Government of Quebec, the Governments of Alberta and New Brunswick and so on, in a parliamentary process. This would give Canadian parliamentarians a chance to put forward national—not provincial—proposals that would reflect the needs of Western Canada, the Atlantic regions and the North, which might pave the way for a new Constitution or an amended Constitution. That is what we hope to do as we continue our work.

For the same reason, I urged the hon. member sometime ago to submit her own ideas on the subject—which would be a very interesting exercise—on behalf of her political party, and that is why all of us who believe in Canada are going to work together. We may work together as a team to initiate a process that will pave the way for a new but nevertheless strong and united Canada.

[*English*]

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, in fact on this side of the House we want to play an all-party role. We want the Parliament of Canada to begin the real work of examining where we can go as a country.

Since last year, we have asked the Prime Minister for a larger role for the Parliament of Canada. His House leader has acknowledged that over the next few weeks it is likely the government will announce such a committee, possibly in the throne speech.

Given that time is short, given that the constitutional clock is ticking, does the Prime Minister not think it would be better today to share his time frame and his ideas so that the Parliament of Canada can get on with the real job of saving the country?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I do not doubt the sincerity of my hon. friend in regard to her commitment and desire to save the country.

• (1420)

One would have to be pretty far off base to fail to understand that this country, Canada, has been a magnificent illustration of co-operation between French and English speaking Canadians for 123 years. We are resolved to keep it together for another 123 years.

My hon. friend seeks a larger role for Parliament. There were two questions when we came back: one was a larger role for ordinary Canadians. The argument was that there has been too much involvement by many parliamentarians and premiers.

The Spicer commission was designed to invite comments from ordinary Canadians. It has been criticized by some, but I still believe that the Spicer commission will prove to have been an excellent initiative that will provide beneficial results and a major contribution to the debate. It is to report on July 1.

The second problem of substance we encountered not only with regard to the constitutional discussions last year, but with regard to the aboriginal discussions mandated under the previous Constitution was a flaw in the amending process. That is now being dealt with for the first time by a Senate–House of Commons committee.

It is doing very impressive work across the country. I saw some of their hearings from the territories and from Edmonton. Those two reports will have a very major and beneficial effect on the debate. It will be helpful to all parliamentarians.

Now that the Belanger–Campeau commission has reported, now that the Ontario legislature report has been tabled—I discussed it last night with Premier Rae—and other reports are in the process of coming in, the Parliament of Canada can be seized not only of these but of all initiatives coming from all parties and all citizens.

I believe that we can put together the kinds of proposals that are responsive to the needs not only of Quebec, but of the west, the north, Atlantic Canada and Ontario. Then we can devise, perhaps, a new Canada; a better, more modern, more flexible and more united Canada.

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister said clearly outside the House: "We have a pretty good idea of where we want to go in the timeframes we would like to respect." Obviously, he has a plan in mind.

Does he not believe it is about time he shares that plan with the people of Canada? Does he not realize that if he waits until after Easter and until the throne speech, every hour lost is an hour lost for this country that we all love, Canada?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the urgency inherent in the question of my hon. friend, but I indicated in the House of Commons in the past that this is a sovereign Parliament of a great and sovereign nation.

This Parliament shall establish the timeframes and not the legislature or political party in any province. We have a country. The country is called Canada. We are going to keep this country together by working together to the timeframes and the objectives of Canada.

In the process of doing that, we will by every reasonable means seek to observe and respect the wishes of others that emanate from other legislatures. That is not unreasonable.

The fundamental objectives must be set by legislators in the interests of all Canadians and within timeframes that all Canadians will find reasonable. I am not unaware of what is happening elsewhere, but I insist on the supremacy and the primacy of this House of Commons.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. With the Bélanger-Campeau report, Quebec has lobbed the ball back into the federal court, all of which has taken place in a climate of political crisis and economic decline created by this government. Canada needs profound political change but it also needs economic change. Unemployment and poverty are increasing in Canada. Fifty thousand children are going hungry in Montreal alone. My question is this: How does the Prime Minister intend to persuade Quebecers to accept his new political contract, considering that his economic contract and his obsolete policies have failed?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, that is the kind of comment all parliamentarians should try to avoid in this debate on national unity. Federalists in Canada and Quebec are not that numerous nowadays—

Some hon. members: True!

Mr. Mulroney: —that we can afford to indulge in such mean—spirited accusations. We need all our allies. We need everyone. And I would urge the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard to contribute actively to this debate and do so positively and constructively. Instead of tarnishing the reputation of the federalist forces, help us build this new Canada!

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Mr. Speaker, I can't believe this! The country is in a crisis, and all the Prime Minister has to offer is clichés.

[*English*]

The Prime Minister may not think the economy is important, but yesterday two of Canada's leading economists testified that this government's economic policies were: "destructive, caused vast damage, were nonsensical." The economists then went on to say that this government's policies would result in higher unemployment, more bankruptcies and a higher deficit. Mike McCracken and Doug Peters were the two economists.

The issue is, can a nation that is deprived of hope by its leaders, hope to hold together? The question is, why can this Prime Minister not bring himself to understand the inevitable link between national unity and a sound economy.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend asks if I understand the link between a sound economy and national unity. I assume that we all understand that. You do not have to be a Liberal or an NDP or a Conservative, I think everybody understands how important it is.

My hon. friend says we have not demonstrated it. For example, today in the *Toronto Star* there is a headline which says "Economic optimism in Canada leaps to a three-year high," which means that the policies of this government are taking effect.

My hon. friend quotes a few economists in regard to the economic difficulties we are having. Well, we are having difficulties. We are emerging from a recession. Interest rates have dropped 408 basis points since their high, and we are now in the process of coming back.

Yesterday I had the privilege of spending an hour and a half with the Secretary-General of the OECD. He indicated that in its reports it would be commenting on the fact that the policies of deficit reduction, free trade and the GST of this government are contributing to a modernizing of the economy and that Canada's economy will soon be regarded again as one of the strongest in the industrialized world.

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

[*Translation*]

Yesterday, during Question Period, I asked the Prime Minister three times how he intended to obtain a mandate for restructuring this country. Today, it was reported in one of the newspapers that the Premier of New Brunswick and the Prime Minister had discussed the possibility of having a national referendum on the Constitution. Is that how the Prime Minister intends to obtain this mandate?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I did not see the report but I have discussions on a regular basis with all provincial Premiers. Last night, I spoke to the Premier of Ontario who said that this afternoon he intended to make a major and, I assume, very useful speech on national unity. Of course, when we discuss these issues, we cover a range of possibilities, but we are not committed to one idea in particular at this time, especially since Beaudoin-Edwards is now considering the matter of the amending process, including referendums. The commission is to report in the near future, and with the hon. member, we will look at the results.

• (1430)

[*English*]

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Prime Minister. Clearly Canadians need to know what is happening in all stages of constitutional development in his country. Canadians want to be involved and they want to know. One of the key issues is how we open up the constitutional process to all Canadians.

The Prime Minister has said that he will not work on a timetable other than Canada's timetable. But there is a timetable set through Quebec. Quebec has said that it wants the option of a referendum in 1992. We cannot ignore that timetable.

We also read today that there is a report from his deputy ministers who are working on the Constitution and have put in interim reports. Will the Prime Minister table those reports in the House today so that we can all share from that thinking and so that all of us can participate in that debate with full knowledge of what the Prime Minister is working on and what his officials are working on?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I would have some difficulty tabling any reports from the deputy ministers inasmuch as I have never seen one. To the best of my knowledge there has never been any report submitted to me, to my office, or to the cabinet. I can assure my hon. friend that I have not seen hide nor hair of any report from any deputy minister with regard to the question she raises.

I will examine them when they come in and I will be happy to discuss them with the leader of the NDP in her capacity as a member of the Privy Council. We can decide the extent to which they could be tabled at that point in time.

I just want to point out to the leader of the NDP that contrary to her prefatory remarks, I never said that we were going to ignore Quebec's deadlines as set out. I said we were going to follow our own, and in the process of following our own, established by the sovereign Parliament of a sovereign nation, we will seek to accommodate the wishes expressed by others to the extent humanly possible. It seems to me that this is a fundamental Canadian question that ought to be decided by the Parliament of Canada.

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, of course it is a fundamental Canadian question and that is why this party has been pressing to make sure that all Canadians are involved: aboriginal Canadians, Quebecers, and the multicultural community.

But I say to the Prime Minister that the worst thing—and I know it is not the Prime Minister's wish or this government's wish even— for this country would be to see a Meech Lake II where the door is slammed on Canadians as other negotiations were going without the involvement or open knowledge so that everyone could participate in it.

His deputy ministers are working on reports. That is fine. There are other meetings going on. Apparently there are some talks about a referendum. We hear about one-to-one negotiations. Canadians do not want a sequel to Meech Lake, they want renewal. Will the Prime Minister be open with Canadians about all of the closed door initiatives as well as the open processes, the commission that we know is going on, and be honest with Canadians about the initiatives he is taking?

Mr. Speaker: I am sure that the hon. member meant would the Prime Minister be frank, but I think that we should watch our language in this very carefully.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I will be happy to accept from my hon. friend any useful and constructive suggestions that she may have either in regard to procedure or in regard to substance. I have already indicated that—because the leader of the NDP has talked about the desire and the importance of listening to Canadians—we established the Spicer commission precisely so that it could listen to ordinary Canadians and it is in the process of doing that.

One of the matters that became very clear, beginning with the aboriginal processes in 1985 and 1986, and then in Meech Lake, was the flaw in the amending process. We have established a committee that is presently supported by members of her party in the process of looking for ways to correct the amending process.

Both of these reports, one listening to ordinary Canadians, another seeking to unblock the amending process, would be major contributions to putting forward the substance of constitutional reform.

The House leader and I have indicated that it is our intention at the earliest possible moment to create a committee that will involve all of the parliamentarians in putting this together on behalf of all Canadians. As soon as it is done, I will be inviting the member either to participate or to designate participation, but also to give us her ideas on how best this can be done.

There has been a lot of criticism of Meech Lake by my hon. friend. I would simply remind her that we are all great Monday morning quarterbacks, and her party supported Meech Lake all the way through.

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BELANGER–CAMPEAU COMMISSION

Mr. David Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast): My question is also for the Prime Minister.

He said yesterday that he gave no instructions to the Conservative member on the Belanger–Campeau commission as to how to vote on Monday on the question of a referendum in Quebec.

Many residents of this single great nation would like to know why the Conservative member on that commission was not told to vote against an early referendum. Will the Prime Minister tell us?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I answered that completely yesterday in both English and French.

[*Translation*]

Mr. David Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is directed to the Prime Minister. Is the Government of Canada's position on the referendum a matter that interests all Canadians? Is the Government of Canada in favour of a referendum of Quebec's sovereignty, even in June 1992? Could he tell us something more substantial than he did yesterday?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the question is so juvenile and hypothetical it doesn't deserve an answer.

[*English*]

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Prime Minister. Yesterday in the House the Prime Minister said, as reported at page 19019 of *Hansard*:

—we are not abstaining from the great issues of the day. The government has taken a position in regard to the unity of Canada.

Canadians want to know why the Prime Minister says one thing on the floor of the House of Commons, while a representative of his government and his party does a completely different thing by abstaining before the Belanger–Campeau commission. Why the double standard, Mr. Prime Minister?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I think my hon. friend from Toronto was here yesterday when I indicated that when the question on sovereignty for Quebec came up, Mr. Hogue, the member for Outremont voted solidly against it, along with other members of the commission, and it was defeated 17 to 15.

I also indicated to my friend something that he knows. He knows that Jean–Pierre Hogue is a very strong and very firmly committed French Canadian in favour of Canada's unity—so much so that it brings laughter from the Bloc Quebecois. They don't like strong French Canadian people who believe in Canada's unity as Mr. Hogue does.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Mulroney: They are going to find out, this little group over here on my right—and I am being charitable because Easter is coming—that this group is going to find out—

[*Translation*]

—there are a lot more French Canadians who believe in Canada than French Canadians who believe in destroying a great country like ours.

[*English*]

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, all I can say is if he was a strong national federalist he should have stood the course right until the end and cast his ballot on behalf of the country that we all enjoy and the one we all love.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

• (1440)

Mr. Speaker: The question is getting very close to imputing the motive of an hon. member. I am sure the hon. member would want to be careful.

Mr. Marchi: Mr. Speaker, I return to the Prime Minister who also said yesterday, and I quote: "We have a Canadian agenda. We are not bound to anybody's agenda or anybody's time frame."

I ask the Prime Minister this. If he was so intent to pursue a truly Canadian agenda, why did the government representative abstain and thereby fail to stand up for a more realistic time frame that would give the Canadian agenda a better chance to succeed? Why condone a race against the clock?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I thought my hon. friend, as a strong committed federalist, would take pleasure in the fact that a member, a colleague of accomplishment, such as Jean–Pierre Hogue, defended the interests of Canada, represented the Parliament of Canada with great dignity. Jean–Pierre Hogue is a very strong Quebecer and a very strong Canadian. He believes very strongly in the unity of Canada.

As the Speaker has implied, it is very dangerous for anyone to impugn the patriotism of a member of Parliament. I would remind my friend in any case, and I say this with some affection, to remember, as someone else said, that patriotism is the final refuge of a scoundrel.

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ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

Mr. Robert E. Skelly (Comox—Alberni): Mr. Speaker, we learned in *Le Soleil* this morning that once again the Prime Minister and at least two of the premiers are secretly discussing a national referendum on the new amending formula.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Skelly (Comox–Alberni): Has the Prime Minister involved the leaders of Canada's aboriginal peoples in any high–level discussions regarding the Constitution and, knowing the dangers of excluding them, why not?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I will tell Bob Rae of the indignation of the hon. member of the fact that he and I have been speaking. I will tell Bob the next time rather than call me to call you.

Mr. Robert E. Skelly (Comox—Alberni): Mr. Speaker, I am told that the matter was not raised with Bob Rae last night, but—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Skelly (Comox–Alberni): When Parliament returned last September the Prime Minister promised us one of his four pillars, that Canada would address the relationship between aboriginal peoples and governments. Yet his government has fobbed off responsibility for the off–reserve child welfare in the province of Manitoba, refuses to assert jurisdiction for on–reserve policing in Quebec and the Prime Minister himself has ducked every single question on aboriginal issues in this House over the last two weeks, including the last question.

Is this the kind of priority aboriginal people can expect from the Prime Minister and his government?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the government is giving the very serious problems of aboriginals the highest priority and indeed the minister of Indian affairs registered another very significant accomplishment on behalf of aboriginals in British Columbia just the other day, and I want to congratulate him.

I suppose a question of equal importance is: How does the hon. member know what I said to Bob Rae? I think he has been spending too much time with Simon de Jong.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

* * *

THE CONSTITUTION

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister who says he has a good idea of his agenda for Canada. All Canadians are proud that our linguistic duality is one of the fundamental characteristics of Canada. I ask the Prime Minister, is it equally an important part of the Canadian agenda that our aboriginal people, our multicultural reality and our Charter of Rights and Freedoms be affirmed as fundamental to Canada's future?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the three final proponents referred to by my hon. friend, I believe, are already in the Constitution and/or in the charter. Obviously that is already there.

With regard to the linguistic duality notion as being a fundamental characteristic of Canada, which it is, that very important precept was found for the first time in the Meech Lake Accord, which is one of the genuine regrets that I had, and I know many had, when it was rejected.

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the other three were not found in the Meech Lake Accord where linguistic duality was located.

[*Translation*]

The Prime Minister knows Canadians feel left out of the constitutional process. They want to participate. They want to be consulted in an open process. Can the Prime Minister give us the assurance that residents in the North, members of cultural communities and members of native communities will be directly involved in the next round this time?

Mr. Lapierre: And women and children!

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend said "this time". I personally chaired two sessions with native leaders to obtain a constitutional amendment, and we were very close to success. If there had not been some last minute decisions in 1985 or 1986, we would have obtained this constitutional amendment that was so important to Canada's native peoples. So, do I believe it is important that the issue of economic and constitutional justice for native people is dealt with in a positive way? I believe it is not only important but vital. If we agree that this problem must be settled, we require the participation of all native peoples. And we intend to be very active and in urging them to participate.

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OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre–Dame–de–Grâce): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. This week, the Commissioner of Official Languages reported that official bilingualism has been very successful, especially in federal institutions and the National Capital, but that improvements were necessary to preserve national unity. Does the Prime Minister agree with the commissioner? And if so, is he prepared to table the regulations for language of work and equitable participation arising from the Official Languages Act, regulations that are now two years late?

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): First of all, Mr. Speaker, I may remind the hon. member—I already explained this in the House, I believe yesterday or the day before—that we have tabled a major piece of legislation. This government has tabled an important bill concerning official languages. Since then, it has prepared a very important set of regulations that are still being reviewed by people across Canada and which have now been printed in *The Canada Gazette*.

As for the language of work, I would say the legislation is sufficiently clear to provide a valid framework for efforts in this respect. As far as the government is concerned, we are putting in place a series of protocols to keep improving the quality of these services.

[*English*]

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, that is not the view of the Commissioner of Official Languages and many other Canadians in minority language groups.

My supplementary question is to the Prime Minister. The Commissioner of Official Languages also stated that none of the present commissions on the future of Canada or Quebec have made a precise proposal on the role of bilingualism in a restructured Canada. In this respect, when can we expect a specific policy from the government for the constitutional debate which would fully recognize the linguistic duality of this country?

• (1450)

Will the language minorities continue to be protected by the federal government or will they be forgotten in the constitutional shuffle?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious the Commissioner of Official Languages is doing his job. He looked at all sectors and, on the whole, he said he was very satisfied. He drew our attention to a number of points that we could certainly improve, and I think that is clear. But if it is so simple, why didn't the Liberals deal with the problem during the many years they were in power?

[*English*]

CONSUL GENERAL IN BOSTON

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for External Affairs, and it concerns a very serious breach of professional ethics by Canada's Consul General in Boston, former Conservative cabinet minister, Tom McMillan,.

As the minister knows, three weeks ago Mr. McMillan wrote to a Prince Edward Island daily attacking Mary Boyd, the head of the Catholic Church Social Action Commission in Charlottetown, for speaking out against Conservative government policies and he urged Islanders to write to the Pope's representative in Ottawa to attack her.

I want to ask the minister this. Will he call in his former colleague, the Consul General, and explain to Mr. McMillan that this conduct is totally unacceptable for a diplomat and will he ensure that McMillan apologizes, not only to Mary Boyd, but to the people of Prince Edward Island and the Catholic Church for this very serious lapse of judgment?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my church, may I thank the hon. member for his help.

May I quote to him the beginning of the letter from the Consul General of Canada, where he said: "Your Excellency, I am not writing to you either as Canada's Consul General to New England or as a former politician. Instead, I am writing as a concerned Roman Catholic"

I will not go on to read the rest, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, the minister unfortunately is confused. The letter in question is not the letter he quoted from, which is a private letter. The letter in question is a public letter, published in a Prince Edward Island newspaper.

I want to ask the minister: In light of that fact, and in light of the criticism by Dean Thomas Maybe, fellow Catholic of the Atlantic School of Theology, who said: "The letter displays ignorance of Catholic teaching and insensitivity to proper relations between church and state", will the minister not recognize that it is fundamentally wrong for—

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member is, certainly by his supplemental, moving into a debate which is taking place between some Christians of the Roman Catholic faith. I really think that it goes beyond something that the right hon. Secretary of State, despite his allegiance, is in a position act upon.

I am going to move on.

* * *

[*Translation*]

QUEBEC'S RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Right Hon. Prime Minister. During Question Period, we heard the Prime Minister claim that it was up to Canada to decide, that it was a prerogative of the House of Commons, that it was up to the Government of Canada to set its own timeframe, and this on the very day the Bélanger-Campeau Commission and leaders of Quebec society chose their timeframe and the path they will follow. Is the Prime Minister telling Quebecers that he wants to deprive them of their right to self-determination, that he does not acknowledge the supremacy of the National Assembly with respect to the issue of Quebec's nationhood? Is the Prime Minister telling Quebecers he wants to try to confuse the issue and thus prevent them from making a clear, logical and unambiguous decision?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Not so, Mr. Speaker. Quebecers are expressing their views, and I am referring to those who took part in the Bélanger-Campeau Commission. If I am not mistaken, there will be further comments this afternoon. We intend to read this report very carefully because it constitutes a major position for the Quebec National Assembly and, I assume, for the Government of Quebec. However, I noticed that in his comments as Premier of Quebec, Mr. Bourassa said he was committed to carrying out all his responsibilities, regardless of commissions of inquiry. In other words, he is not yielding his moral or political authority to anyone.

That being said, I consider the Bélanger-Campeau report as a major contribution by Quebec to the national debate. The government and the federal Parliament intend to take an active part in this debate. And I am sure the hon. member will not be offended if, as the Prime Minister of Canada, and as Canadian parliamentarians, we ensure that the prerogatives of a sovereign Parliament are also respected.

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, the fundamental question I asked the Prime Minister of Canada is this: Does he recognize, in law and in reality, the right of Quebec to be the master of its destiny? Does he recognize the right of Quebec to self-determination and that of the National Assembly to hold a referendum in 1992 to decide of Quebec's own future without any interference from the government of Canada?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raised this question before. The answer is in the record.

An hon. member: Answer!

Mr. Mulroney: Mr. Speaker, many things are going to happen, but I will not put up with being harassed by the Bloc Québécois while I am answering an important question on behalf of all Canadians. You can count on that!

As I said,—

An hon. member: Just wait until the next elections!

Mr. Mulroney: I will be waiting for you resolutely. Let us see how you fare in Quebec!

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Mulroney: Come to Quebec and you will see that, if they have to choose between the builders of Canada and the demolishers from the Bloc Québécois, Quebecers and Canadians alike will go for those who will build a great big country.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

* * *

[*English*]

WESTERN GRAIN STABILIZATION ACT

Mr. Geoff Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State for Grains and Oilseeds.

The same minister in 1985 caused the Western Grain Stabilization Act to be amended to provide for the possibility of interim spring payments.

Given the fact that seeding time is not far away, I want to ask the minister if it is possible to say whether there will be an interim payment or not. If so, how much will it be and when will it go out to producers?

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister of State (Grains and Oilseeds)): Mr. Speaker, the Western Grain Stabilization Act provides for joint funding by producers and the federal government to assist producers in times of falling grain prices.

We are in a situation now because of world grain prices being very low that the fund will trigger a payment this year. I am happy to announce today that we will be putting cheques in the mail to producers at the end of this week.

The total amount will be $158 million.

* * *

NATIONAL UNITY

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Often on this side of the House, we disagree with the Prime Minister in a great many policy areas. On the question of Canada and the obligation we, in this House, have to do what we can to work together to keep this country united, we agree with the Prime Minister.

I want to ask the Prime Minister: How is the cause of national unity strengthened and fostered when the Prime Minister, as he did yesterday, began this phase of this important debate in our nation's history by spending a good part of the Question Period attacking the Leader of the Opposition who is not here, and by attacking premiers who are not here to defend themselves?

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that is a question. Perhaps the hon. member would put a direct question to the government.

Mr. Tobin: I do not know how else, but to say to the Prime Minister: If we are going to work together in this Parliament among the parties and all the players, the provinces, to rebuild Canada, that requires trust, sharing information and opening up the backroom process to build a team to restructure this country.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

• (1500)

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the comments by my hon. friend in regard to the intentions of his party to contribute constructively to the debate. I take that in good faith. Indeed, it would probably be a major contribution that we could all make to the country, given the seriousness of the challenge confronting us, if all of us undertook to depoliticize this very important issue and work together on behalf of a united Canada.

I do not want to digress or diverge from what I have just said, but my friend says that the Prime Minister began this phase by attacking the Leader of the Opposition yesterday. I did not. What began were comments from the Leader of the Opposition, to which I responded.

That being said, I want to accept my share of responsibility in terms of partisanship and give my hon. friend the following undertaking: The importance of this issue is such that all of us should go the extra mile to avoid partisanship in dealing with this fundamental question of national unity, and I tell my hon. friend that if that is the position of the Liberal Party and the NDP, it is one that I will follow suit on and respect.

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte): Mr. Speaker, I apologize for my demonstration of frustration and anger a moment ago.

In supplementary to the Prime Minister, I accept what the Prime Minister has said and I say to him on behalf of this party and on behalf of all Canadians that we want to be part of a constructive process.

Will the Prime Minister at the earliest opportunity please share with all members of Parliament the plans, the designs, and the process that the Prime Minister alluded to yesterday so that we can work constructively and collectively to give this country a fighting chance?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, my friend says that he wishes to be part of a constructive process and to work collectively. I think that is already an important contribution to the most important debate that will be confronting this country in an extended period of time. I thank him for that.

I give him the assurance, as Prime Minister of Canada, that we will work collectively and constructively with him and all of his colleagues to make sure that Canada does indeed remain a strong and united country.

In conclusion, and in the same spirit, I owe my hon. friend from Granby a comment simply because I was precluded from answering. It is very simple and straightforward: The participation of the Prime Minister of Canada in the 1980 referendum presupposed by all of those who participated in it the democratic acceptance of what was a democratic consultation among the people of the province of Quebec. That has always been my position. It has been the position of the Leader of the Opposition and others, and I believe it to be a legitimate one.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

WITHDRAWAL OF COMMENTS RESPECTING STANDING COMMITTEE

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I made allegations to the effect that the PMO had contacted the reporting services to prevent the printing of minutes. That is not so. In fact, the PMO's contact with reporting services was to obtain the minutes of the meeting.

Earlier I informed the chairman of the consumer and corporate affairs committee of such, and I now withdraw those allegations unequivocally.

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Sherbrooke): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point. I had the opportunity to discuss this matter with my colleague before Question Period today, and he was kind enough to inform me of his intention to rise in the House today to make the statement that he just made.

I thank my colleague on behalf of the members of the committee for having closed this matter in the way he did.

COMMENTS DURING QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege, of which I have given Your Honour notice, concerning the supplementary question which I was attempting to ask of the Secretary of State for External Affairs in Question Period.

As I pointed out to Your Honour, the question related to the actions of the Consul General in Boston, for whom the Secretary of State for External Affairs is directly responsible. Indeed, he was responsible for the appointment of this individual.

In my supplementary question, I was simply seeking to obtain an assurance from the Secretary of State for External Affairs that not a private letter but a public attack on an individual within the Catholic Church of Prince Edward Island for expressing views on government policy was not an acceptable manner for a diplomat to proceed.

I was simply seeking an assurance from the minister, who is responsible for the Consul General's activities, that this kind of thing will not be repeated and that there would be an apology. With respect, I would hope the Secretary of State for External Affairs might be prepared to answer the question which is indeed in order.

Mr. Speaker: I think the first thing I should say is that of course the hon. member for Burnaby—Kingsway gave me notice of this and raised it as a question of privilege. It is not. It is a point of order. It may well be that if I had heard the end of the question, the supplemental, I might have been in agreement with the hon. member.

However, given what was said at that point I felt it was straying beyond the bounds, and that was my ruling at that time. I understand the point the hon. member is making.

The right hon. Secretary of State for External Affairs may wish to respond. He indicates that he does not wish to respond.

ARREST OF GLEN KEALEY

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, I rise on another question of privilege. At approximately five minutes to two today outside this Chamber a gentleman, Mr. Glen Kealey, was standing peacefully and silently, holding a Canadian flag and a sign.

At that time, Mr. Kealey was approached by a member of the RCMP and was arrested. A number of members of Parliament questioned the basis for that arrest, and we were told by the officer in question that Mr. Kealey was obstructing the law.

I want to raise a question of privilege regarding contempt of this House in view of the unanimous and strong position that was taken by the Standing Joint Committee on Scrutiny of Regulations in a letter addressed to the Minister of Public Works in July 1990 when the regulations allowing for this kind of arrest were severely criticized and were arguably in breach of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It was suggested and it was urged unanimously by the committee that the regulations should be revoked at once and that there should be pre-publication for any subsequent regulations.

In the response by the minister dated September 26 to this question, the minister stated: "The regulations are not being enforced by the RCMP".

Surely it is a sad day in this country when a Canadian citizen wishes to stand silently and peacefully in front of the Parliament Buildings and express his views with respect to government policy, and that person is arrested as a criminal and taken away in an RCMP vehicle. That is not acceptable in Canada today.

I want to ask for clear direction from the Chair. Will the Speaker make it very clear to the RCMP, since it is the Speaker who is responsible for the precincts of this House, that this kind of conduct is unacceptable, that it is totally inappropriate for any individual to be arrested when that individual is silently and peacefully standing on Parliament Hill, exercising his or her freedom of speech in conformity with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms?

Will the Speaker give that direction to all Canadians, particularly to the RCMP, and will he ensure that no further arrests will be made of those who are seeking to exercise freedom of speech in this country?

Mr. Maurice A. Dionne (Miramichi): I rise on the same question, Mr. Speaker. I simply want to add my voice to the question raised by my hon. friend opposite and tell you that I also witnessed the scene. The thought that came to my mind was that we have lost a little bit of democracy today.

• (1510)

Things were very peaceful, and all of a sudden an RCMP officer who had been told to do so—I am not particularly angry with the action of the policeman because obviously he was following orders—arrested the gentleman in question when he was doing absolutely nothing that was criminal or violent. If one person's rights and freedoms in this nation are in peril, then the rights and freedoms of us all are in peril.

Mr. David Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same question.

Mr. Speaker: Very briefly. I have the point.

Mr. Kilgour: I join with my colleagues on both ends of the House. I think you and I have discussed this matter before. I realize that you do not have jurisdiction outside the building and that you may feel, therefore, you can say nothing about this matter.

As was just put my colleagues, all our rights are affected when a priest and today Mr. Kealey can be dragged away for not obeying a lawful order. I understand the police cannot give what the basis of that lawful order is.

Mr. Speaker: Let me deal with this point first of all. As is perhaps not as well known as should be, the Speaker's jurisdiction ends at the building wall. It does not extend out on to the grounds.

Second, I do not know what the circumstances were and I cannot sit in judgment as to whether the arrest was within the law or outside the law.

Third, the hon. member raises the matter as a question of privilege. There may or may not be a legitimate complaint about the action of the RCMP under the circumstances. That is not for me to rule on.

I have to decide whether the matter that is raised is a question of privilege or a contempt against the House. I have to say that nothing that has happened has made it impossible for any of the three hon. members to rise in this House, to carry on and to do their duties. That is, after all, the essence of what is a privilege. It must be clearly understood that although there may be no sign of prima facie privilege there may be, however, a complaint in another direction.

The hon. members have given some indication of their unhappiness. They of course can take the matter up in other ways, but I do not think they can establish, certainly on what I have heard, a prima facie case of privilege.

With respect to the policy in general here on the Hill, hon. members know that it is a matter from time to time of considerable concern. I certainly will discuss the matter further with colleagues in the Board of Internal Economy.

I also want to say—and this does not necessarily reflect on the facts that took place today because I am not sitting in judgment of them—that there are security problems. They are very real. One way or another, in the final analysis the Speaker is responsible for the security of all members, at least when inside the building. This is a matter which gives the Speaker some difficulty because there is this dividing line.

We are governed by the rule of law and I do not have authority to do what might be a very good idea to give me authority to do. However, I do not have it at the moment.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, to add to the point you just made, when there was a disturbance in this House some months ago, you felt that perhaps the most appropriate way to deal with it would be to refer the matter to an appropriate committee. This in fact was done, the details were looked into and discussed among members and other witnesses. I wonder if it would be the appropriate thing to do in this case as well.

The point is that when there are disruptions in terms of innocent citizens before their Parliament Buildings, I think it is something of concern to us all. For that reason, I just wonder if it would be appropriate to refer the matter to the appropriate committee for consideration and report back to the House.

Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough West): Mr. Speaker, I rise in my capacity as co-chairman of the Joint Senate and House of Commons Committee on the Scrutiny of Regulations, particularly in response to the comment of the hon. NDP House leader.

As the hon. member for Burnaby indicated, the committee has already looked at the public works regulations which were brought into place by the Minister of Public Works and which were the subject of my friend's comments.

The committee has in fact already advised the minister quite clearly that the committee's view is that those regulations are totally unacceptable and unconstitutional.

Mr. Speaker: I am also bound by the rules. This is a matter of debate. It may be a matter for Question Period. However, it is not something that I can interfere with. I do not think I have the authority even to go as far as the hon. member for Kamloops has suggested, that I refer this matter to a committee. The committee is the master of its own proceedings and can take the matter under consideration if it wishes.

As I say, I will do what I can do. I will discuss it with members of the Board of Internal Economy because undoubtedly security and all such matters, not just within the building but outside the building, are of very grave concern to us.

Mr. Wappel: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member has heard my comments. I will listen for a moment.

Mr. Wappel: I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, that in my view one committee of this House is already seized of the matter. My point was just to indicate that the particular committee of which I am the chairman is already looking into it.

I also wanted to make the point that the minister wrote to yourself, Sir, in September 1990 and now we have an arrest outside the House in March of 1991. With great respect, we are still waiting for a response from this place.

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, I rise just for clarification. You indicated in your response to the member for Burnaby that you were not responsible outside the walls of this building.

Could you advise the House and the people who are watching who in fact has the jurisdiction relative to the policing of the grounds of the House of Commons? Which minister has responsibility or which organization has responsibility for that?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member may have that question and he may have further questions. He may certainly come and see me and I will discuss it with him, but I think we are getting far beyond anything that I can justify under the rules.

RESPONSE OF MINISTER

Mr. Geoff Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, my personal concern arises out of a question which I asked toward the end of Question Period. It was a question directed to the Minister of State for Grains and Oilseeds.

I do not consider that the question was frivolous or that it lacked substance. However, I say with the greatest respect that I do not believe the hon. minister was given sufficient time to provide an answer.

I suggest that perhaps it was a 15 or 20 second span. It was inadequate to provide an answer. I do believe that there are several hundred thousand grain farmers who would be very interested in hearing the answer.

I wonder, with the greatest respect, whether the minister might be afforded the opportunity to complete his response to my question because I for one would like to hear it.

Mr. Speaker: I certainly regret if for whatever reason the hon. minister did not have sufficient time to give his response.

I must also point out that there are very adequate means available to ministers and to members to make information available. Of course the hon. member can avail himself of the rules, bring about an adjourned debate and put further questions to the government, at which time the minister or the minister's parliamentary secretary would be able to give an even more full response.

In any event, I certainly regret if the minister was cut off too quickly. I will try very hard to make sure that does not happen.

Mr. Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, again with the greatest respect, I simply wish to make the observation that it appears that a number of questioners are allowed considerable preamble, some of which I would suggest were 40 to 50 seconds in length, and indeed there are long answers. I am simply suggesting that a question from a backbench government member ought to be treated with the same respect as one from any other member within this House—

• (1520)

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: I want to assure the hon. member that questions from all members are treated with respect by the Chair. There have been suggestions made very recently that members on both sides have some discussions among themselves with respect to Question Period. I am hoping that those discussions are taking place.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, the point is well taken that we want to make this place as relevant as possible. May I suggest that in a moment or two we will be getting into Routine Proceedings and that the minister responsible has an opportunity to make a short statement at that point.

* * *

[*Translation*]

ROYAL ASSENT

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Rideau Hall
Ottawa

March 27, 1991

Mr. Speaker,

I have the honour to inform you that the Honourable Beverley M. McLachlin, Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of Canada, in her capacity as Deputy Governor General, will proceed to the Senate Chamber today, the 27th day of March, 1991, at 4 p.m., for the purpose of giving Royal Assent to certain Bills.

Yours sincerely,
Anthony P. Smyth
Deputy Secretary, Policy

[*English*]

Mr. Angus: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. Just for clarification, in the interpretation of your first remarks, it said six o'clock, in English it said four o'clock. Could you clarify for the House when the Royal Assent will occur?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): It should be four o'clock. Sorry.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

PETITIONS

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the Government's response to three petitions.

[*Editor's Note: See today's Votes and Proceedings.*]

[*English*]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION

23RD REPORT OF CANADIAN NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

Mr. Bob Hicks (Scarborough East): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34, it is my pleasure to present to the House, in both official languages, the 23rd report of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FOURTH REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL DEFENCE AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Arnold Malone (Crowfoot): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with its mandate under Standing Order 108(2), the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs has the honour to present its fourth report. Having undertaken a study of arms transfers, the committee tables its report entitled "World Summit on the Instruments of War and Weapons of Mass Destruction".

This study was undertaken with some urgency, as the committee believes that we have the duty to do what we can to prevent the types of mass arms build-up that allowed Iraq to invade its neighbour and to cause tremendous suffering.

As a part of its post-hostility proposals unveiled in February, the government proposed a world summit designed to highlight the problems of weapons proliferation and to develop plans to control it. In the weeks since the end of the war, the committee has held hearings with a number of experts on the idea of a world summit.

I am pleased to say the committee supports the proposal and has made some suggestions which we think could strengthen its impact. We hope our suggestions will be useful in this regard, and we will work to ensure that Canadian policies are consistent with the goals of the summit.

SIXTH REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE STATUS OF DISABLED PERSONS

Mr. Bruce Halliday (Oxford): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Human Rights and the Status of Disabled Persons.

FOURTH REPORT OF STANDING JOINT COMMITTEE FOR THE SCRUTINY OF REGULATIONS

Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough West): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations.

[*Translation*]

This report emphasizes the lack of legal authority for certain programs administered by the Department of National Health and Welfare and intended to authorize the possession of controlled and restricted narcotics and drugs.

[*English*]

The report notes that the department has been aware of the lack of authority for the regulations authorizing these programs for at least 15 years.

The report also notes that successive ministers have failed to seek parliamentary approval for legislation authorizing these regulations, despite the government's admission that the current regulations are illegal.

[*Translation*]

In their fourth report the committee categorically rejects the suggestion of the Minister of National Health and Welfare to the effect that departmental recourse to illegal regulations can be justified by his department's health protection mandate. The report points out that constitutional government principles make it mandatory for ministers and other public officials to enforce the law as it has been passed by Parliament, not as they would wish it to be drafted.

[*English*]

The fourth report calls for the revocation of the current regulations and their replacement by new regulations that conform to the Narcotics Control Act and the Food and Drugs Act.

SEVENTH REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Walter McLean (Waterloo): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the seventh report of the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade.

The committee issued an earlier report entitled *Securing our Global Future: Canada's Stake in the Unfinished Business of Third World Debt*.

Today's report responds to the government's reply. It is entitled *Unanswered Questions: Uncertain Hopes*. It encourages continuing Canadian leadership on the critical North–South issue of debt relief.

[*Editor's Note: See today's Votes and Proceedings.*]

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CRIMINAL CODE

MEASURE TO AMEND

Mr. Robert Wenman (Fraser Valley West) moved for leave to introduce Bill C–351, an act to amend the Criminal Code (terminally ill persons).

He said: This bill concerns amendments to the Criminal Code. Specifically, it deals with the serious subject of the right of individuals who are in the latter stages of terminal illness to refuse or withdraw from medical treatment in order that the timing of a more natural death may preclude unnecessary pain and suffering.

In essence, this bill will address the question of whether we allow individuals in our society to have the right to die with dignity.

As a society and as a government, we can no longer keep avoiding this issue as there exists virtually no government regulation or no judicial guidance concerning the right of a terminally ill patient to refuse or withdraw from treatment.

Terminally ill patients must have the right to determine their own length of treatment and physicians must, in turn, not be held liable for following the very wishes of their own patients.

A strict reading of the Criminal Code of Canada would indicate that withholding treatment from the terminally ill might constitute a criminal offence. As a matter of fact, the Criminal Code has a number of sections which either indicate or seem to indicate that doctors must provide their patients with full medical treatment regardless of circumstances.

Section 14 of the Code reads: "No person is entitled to consent to have death inflicted upon him."

• (1530)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I believe that is a brief explanation.

Motion agreed to, bill read the first time and ordered to be printed.

* * *

[*Translation*]

WAYS AND MEANS

NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce a ways and means motion. It will no doubt be of interest to all of those who are concerned with the increasing fairness and efficiency of the GST.

So, pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 83(1), I have the honour to lay upon the Table a notice of ways and means motion concerning the Excise Tax Act and other Acts pertaining to the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax.

I ask, at the same time, Mr. Speaker, that you designate an Order of the Day for the consideration of the said motion.

Ms. Copps: I would like to wish Happy Easter to everyone, Mr. Speaker. I also wish to thank the government to have taken our advice about the GST on books.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The hon. member for Western Arctic would like to present a motion, but she must have unanimous consent.

An hon. member: Let us hear the motion.

Routine Proceedings

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

REQUEST FOR AUTHORIZATION TO SUBPOENA QUEBEC MINISTERS

Ms. Ethel Blondin (Western Arctic): Mr. Speaker, I wish to seek leave of the House to move the following motion. I move:

That the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs be authorized to subpoena the ministers of the Quebec government as well as other key witnesses who had direct responsibility for the events which occurred at Kahnawake and Kanesatake in the summer of 1990, in order to complete the committee's work on this subject, in full and with credibility.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS INFORMATION REVIEW ACT

REFERRAL OF SECTION 12 TO STANDING COMMITTEE

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the various members of the House and I believe you will find consent for the following motions. The first motion is the one I moved yesterday. I move:

Pursuant to section 57 of an act to amend the Hazardous Products Act and the Canada Labour Code, to enact the Hazardous Materials Information Review Act and to amend other acts in relation thereto, chapter 24, third supplement, Revised Statutes of Canada, 1985, section 12 of the act be referred to the Standing Committee on Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Government Operations; and

That the committee undertake a comprehensive review of section 12 and submit a report to the House no later than December 1, 1991.

Motion agreed to.

* * *

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, MINES AND RESOURCES

AUTHORIZATION TO TRAVEL

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I believe you find consent for this motion as well: I move:

That three members and one researcher of the Standing Committee on Energy, Mines and Resources be authorized to travel to London, U.K., to attend the conference, "Coal in the Environment", from April 1 to 6, 1991.

Motion agreed to.

* * *

HOUSE OF COMMONS

ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED MEXICAN STATES

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, this should be the last time I rise on motions. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order of the House, at 11 o'clock a.m. on Monday April 8, 1991, the House shall meet for an address by His Excellency Carlos Salinas de Gortari, President of the United Mexican States, to members of the House of Commons and members of the Senate, and

That, such address and all customary introductory and related remarks be printed as an appendix to the House of Commons Debates of that day and form part of the records of this House, and

That, media recording and transmission of such address, introductory and related remarks be authorized according to House guidelines, and

That, beginning at 2 o'clock p.m. that day proceedings will be in accordance with the provisions of the Standing Orders.

Motion agreed to.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PETITIONS

CANADA POST

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, it is my duty to table today another four or so petitions on behalf of residents of my riding of Ottawa—Vanier who disapprove of Canada Post's decision to close down the branch located at 580 Rideau Street, which is part of my riding. These petitioners claim that this branch is serving not only a number of senior citizens homes, but also several embassies, three of which already strongly opposed the closure.

Mr. Speaker, I have tabled nearly a dozen petitions on behalf of constituents of Ottawa—Vanier asking Canada Post to reverse this unfortunate decision and I hope they will listen to good old common sense.

[*English*]

BALTIC STATES

Mr. Neil Young (Beaches—Woodbine): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present today. The first requests that as the House of Commons has condemned the brutal and unacceptable Soviet crackdown on Lithuania and Latvia, Canada has suspended aid to the U.S.S.R. in light of Soviet military aggression in the Baltic States and the Canadian government does not recognize the *de jure* annexation of the Baltic States by the Soviet Union, and the Canadian government supports the peaceful restoration of freedoms in the Baltic States, and as the present Government of Latvia was elected on a pro-independence platform and enjoys the confidence of the people, the petitioners call upon Parliament to allocate and activate credits for feed grain to Latvia and the neighbouring Baltic States.

The next petition, Mr. Speaker, is similar in the preamble. However, in the whereases, the petitioners call upon Parliament to ascertain the specific requirements for medical aid to Latvia, allocate funds for the acquisition of required medical supplies for Latvia, and expedite the shipment of these supplies to the Government of Latvia.

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Hon. William Rompkey (Labrador): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition on behalf of several thousand residents of Labrador from a number of communities; Happy Valley, Goose Bay, Labrador City, Wabush, Nain, Makkovik, and other communities along the coast. The petitioners are calling on the Parliament of Canada to instruct the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to reverse its decision regarding the cancellation of Labrador services. They point out that the federal government, through the CBC, has seen fit to cancel all locally produced and locally broadcasted television material in the region of Labrador, and as Labrador is the only location in Canada's north to experience such a cut, and as there is no alternate source of local television broadcasts available in Labrador, neither a daily newspaper, nor a full-time local radio station, that these local CBC television services are essential and should be reinstated immediately.

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, I rise, following the tabling of the Ways and Means Motion by the President of the Treasury Board, where we removed the tax on yoghurt but we certainly did not stop taxing books, which is to impose ignorance. Taxing books is a terrible mortgage on our future, and I think we should do everything that we can to encourage reading—

[*Translation*]

Now that we have come to realize the extent of the problem of illiteracy in our country, now is the time to encourage reading, not to tax it.

[*English*]

It was with great regret that I will read once again into the record that petitioners, thousands now, call on this Parliament to remove the repressive tax on reading, which is a tax on intellectual property.

Mr. Speaker, please note that Canadians are not happy with the the Ways and Means Motion deposited today.

CANADA POST

Ms. Catherine Callbeck (Malpeque): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to present a petition signed by many of my constituents from Malpeque, Prince Edward Island. They are concerned about the post office in Albany and state that the Canada Post Corporation, which is presently reviewing the status of the Albany post office for conversion, its residents should not be deprived of adequate postal service due to the rural nature of Prince Edward Island.

These petitioners call upon Parliament to reject proposals which will decrease postal service to their local community, to take strong and immediate action to assure them that our post office, which serves a great need in their community will not be closed, put out on contract, relocated in another community, replaced with supermailboxes or any other inferior service.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the honour to present the names of close to 600 petitioners who signed this petition stating that thousands of east Europeans did enter Canada legally in good faith and did subsequently apply as self-exiles in good faith.

• (1540)

Self-exiles from Poland and other east European countries are unable to work or attend school while waiting for their applications to be processed, creating unnecessary hardship for both themselves and their sponsors. The processing time for many of these self-exile applicants is up to three years. The quotas imposed by the Minister of Employment and Immigration limit the number of applications being processed.

The petitioners humbly pray and call upon Parliament to request the Minister of Employment and Immigration to reciprocate on their good faith and speed up the process, remove quotas, and allow self-exile applicants to work or attend school while waiting for applications to be processed.

I am pleased that the minister responsible is present to hear these petitioners, and I hope that she will act on these before Easter.

COMMEMORATIVE STAMP

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park): Mr. Speaker, I have a second petition. This is further to the thousands of Canadians who have already petitioned this House calling upon the government to issue a stamp in honour of Marie Sklodowska Curie who discovered radium. This honour can be made by issuing a commemorative stamp on the occasion of the 125th anniversary of her birth, which will take place on November 7, 1992.

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand pursuant to Standing Order 36 to present to the House numerous petitions signed by citizens from North York, Thornhill, Willowdale, and several hundred from Guelph, Cambridge, and others outside of Toronto, all of them objecting strenuously to the unjust imposition of taxes on books, on reading, on literacy.

All of the petitioners humbly implore this Parliament to urge the government to withdraw the GST on textbooks and other materials that lead to literacy and culture.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition on the subject of the private member's bill introduced this day by the hon. member from Fraser Valley West. The petition points out the difficult questions confronting health care professionals, family members and terminally ill persons which have grown more complex with the advancement of medical technology. It calls upon Parliament to acknowledge openly the urgent need for changes to address the present denial of human dignity among thousands of elderly and dying Canadians by taking such actions as it deems appropriate to cause the government to examine the numerous proposals now being presented which would safeguard the right of every Canadian to control his or her own life to the end.

ETHANOL BASED GASOLINES

Hon. Ralph Ferguson (Lambton—Middlesex): Mr. Speaker, I rise again to present petitions signed by over 400 members of my constituency supporting the use of ethanol based gasolines. They want the government to make the oxygen content of gasoline at least 3.2 per cent and to ban methylcyclopentadienyl from further use in the automotive industry and as automotive fuel.

I am shocked that in response to earlier petitions the government has been responding using technology that is probably 10 or 12 years old and not up to current standards on the efficiencies that are involved in manufacturing this product or some of the end uses, one of which is a flour that can be used for human consumption, particularly suitable for Third World countries.

VIA RAIL

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present petitions signed by approximately 900 or so Canadians, plus some visitors to our country. It is part of the "Put Canada Back on Track" campaign. The petitioners, who are from right across Canada, humbly pray and call upon Parliament to support the NDP plan to restore VIA Rail services cut on January 15, 1990, to maintain and where appropriate upgrade remote services on which many Canadians rely, to provide a legislative mandate for VIA Rail, and to make available to VIA the resources which it needs to become a modern passenger rail system in a class with those throughout the rest of the western world.

This is a new petition and perhaps the government can come up with a new answer.

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, I have a group of petitions from constituents in my riding from Melfort, Naicam, Mistatim, Hudson Bay, Spalding, Pleasantdale, Grandin, Fairy Glen and Lac-Vert, who note that the government is attempting to off-load some of the costs of maintaining RCMP policing in their area. They point out that the Government of Canada and Canada benefits by at least 30 per cent by the activities of the RCMP.

The petitioners request the Parliament of Canada to continue the sharing of this important national symbol and institution and that the federal government continue to carry 30 per cent of the cost of RCMP policing instead of the 25 per cent to which it is attempting to shift.

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present with respect to the goods and services tax and its impact on Canadians, an impact which the petitioners are quite critical of.

The various ways and means motions which have been presented before the House today do not deal with most of these problems. They do provide some very important changes with respect to jigs, dyes and moulds, which are of extreme importance to my constituency and I am pleased to see, but they do not address things such as the need to provide an exemption for books, the need to see to it that this GST is replaced by a fair tax system applying in a fair way to Canadians across the country.

INCOME TAX GUIDES

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Mr. Speaker, I have two sets of petitions which have been duly certified by the Clerk of Petitions.

In the first one, the petitioners point out that tax guides have been provided for a variety of groups with special needs. It also points out that students are a group with special needs with respect to income tax. They seek action by Parliament to request that Revenue Canada make available to students a guide that would be suitable to their needs.

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present the final 3,000 of 57,000 petitions which were submitted by the citizens of Windsor, the content of which you know, but I think it is important to re-emphasize the final paragraph. It says: "Wherefore the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon Parliament to take all necessary measures to preserve local CBC television broadcasting in Windsor and all other areas deprived of such service by federal government cutbacks and by the decisions of CBC management". I would remind you that we in Windsor have lost our sole source of local Canadian broadcasting and are, therefore, subject to dominance by American airwaves by the action of this government.

VIA RAIL

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition signed by people in a number of provinces: Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Manitoba and, as well, residents of England.

In their petition, the people humbly pray and call upon Parliament to support the New Democratic Party plan to restore VIA Rail services which were cut on January 15, 1990, and maintain and, more appropriately, to upgrade remote services on which many Canadians rely, and to provide a legislative mandate for VIA Rail and make available to VIA the resources which it needs to become a modern passenger rail system in a class with those throughout the rest of the western world.

URANIUM MINING

Mr. Ray Funk (Prince Albert—Churchill River): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and a privilege to be able to present a petition signed by several hundred people from places in Saskatchewan like Moose Jaw, Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Alberta and, in Manitoba from Brandon, Boissevain, Winnipeg and other points. These people have taken note of the spill of radioactive waste at Wollaston Lake in 1989. They found that the regulatory system that pertains to these kinds of events was grossly inadequate.

• (1550)

Therefore, the petitioners are calling for a comprehensive, independent and public inquiry into uranium mining in Saskatchewan and in northern Canada in general.

As well, the petitioners feel that there needs to be an immediate EARP panel convened in order to look into the new mine at Eagle Point next to the Wollaston Lake mine.

DYING WITH DIGNITY

Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the pleasure of presenting two petitions.

The first one states that since 1981, Canada's Dying with Dignity Association has been expanding and reflecting the concerns of Canadians for more widespread understanding of euthanasia.

It goes on to point out that many thousands of Canadians are kept in existence in conditions totally lacking in human dignity and with no resources for relief. The petitioners call upon Parliament to acknowledge openly the urgent need for changes to address the present denial of human dignity among thousands of elderly and dying Canadians.

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I have is 45 pages long and contains several hundred names.

The petitioners are mainly old age pensioners living in mobile home parks who point out that the goods and services tax is being levied unfairly on their residences. They point out that the government is taxing shelter by virtue of the definition of mobile homes.

The petitioners also point out the government's failure to recognize the use to which mobile accommodation can be put and call upon the government to rescind the goods and services tax. They wish the prevention of taxing of shelter for persons residing in movable residences, including recreational vehicles, small trailers and houseboats.

VIA RAIL

Mr. Jack Whittaker (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise under Standing Order 36 to present yet another petition on VIA Rail.

The petition shows how widespread the support for VIA Rail is. The petitioners are from places like Winnipeg, Toronto, Kamloops, British Columbia, Fredericton, New Brunswick and various places in Manitoba, Thunder Bay and Calgary, Alberta.

These petitioners have not given up on VIA Rail. They have asked the government and Parliament to maintain VIA Rail as a present national network, to upgrade VIA Rail with new equipment and to give VIA Rail a sufficient budget to maintain its national mandate for passenger service.

PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Mr. Rod Laporte (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present two petitions.

The first one is from a number of residents from Saskatchewan who are concerned about the cuts made by this government regarding the Public Distribution Assistance Program which is threatening the future of weekly newspapers.

The petitioners are particularly concerned that weekly newspapers have been especially hard hit. In fact, weekly newspapers are, in many cases, the sole instrument for receiving news in a local area. They call upon this government to make some changes with respect to the mailing costs for these newspapers.

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Rod Laporte (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I also have a petition presented to me by a number of farmers from Saskatchewan who are very concerned that this government has removed oats from the Canadian Wheat Board.

The petitioners call upon this government to replace oats under the jurisdiction of the Canadian Wheat Board and to give oats and barley the same protection under the Canadian Wheat Board that wheat presently has.

They further call upon this government not to remove oats or barley without this institution, Parliament, first having a debate and making a decision after a proper and open consultation with all the farmers in western Canada.

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

(Questions answered orally are indicated by an asterisk.)

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 423, 439 and 469.

[*Text*]

EMPLOYEES OF J.F. HICKLING MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS LTD.

Question No. 423—**Mr. Skelly:**

Are any of the employees of J.F. Hickling Management Consultants Ltd. (a) former employees of (b) presently employed by the federal government?

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): The information requested is proprietary to the Company and also of a personal nature.

CF TRAINING

Question No. 439—**Mr. Walker:**

For the Canadian Armed Forces units involved in Oka and Châteauguay, Que., during the summer of 1990, were any units involved in any training exercises since 1985, and, if so, (a) at what costs (b) were any held during 1989?

Hon. William Hunter McKnight (Minister of National Defence): Yes. Canadian Forces units involved in Oka and Châteauguay, Québec during the summer of 1990 were involved in training exercises since 1985.

a) The cost of all training and exercises is an integral part of command budgets. A summary of command allocations is attached as Annex A.

b) Yes.

FUNDING ALLOCATIONS FOR COMMANDS AND RESERVES

The following table shows the funding allocations for Commands and Reserves for FY 85/86 to FY 89/90. The amounts are shown in thousands of dollars ($000) and have been rounded.

TABLE

	FY 85/86	FY 86/87	FY 87/88	FY 88/89	FY 89/90
FMC	271,400	180,368	201,817	216,290	232,535
MARCOM	215,429	177,941	186,542	182,242	187,758
AIRCOM	458,526	430,149	467,644	461,169	492,153
CFCC	87,615	77,741	79,729	86,403	91,717
CFTS	103,493	99,644	103,536	108,667	119,551
CFE	113,871	148,111	172,604	186,645	167,169
RESERVES	*	112,024	124,023	158,558	206,631
	1,250,333	1,225,978	1,335,895	1,339,974	1,497,502

*Notes: (1) In FY 85/86 Resrves funding was included in command allocations.

(2) Command operating, maintenance and administrative funds may be used directly or indirectly to support training and exercices. These costs are also funded from the command allocations.

RENOVATIONS OR IMPROVEMENTS MADE TO THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTER OF SUPPLY AND SERVICES AT THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Question No. 469—**Mr. Dionne:**

Has the Minister of Supply and Services made renovations or improvements to his House of Commons office and, if so, in each case (a) who received the contract (b) what was the nature of the contract (c) what was the total cost?

Hon. Paul Wyatt Dick (Minister of Supply and Services): The Department of Supply and Services has not made any renovations or improvements to the Minister's office at the House of Commons.

* * *

[*English*]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 297, 394, 395, 422, 424, 425 and 438 could be made Orders for Returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Text*]

GOVERNMENT GRANTS

Question No. 297—**Mr. Whittaker:**

For the time period from November, 1988 up to and including April, 1990, were government grants or monies received by individuals or groups within the Constituency of Okanagan–Similkameen–Merritt and, if so, in each case (a) from which department or federal funding agency (b) what was the program name (c) what were the names of individuals or groups receiving funds (d) what were the dollar values of each award (e) what percentage of the total money value of the program did the award represent?

Return tabled.

RADIATION

Question No. 394—**Ms. Hunter:**

For (a) each year of operation to date (b) each nuclear worker, what is the total absorbed dose of radiation in person-rems (i) by reactor station (ii) for each nuclear power generating station?

Return tabled.

RADIATION

Question No. 395—**Ms. Hunter:**

For (a) each year of operation to date (b) each nuclear worker, for (i) the Chalk River Nuclear Laboratories (ii) the Whiteshell Nuclear Research Establishment, what is the total absorbed dose of radiation in person-rems?

Return tabled.

J.F. HICKLING MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS LTD.

Question No. 422—**Mr. Skelly (Comox-Alberni):**

For the period 1984-1990 were any government contracts awarded to J.F. Hickling Management Consultants Ltd. and, if so, (a) how many (b) for what projects (c) what was the value of each project?

Return tabled.

MMT

Question No. 424—**Mr. Ferguson:**

1. What studies, research, working papers etc. and responses by author and title has the government conducted, commissioned or funded on: (a) the gasoline oxygenate Methylcyclopentadienyl Manganese Tricarbonyl (MMT) (b) MMT and hydrocarbon emissions (c) MMT and automotive exhaust emissions (d) MMT and its effects on pollution control devices (e) MMT and its effects on the environment (f) MMT and its effects on human health and other living organisms (g) MMT and its neurological effects (h) Mn3 and its effects on human health and other living organisms (i) Mn3 and its effects on the environment (j) Mn3 and its neurological effects (k) Mn3 and the neurological effects of breathing it (l) other heavy metals and their neurological effects (m) the gradual phase out of lead in gasoline and alternative oxygenate (n) the environmental effects of alternative oxygenates (o) the effects of alternative oxigenates on human health and other living organisms (p) the neurological effects of alternate oxygenates?

2. Is the governement aware of studies or research papers that have been conducted by the private sector or educational institutions in Canada or abroad on any of the subjects listed above and if so, what are they by author and title?

Return tabled.

MANGANESE

Question No. 425—**Mr. Ferguson:**

1. What studies, research, working papers etc. and responses by author and title has the government conducted, commissioned, or funded on: (a) Manganese and its effects on human health and other living organisms (b) Manganese and its neurological effects?

2. Is the government aware of studies or research papers that have been conducted by the private sector or educational institutions in Canada or abroad on any of the subjects listed above, and if so, what are they, by author and title?

Return tabled.

CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

Question No. 438—**Mr. Walker:**

Since 1985, what are (a) the names of the military training exercises or wargames conducted by the Canadian Armed Forces and Reserves (b) the cost for each exercise (c) their duration?

Return tabled.

* * *

[*English*]

STARRED QUESTIONS

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, would you be so kind as to call Starred Question No. 378.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Cooper: I ask that this response be made an Order for Return. This return would be tabled immediately as well.

[*Text*]

LITERACY

*Question No. 378—**Mr. Duhamel:**

1. For each of the government's recently announced projects providing assistance to literacy, what are the (a) project names (b) objectives (c) amounts allocated (d) breakdown by (i) project (ii) amount for each province and territory?

2. What is the breakdown by project for (a) English language (b) French language (c) other languages?

Return tabled.

[*English*]

Mr. Cooper: I ask, Mr. Speaker, that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Shall the remaining questions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed the following bills: Bill C-99, an act for granting Her Majesty certain sums of money for the Government of Canada for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1991; Bill C-100, an act for granting Her Majesty certain sums of money for the Government of Canada for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1992.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

PARLIAMENT OF CANADA ACT

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed from Tuesday, March 26, consideration of the motion of Mr. Andre in relation to amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-79, an act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act, and the motion of Mr. Hawkes (p. 18849).

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. As you know, this motion on Bill C-79 received a lot of debate yesterday, basically on the fact that I was not allowed to introduce some of my amendments which would have ensured that any opinion the board had already given with respect to an investigation that may be ongoing on a member of Parliament or a senator, and the bill reads at present:

> —the board or the relevant committee in the Senate may not give that opinion to the police officer who requested it.

In debate yesterday representatives of the Conservative and the Liberal parties indicated that they would be willing to make sure that the Board of Internal Economy in this House passed bylaws soon to ensure the gist of that would be part of the bylaws of the board.

If we could have that assurance at this time, that those people spoke for their parties, I think you may find that there is a disposition of the House to move quickly on this matter.

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): The member for Ottawa—Vanier and I had discussions earlier and I had his assurance. He is not in the House at the moment but there may be another member of the party who can speak on his behalf. But I welcome the input from my colleague across the way. I can assure him that as a board member and on behalf of the members of my party on the board, we would attempt to incorporate the principle in a bylaw as quickly as possible, once we have it proclaimed and through Royal Assent, and so on. It should be one of the very first bylaws, if not the first bylaw.

The advantage of that may be, in a funny kind of a way, Mr. Speaker, if we get it right it will endure forever, if we get it wrong all members of the House from experience can tell us it should be changed, and we can change the bylaw if we haven't got it right. It has been a clause that has given us enormous difficulty in its wording over time, and so there may be a kind of advantage to doing it by a bylaw which is legally binding on the board and on the behaviour of the board. But if we do not get it right the next time, it will be easier to change and more quickly changeable to make sure that we get it the way the House wants.

I hope that is sufficient confirmation. I do not know if the representative of the Liberal Party is willing to confirm, but I can assure the House that I had that conversation with the member for Ottawa—Vanier at around two o'clock or two-fifteen. He made the offer on the floor yesterday and is still standing by the offer.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands): I am afraid I am not in much of a position to help. I have tried to locate the hon. member and he is not in the building at the moment. He will be back later today. If he had the discussion as was indicated by the government Whip—and I have no reason to disbelieve the government Whip in his statements. I am not a member of the board obviously and can give no such assurance and I am sorry not to be in that position—but if the discussion took place between the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier and the hon. member for Calgary West, then I think the hon. member for Churchill could take that assurance.

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): One of the realities is that the existing Board of Internal Economy may change in the next month, month and a half. Because if the House does prorogue there will have to be a new striking of that committee and I suspect because of the changes, particularly in the Official Opposition as well as on the government benches, there may be some readjustment.

I am wondering, Mr. Speaker, if through you I can ask the chief government Whip whether he was speaking as a member of the board or whether he was speaking on behalf of the government in terms of an indication that the government would be prepared through its votes on the Board of Internal Economy, whoever may hold them, to ensure that those bylaws were put forward.

Mr. Hawkes: One of the beauties of Bill C-79 and the changes is that the board continues through dissolution, promulgation—it could indeed be changed, but I would give him the assurance, and we definitely have enough votes to be able to see that the bylaw comes into place.

Mr. Murphy: Without insurance and with the assurance that the member for Ottawa—Vanier gave me privately on behalf of the Liberal Party, I would be willing to let the bill come to a vote.

• (1600)

The New Democratic Party caucus will still oppose the legislation, not because we are against Bill C-79—we have supported the work there—but because we believe the very issue we have been talking about today should have been put in the legislation. It is not that we doubt the word of the board. I think it will be in the by-laws that affect the House of Commons. However, my concern is that by not having that as a requirement we have no power to ensure that the Senate passes the same sort of by-laws.

Therefore we will oppose the motion before us, but we certainly do not oppose the intent of Bill C-79.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The first question is on the motion standing in the name of Mr. Hawkes.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

Some hon. members: On division.

Motion of Mr. Hawkes agreed to

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The next question is on the main motion.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Before you begin the ringing of the bells, let me indicate that there have been consultations.

There has been a request that we defer this vote to about 4.45 p.m. and therefore have a vote at 5 p.m.

However, that is on the understanding that upon the completion of that vote we would then move to the consideration of Bill C-98. No one would object to the normal motion for continuation of hours through to the completion of Bill C-98. It might take until 6.30 p.m. or 7 p.m. as a lot of members would like to make at least some input on it.

There would be general agreement that no party in the House intends to stop that motion for extended hour and that at the conclusion of that debate no party has the intention to have a recorded division at that point.

If we could just have that confirmation, we could defer the ringing of the bells until 4.45 p.m. for a vote at 5 p.m.

Mr. Angus: Mr. Speaker, assuming that right after this motion passes and/or Royal Assent we will immediately deal with the agricultural bill. The bells will start ringing at 4.45 for a vote at 5 p.m. and we will return to consideration of the agricultural bill.

The understanding is that there will be no dilatory motions, no additional extensions, no additional legislation or motions brought in if we do go past 6 p.m. and that there will not be a recorded division called for, at least by this party, on the agricultural bill.

Mr. Milliken: We agree with what has been stated, but I think it should be a House order. It should be agreed, by unanimous consent of the House now, that those are the terms. I think the table could properly draft the order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

THE ROYAL ASSENT

A message was delivered by the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod as follows:

> Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Deputy to the Governor General desires the immediate attendance of this honourable House in the chamber of the honourable the Senate.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker with the House went up to the Senate chamber.

And being returned:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I have the honour to inform the House that when the House went up to the Senate chamber the Deputy Governor General was pleased to give, in Her Majesty's name, the Royal Assent to the following bills:

> Bill C-34, an act to establish the Canadian Centre for Management Development and to amend certain acts in consequence thereof—Chapter No. 16.
>
> Bill C-258, an act respecting the establishment of the Centennial Flame Research Award to publicize the contributions to Canadian public life of persons with disabilities—Chapter No. 17.
>
> Bill C-100, an act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the Government of Canada for the financial year ending the March 31, 1992—Chapter No. 18.
>
> Bill C-99, an act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the Government of Canada for the financial year ending the March 31, 1991—Chapter No. 19.

FARM INCOME PROTECTION ACT

MEASURE TO ENACT

Hon. Marcel Danis (for the Minister of Agriculture) moved that Bill C-98, an act authorizing agreements between the Government of Canada and the provinces to provide for protection for the income of producers of agricultural products and to enable the Government of Canada to take additional measures for that purpose, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Murray Cardiff (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I will keep my remarks very short. This piece of legislation we are dealing with, Bill C-98, has had considerable study throughout the country going back to January 9, 1990 when the committee was formed. We have had a lot of consultation right across the country with provincial governments, producers, and the federal government.

I would like to read into the record, with your permission, Mr. Speaker, the names of those people who contributed so much time and help to the process we have just come through: from the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, Don Downe; from the National Farmers Union, Gil Pedersen; from the Atlantic Grains Council, George Burris, secretary-manager of the council; from Quebec, Claude Lafleur; from Ontario, Terry Daynard, executive vice-president of the Ontario Corn Producers' Association; Roger George of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, an organization which represents many farmers and producers across this country; and Larry Miehls from the Ontario Soybean Growers' Marketing Board.

• (1620)

From the prairies we had Gordon Cresswell and Bill Duke who served with the Western Canadian Wheat Growers' Association; Ken Edie from the Manitoba Pool Elevators; Alex Graham from the Alberta Wheat Pool and Terry Hanson from the Advisory Committee of the Canadian Wheat Board. Also we had Ed Armstrong, Western Barley Growers' Association; Bob Hopely of the Western Grain Stabilization Advisory Committee and Keith Lewis, the past president of the Prairie Canola Board; Owen McAulay from Keystone Agriculture Products; Roy Piper from the United Grain Growers; Barry Seneft, director of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool; Frank Spanbauer from Western Canada Pulse Growers and Brian Haddow from the B.C. Federation of Agriculture.

Mr. Vanclief: You forgot us. We helped.

Mr. Cardiff: Yes. Mr. Speaker, I want to say, as well, that we thank all parties in the House of Commons for the co-operation they extended to us. They recognize the importance of this legislation and how necessary it is to have it implemented as quickly as possible.

Many things have been said about the legislation. We have been accused of hurrying it through the House of Commons in the process. As I said before, from the timeframe and the consultations held with producers across this country, the 19 producers on that committee, I believe this is legislation that everybody should be very proud of because they played a very major role in its development.

It is now up to us to give quick passage to Bill C-98, and allow the Senate to deliberate on the bill. It is the first time in a long while the farmers and producers of this country have had such a major, comprehensive piece of legislation that offers the long-term security and bankable programs this legislation does.

We wish more provinces would offer the NISA program, because we believe that GRIP and NISA are compatible with one another and would give that much more security to the farm economy as well.

I will close my remarks by asking my colleagues if they could give quick passage to this legislation, because I believe it is absolutely necessary and the producers are looking for it.

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to say a few words at the third reading stage of Bill C-98, the Farm Income Protection Act. This is extremely important legislation.

Unfortunately it is not legislation which spells out exactly what arrangements will be provided to producers of agriculture products, but rather provides a framework for the government to put in place agreements with provincial governments and with producers groups. From that point of view, I think it really circumvents Parliament and does not allow for the normal kinds of inputs to be made for producers in stabilizing their incomes.

The proposals planned under this bill, the Gross Revenue Insurance Program and the Net Income Stabilization Account and the third line of defence, or the special arrangements provisions probably will be made to work.

I am exceedingly skeptical as to whether the agreements that have been put in place will be in place three or four years from now. I think there will have to be massive modifications to them.

I believe there is a great deal of concern among producers as to just how serious the government is about this legislation. There are those who think there will be a massive payout in 1992 and 1993. Those are election years. After that there will be very little pay-out because of the structure and the arrangements. Whether the GRIP and NISA programs survive no one knows at this time.

There is one overriding consideration and it is that the situation for Canadian grains and oilseed producers is so desperate that whatever the proposal being offered by this government and by the provincial governments involved, producers need it desperately at this time.

The net farm income this year is projected to drop by 54 per cent from about $4 billion to $2 billion. This is an industry that at the retail level has something like $45 billion. At the farm gate level there is some $22 billion. Out of that $22 billion only $2 billion is there as total net farm income. The Department of Agriculture has projected no net farm income for provinces like Saskatchewan and Manitoba this year.

The situation is exceedingly desperate. Farmers are being forced to take GRIP this year because the initial price for grain is not going to be revealed until late July. The world farm gate price for wheat may be as low as $90 or $95 a tonne, lower than it has been in real terms since the 1930s. The situation is so desperate that producers feel they have absolutely no choice.

If we look at the three levels of support, GRIP and NISA are designed to stabilize farm incomes and level out the low years with the high years of income. The government has lost all credibility with the special arrangements committee, special arrangements or deficiency payments that are being proposed because it has not made an announcement. It is now the end of March. It is questionable whether any assistance will be made available in time for the seeding next month or early May.

That destroys the credibility of the whole three-stage level of support, especially with net farm income dropping by over 50 per cent this year. Many farmers feel they have to take the Gross Revenue Insurance Program, even though the premiums are very high, because of the tremendous uncertainty and the question in their minds is: "Is the government really going to provide any additional assistance?"

Today the minister had a backbencher put a question concerning western grain stabilization fund. He announced that there was going to be $158 million distributed under the western grain stabilization fund this spring. That would be an interim payment in this particular crop year. It sounds like a lot of money. When we realize that net farm income is dropping by $2 billion, and the minister's own advisory committee on interim financial support is recommending at least $1 billion or $1.2 billion, it is not very much. Unless the minister comes through with a major payment, the situation this spring for literally tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of producers is going to be very bleak.

On this side of the House we are concerned about executive federalism, where the government gets legislation like this which puts it in the position to make all kinds of deals without hardly a nod to Parliament. Fortunately, the government has accepted a couple of amendments from this side of the House. One is by the member for Prince Edward—Hastings recommending that there be an ongoing review of the legislation. The one that provided specifically for a review and report to Parliament by 1993 was not accepted, but we hope the amendment that was put by the hon. member for Prince Edward—Hastings will have the effect of providing that kind of interim review.

• (1630)

I do not think there is very much confidence among producers as to what is going to happen with this legislation. I am told that in the central part of Alberta many producers will not take the program. I met with a number of producers in western Canada over the weekend and the split was interesting. Some were going to take the program because they were in such a desperate situation. Others who were in a stronger position financially said they saw the benefit this year, but thought they would be paying for four years and, at the end of the day, they would not profit much by enrolling in the program. So there is great skepticism and great uncertainty.

The one amendment, which was put by our side of the House and accepted, provides for the government to be required, with the concurrence of the provinces, to table each agreement. At least we have the agreements with whatever number of provinces take it on.

There is great concern that the legislation will not be national in scope. There is provision for it. We have some five or six provinces who have, so far, indicated they will take the Gross Revenue Insurance Program, but only one has agreed to take the Net Income Stabilization Program, that being Saskatchewan. Whether the program will ever be national in scope the way that the western grain stabilization and the Agriculture Stabilization Act worked in tandem, only time will tell. That is part of the uncertainty with the whole arrangement.

The bill sets out laudable objectives: it should be market neutral; it should be production neutral; it should respect our international trade arrangements; it should be environmentally sustainable. Yet some groups who came before the committee were able to put very convincing arguments that none of these objectives will be met, at least in the initial year. That is why the need for a very capable and competent review.

Already there are important and credible agriculture forecasting groups saying that the bill is going to encourage greater production of wheat and it is going to ignore market signals. It would be most unfortunate if that were to occur this year when wheat is at $2.50 a bushel rather than $4 or $5 a bushel and that should not trigger a signal for an increased production of two million acres of wheat rather than a reduction of one million acres of wheat as probably would have happened without the GRIP program being in place.

There are a number of other amendments which the government did not accept. One is to protect the integrity of individual producer's income tax confidentiality. This bill will provide that the ordinary crop insurance authorities in each province will simply be able to trigger an individual producer's income tax files. I am not sure that is necessary or desirable. I am sure it is not desirable and I doubt that it is even necessary.

We had proposed as well that the government should not be allowing NISA, which is a funded program where the government matches dollar for dollar certain amounts of funding, to be made available to other than Canadian citizens or permanent residents of Canada. The government did not accept those amendments.

We look at the bill believing that it is a framework legislation that can provide for agreements. We are not certain how effective the legislation will be and whether the objectives will be met. On the other hand, we believe that the government has an immediate responsibility to provide cash assistance before the crop season begins this spring. Because of its urgency, we hope that the government will act and bring this legislation back to the House from time to time to be amended, as needed, or at least to have the agreements amended so that we will be able to make the necessary adjustments. With the wide variety of growing situations and market circumstances and other aspects involved in this, and at a time of incredible cash flow shortage, there is not much confidence or belief that this legislation will stand as it is for very long without amendments to those agreements.

We want to see the legislation pass so that the benefits can be made available to producers. We think it will require adjustments and changes not very far down the road, but we are pleased to see it pass at third reading today and get on the road to providing assistance either later this fall or certainly in the next crop year to remedy in that crop year what has been lost in this particular crop year. During the past two years the government has chopped back in a crude and violent way government support programs by some $1.6 billion. That is why there is an emergency today for Canadian grain and oilseed producers.

This legislation is not going to correct that immediate problem. We require assistance immediately, before the planting season this spring. If this legislation works the way the government believes it will, hopefully it will be useful in the next crop year 1991–92.

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Saskatoon—Humboldt): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I attended a press conference where I and a number of my colleagues from this House who had made a recent trip to Sudan and Ethiopia were putting before our country the needs of those particular countries for food. It is recognized that if we do not get a couple of million tonnes of food to those countries in the next few months, as many as a million people will die.

There are 12 million people in those two countries that are being affected by famine, a famine that is considered to be even worse than the one in 1984–85 in which one million people died. This is thought to be a worse situation because of unco-operative governments and the wars that are going on in those areas. We in the prairies and in Canada grow over 50 million tonnes of grain, of which we export up to 30 million tonnes. Our contribution to world food is fairly small compared to the amount that we actually grow.

What we are talking about today is a system which will allow the farmers in Canada to survive. It is almost ridiculous that we find ourselves working on a plan that is supposed to help in the survival of the food producers in our country when there is such a great need in the world for the food that we produce.

• (1640)

Obviously there is something wrong with our distribution system. Some people starve while we cannot get enough for our product to survive. The various papers that were part of the growing together operation that the government put into place made a plea for a structure that would stabilize the food production industry in Canada.

The two plans that are part of this particular bill, the Farm Income Protection Act, are the Gross Revenue Insurance Program and the Net Income Stabilization Account. They are the product of a considerable amount of discussion among people interested in farming and among farmers themselves. At least that was what was supposed to happen. However, the consultation process only went so far. It continued up until the basics had been agreed upon, then the details were left to the bureaucrats and the legislation was left to the bureaucrats.

The agreements which really make up the key issues in this whole operation of a safety net are between the federal government and the provincial governments, with only marginal impact from the farm groups.

I know the government says this is the product of a considerable amount of consultation, and I guess we have to agree with that. However, this government has also given the term "consultation" a bad name. Therefore, we are always a little suspicious that what we are getting is an opportunity to say something, but nobody is on the other side listening.

This bill is enabling legislation. It allows the federal Minister of Agriculture to make agreements with the provinces and with the producers relative to the provision of safety nets for the products they produce. The parameters of these agreements are supposed to be established in this legislation and these are supposed to be long-term safety nets.

This was not to be an *ad hoc* solution to the disasters when they arose, but was supposed to be an ongoing, permanent solution to the ups and downs of the agricultural sector. The need for a permanent stabilization program has long been part of the New Democratic Party's policy, as it was a policy of the CCF, which preceded us.

Various attempts have been made over the years to establish programs which would allow this kind of stabilization as far as agriculture is concerned. We have had the Western Grain Stabilization program, the agricultural stabilization program, Crop Insurance Act, various supply management marketing boards. All of these have been attempts to put in place a safety net program that would be permanent and satisfactory.

These attempts have worked with varying degrees of success, supply management probably being the relative easy winner among the groups. In 1985, the Hon. John Wise, then the Minister of Agriculture, made a commitment on behalf of this government to the country that he would put in place a permanent long-term stabilization program for all sectors of agriculture. I am sure John Wise is breathing easier today because I think he gave up in despair of even expanding the supply management under the ideology that was at that particular time espousing things like free trade and the selling of the country.

As it happened, the hon. John Wise left us and it has taken the government since 1985 until now to come up with some kind of an alternative to the suggestion that was put in place at that time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Pursuant to the order made earlier this day, the House will now proceed to the taking of a recorded division.

PARLIAMENT OF CANADA ACT

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Andre in relation to amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-79, an act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Call in the members.

The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:

(Division No. 413)

YEAS

Members

Andre	Assad
Atkinson	Attewell
Baker	Bellemare
Belsher	Berger
Bernier	Bevilacqua
Bjornson	Blais
Blondin	Bouchard (Roberval)
Boudria	Boyer
Brightwell	Cadieux
Campbell (Vancouver Centre)	Cardiff
Casey	Catterall
Chadwick	Champagne (Champlain)
Charest	Clancy
Clark (Yellowhead)	Clark (Brandon—Souris)
Clifford	Cole
Cooper	Corbeil
Corbett	Côté
Couture	Crawford
Crosby (Halifax West)	Danis
Darling	DeBlois
de Cotret	Della Noce
Desjardins	Dick
Dionne	Dobbie
Duplessis	Feltham
Ferguson	Ferland
Finestone	Flis
Fontaine	Fontana
Foster	Fretz
Friesen	Gagliano
Gauthier	Gibeau
Greene	Guilbault
Halliday	Harvey (Chicoutimi)
Hawkes	Hicks
Hockin	Hopkins
Horner	Horning
Hudon	Hughes
Jacques	James
Johnson	Joncas
Jourdenais	Kempling
Keyes	Koury
Landry	Larrivée
Layton	Lee.

Lewis
Lopez
MacDougall (Timiskaming)
Marchi
Martin (Lincoln)
Mazankowski
McDougall (St. Paul's)
McLean
Mifflin
Mills
Moore
Oberle
Pagtakhan
Plourde
Prud'homme
Robitaille
Scott (Victoria—Haliburton)
Siddon
Sobeski
Sparrow
Stewart
Thacker
Tremblay (Québec-Est)
Turner (Halton—Peel)
Van de Walle
Volpe
Wenman
Wilbee
Assiniboia)
Worthy—142

Loiselle
MacDonald (Rosedale)
Manley
Marin
Mayer
McCreath
McKnight
Merrithew
Milliken
Monteith
Nault
O'Kurley
Phinney
Pronovost
Richardson
Saint-Julien
Shields
Simmons
Soetens
Stevenson
Tardif
Thorkelson
Tremblay (Lotbinière)
Vanclief
Vien
Weiner
White
Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek—
Winegard

NAYS

Members

Althouse
Benjamin
Blackburn (Brant)
Butland
Funk
Heap
Karpoff
Langan (Mission—Coquitlam)
MacWilliam
McLaughlin
Riis
Skelly (Comox—Alberni)
Whittaker

Angus
Black
Brewin
Fulton
Harvey (Edmonton East)
Hovdebo
Kristiansen
Laporte
McCurdy
Murphy
Robinson
Taylor
Young (Beaches —Woodbine)—26

• (1710)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I declare the motion carried.

Amendments read the second time and concurred in.

* * *

FARM INCOME PROTECTION ACT

MEASURE TO ENACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Mazankowski that Bill C-98, an act authorizing agreements between the Government of Canada and the provinces to provide for protection for the income of producers of agricultural products and to enable the Government of Canada to take additional measures for that purpose, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Saskatoon—Humboldt): Mr. Speaker, basically GRIP is much the same structure as a New Democratic Party proposal which is quite well known across the prairies and across the rest of Canada called the Family Farm Stabilization Program. It is by comparison to our program that we see the shortcomings of this particular program.

I would like to spend a bit of time on a couple of those shortcomings. First, this was supposed to be a long-term program and it may be a short-term program. The Western Grain Stabilization Program floundered under a $1.2 billion deficit, a deficit which Grant Devine hopes is to become greater in the next few months and hopes that he will win the Saskatchewan election.

I suggest that this program may be short-term because of the 15-year moving average price which is likely to pay well for the first couple of years, particularly for wheat. It will pay well because it takes in those years in the late 1970s when the price of wheat was fairly high.

This will mean that the program will establish a pretty hefty deficit during the first two years of its existence. We hope that the deficit will not sink the program during those years. That is why I suggest that it may be a short-term program. If it goes several billion dollars in the hole in the first couple of years, this government or a following government may have to or may want to look at it. However, it may not have to do so in the first two years, which will almost take it to the next election. That is one shortcoming of this particular program.

It may be short-term for another reason. If the guaranteed price falls after a couple of years, farmers may not want to be part of it.

The success of this type of program depends on almost universal subscriptions from the producers. If the producers decide that they do not like it and start dropping out, the program eventually falls on hard times and the government is likely to dump it. It is likely to dump it, particularly after a couple of years, if it becomes politically advantageous for the government to do so.

That is another reason why it may not survive and another reason why we think it has some shortcomings.

A third concern is that it does not include the cost of production for even a minimum amount of production. We are not suggesting, and we have never suggested it, that the cost of production be guaranteed for great amounts of product produced, to unlimited levels. However, we have suggested that every farmer should be assured of the cost of production for a certain part of his production.

There is not enough stability in this program after the first couple of years. If they start producing crops lower than the cost of production, they will want to get out of it as soon as possible or go into products that are more marketable. We in Canada know that we have to continue producing the products presently in place.

Another flaw in this plan is that there is no limit to the amount that can be paid to any particular producer. In the United States similar programs are now being blamed for the demise of the family farm, because those programs ended up paying 85 per cent of the funds available to 10 per cent of the farms. Those 10 per cent were the large farms, many of which were vertically integrated corporate farms that took the lion's share of the program. Meanwhile, small farms or farms that had been viable disappeared, with the effect of elimination of rural communities and, to a great extent, the rural way of life in many states.

In our amendments to this bill we have suggested that a limit should be placed upon the amount paid to each unit to keep the total cost of the program down. That again is a flaw in this particular program. There is nothing within this legislation which guarantees a top limit on the spending as far as the taxpayer is concerned.

In the policy our party has been suggesting for years we had many issues in place that are not in this program. The first would be the cost of production, a basic part of production. In the second level of production we suggested a similar program to the one we are talking about today and that the average price be guaranteed. In the third level farmers would have yield insurance.

There are two other real concerns about the short-sightedness of these particular plans. There is nothing in this program or related to this program which relieves farm debt. That is a major concern out there at the moment.

In Saskatchewan there has been a major decimating of a number of farms by foreclosures, quit claims and other methods.

• (1720)

Twenty to 30 per cent of the farmers are in financial difficulty. These plans do nothing to help these farmers stay viable, so that they can make use of these plans. Many farmers are also in a position where they do not have money to plant this spring.

The Minister of State responsible for Grains and Oilseeds made an announcement that western grain stabilization would make some pay-outs this spring that may help in the bridging. These plans are based on this particular year and the farmers need funds now to plant. Consequently, a number of farmers may not be able to take advantage of GRIP because they do not have enough money to put seed in the ground now.

I could spend a considerable amount of time talking about NISA which is a glorified RRSP plan, the kind of plan of which every group of people in Canada would like to take advantage. I could talk also about a number of other issues that we are concerned about: the fact that this is not friendly to the environment, that it gives the wrong kind of market signals, that it does not include forages. All of these are concerns we have with these plans.

Mr. Speaker, I will sit down now. I know there are other speakers who will talk about the particular concerns we have with this bill.

Mr. Lyle Vanclief (Prince Edward—Hastings): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to make a few comments about Bill C-98, the Farm Income Protection Act, before the completion of third reading.

Without a doubt this is the most all-encompassing piece of farm legislation that we have had in Canada in many decades. That statement has both pluses and minuses. It is a piece of legislation that is attacking the stability problem of farmers in Canada in a different way than we have ever attacked it before in the hope we can provide that stability.

I want to point out to the House and to all Canadians that the dangers of this type of bill, which is enabling legislation, gives this government and any future government more power to deal with agricultural legislation and programs than has ever been given in Canada before.

With this bill a government does not have to come back to the House of Commons or to the Parliament of Canada to make changes in most, if not all, of the important pieces of farm legislation. That gives flexibility, I agree, but it can also be used, if so desired, in negative ways, whether it be for political reasons, or for the expedience of doing what may need to be done in a hurry in order to help solve a problem. As I say, there are pluses and minuses.

We should all be aware that this bill, albeit for the most part a good bill, is not the be all and the end all that some people would like us to believe it is. It will put some stability into the farm situation, but most of that stability is going to be in the very near future. When I say the near future, I mean at the end of the 1991 crop and at the end of the 1992 crop. After that there are grave concerns about what may happen.

I would just like to quote from a very highly regarded Canada agribusiness authority, *Agriweek*, that is published in Winnipeg:

> The first crop year to be covered is 1991–92 and a substantial payment for that year is reasonably assured. But market prices have nowhere to go but up;—

And let us hope that is the case, Mr. Speaker. The article goes on:

> —meanwhile the 15–year moving average on which support prices are based will go progressively lower each year. When the two converge benefits will cease but premiums will continue. Unless crop prices drop even further the probability of significant GRIP payouts after about 1992–93 is low.

We have to realize that this is the type of program that has been arranged as it should. I agree that those producers who sign up cannot get in and out each year. One of the conditions of signing up for GRIP is that once a producer signs up for one year he must give three years' notice.

This is a type of insurance plan, but a farmer cannot get out for three years. The minister himself has said that the deficits, which should be covered by the premiums, are going to build up in the first two or three years in particular and if the premiums get to a level that they do not pay for the forthcoming year, there is not any way the producer can get out unless he or she has given notice some three years prior to that.

The other concern is that it is a combination type bill. In order to have anywhere near the effectiveness it is hoped to have, a producer must take part in both GRIP and NISA. All provinces right now with the exception of one, have not seen fit to sign up for the Net Income Stabilization Account portion of the bill.

We must not be deceived when we see the charts and figures that are put before us as taxpayers, producers, and people in the agrifood industry that show the net results of producers being involved in GRIP and NISA. For the most part producers are not involved in NISA and everyone says that for the program to be as successful as we hope it is producers must belong to both. Most producers in this country are not going to be given the opportunity to belong to both because most of the provinces have not signed up for the NISA.

When we look at the charts and the net income the farmers have had in the last 10 years, even with the new programs, when we look at the projections for market prices, market returns, and the returns from GRIP and NISA, these programs are still only going to guarantee Canadian producers about 80 per cent of the average net income they have become accustomed to for the last 10 years. I do not think there are many Canadians out there who would be happy with that.

The good part of that is that it is going to be stabilized. There will be some stability. But it is one thing to say to someone: "Yes, you have an income, and you are going to have an income for the next five years, or 10 years, or whatever it is". It is another thing to say: "But, it is going to be at 80 per cent of what your income has been for the last 10 years," or, in this case, the figures that we look at.

That would even be different if the income for the last 10 years had been a good income so that that cutback could be afforded. I can tell you that that cutback cannot be afforded.

The other concern that I have, and I think it is one we need to pay a lot of attention to and spend a lot of time with, is the acceptability of this program and the results of this enabling legislation, how it is going to be received by the rest of the world and by other trading nations. Already we have some of those groups from outside our borders taking a look at it, one of them being a very highly respected economic forecasting group from the United States, the Wharton Econometric Forecasting Associates. They are already pointing fingers at what they feel will be the net result of this piece of legislation. They say that it is going to increase production and it is going to influence, not only the amount of acres of different crops that will be planted in Canada, but the distribution of those acres and the distribution of the different types of crops, whether they be wheat, canola, flax, lentils, corn, soybeans, or whatever it might happen to be.

• (1730)

Those are matters we had best be aware of now. They are going to be looked at by other countries at the GATT negotiations. Other countries are going to pass judgment on whether they think this enabling legislation allows Canadian governments now and in the future to influence production and, therefore, influence the amount of grains, oilseeds or crops that are in the country and whether that will adjust what might otherwise be the production level in Canada and, therefore, affect production in the rest of the world.

I would like to thank the government for all of the amendments they made at committee, and further, the amendments they made at report stage here in the House on Bill C-98.

One of those amendments was by my colleague from Algoma, which requests and ensures that the agreements the federal government makes with the individual provinces will be tabled in the House of Commons so that we can review and look at those each time the agreements are made.

The other was an amendment in my name, which covered the concerns of a lot of groups and individuals who came forward at the agriculture committee when we were going through the bill, prior to clause by clause review at the end.

The amendment states that the minister must appoint a review committee which each year must review and report to the minister with any suggestions or amendments they feel need to be made to the bill in order to improve it. I feel that is absolutely necessary. I appreciate the fact that that has taken place.

I do not think I will make any more comments, other than in closing, to say basically it is a good bill. It is not the be all and the end all. It is better than the *ad hoc* programs we have at the present time. It is filling in the second line of defence we are concerned about at the farm level.

The first line of defence, as we all know, and the only line of defence that producers and farmers want is a fair return from the marketplace for the produce, livestock and crops they produce. That is really what we want. That is really what producers want and that is really what is needed.

Along with that, there has to be the government programs and the government action and force put into place to ensure that producers have a decent interest rate, not the interest rate we have now that is away out of whack, compared to our competitors, especially those south of the border.

We need proper border inspection put in place. We need a better way of counteracting the game that our friends south of the border like to play in putting up non-tariff barriers and the other word that they are now admitting they are using in the way they describe what they are doing, called harassment. They are excellent at that. We have do a much better job on behalf of our producers, as a Parliament, in counteracting that.

The GRIP and NISA programs covered by Bill C-98 puts in place the second line of defence in order to give some stability if the first line of defence does not provide a fair return to the producers for their product.

There is the third line of defence, which the government is presently dragging its heels on by not telling the producers what it is going to do, if anything, concerning the 1991 spring year as a result of the terrible prices in farm products because of the 1990 crop prices. That is bridging financing to get the producers through the situation they are in now, until the positive effects of the GRIP and NISA programs can take place after this year.

Again I urge the government to get off its hands and get that done so the producers know where they are for this year. Hopefully producers will to be able to take part in and benefit from the enabling legislation which puts GRIP and NISA in place for the long-term benefit of Canadian producers. Therefore, when they are benefiting and are productive, they will be producing the quality food that Canadians demand and deserve and they will be able to do it at a reasonable and competitive price.

Mr. Ray Funk (Prince Albert—Churchill River): Mr. Speaker, it is certainly a privilege to be able to participate in this debate because there is probably no debate that we have had in this House of Commons that more directly affects more people in a whole region than the one that we are talking about now.

What we are talking about is not so much whether Bill C-98, the Farm Income Protection Act, will protect production in this country, but whether it will protect family farmers in this country. I have no doubt that we will keep on producing food in this country. Certainly we have the resources to do so and the world will keep on needing food, there is no question about that. So we will produce food in this country.

The question is: Who will produce it? Will it be family farmers as we have known it; generations of farmers who pass on the farming knowledge from one generation to another, the knowledge of a particular piece of land from one generation to another, or will it be corporate farms, a very few large farms where everybody works as hired help with no real commitment to the industry and culture of the farming community, the small communities and towns that rely on the farming community? All of that, which is so much a part of the Canadian fabric, could well be lost.

I would like to say that in some ways I feel, quite personally, that it is many of my friends and peers who are getting wiped out by the agriculture crisis that we are facing right now. The older generation of farmers, our parents, people who started in the 1930s and so on, went through tough times in the late 1950s which were resolved, in many ways, by the Diefenbaker government selling grain to the Soviet Union and China. Those same people went through the low prices and the inability to sell grain in the late 1960s and early 1970s when the former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, distinguished himself by saying: "Why should I sell your grain?" Those farmers went through those years. Those who have survived will continue to survive, but they are getting older.

What happened was that in the 1970s when prices were good there was quite a number of young farmers in all communities across the country who went back to the farm and established their families on the farm and took up farming as a career. These farm families are now in their late 30s, 40s and early 50s and are up against the wall. These people do not know whether they will be able to put a crop in this year. These people do not know whether they will have to relocate their families, whether the way of life that they chose is gone forever or whether it is worthwhile to try and hang on for another year. This is a crisis that not only pertains to individuals, it pertains to whole communities and, indeed, whole regions of this country. If you look at the figures you can see why.

In 1980, net farm income in this country was about $4.5 billion to $5 billion a year. By 1989-90, it had gone down to $3.2 million although inflation had about doubled the cost to production in that time. Another 54 per cent drop this year to about $2 billion nationally. But in Saskatchewan and Manitoba not a dime of net farm income over-all. That means there is nothing to live on for farm families in those two provinces without government assistance in this coming year. Unfortunately these discouraging trends in the farm community have also been reinforced by other actions of the government which have also served to demoralize farm communities and take away their reasons for being—things like post office closures, closures of railways, and now most recently the cuts to revenue sharing with the provinces, which is serving to undermine the health and education systems.

• (1740)

In a lot of these rural communities it is the small rural hospital, the small rural school that is already in trouble that will be the first to go because of the cuts that were recently announced by the federal government. That again undermines that rural community, not only in terms of morale but by taking away valuable jobs which members of the farm family could hold to supplement their farm income.

The legislation we are talking about here permits the government to proceed with agreements with the provinces on the GRIP and NISA programs is the result of a long process obviously. There is a long history of struggle by farmers to get in place government programs which will maintain their incomes and their way of life—going back to the thirties, struggles for crop insurance, struggles for grain stabilization and so on.

It became apparent that a lot of these were not working properly. Too much *ad hoc* assistance was still needed, and that is why when the former Minister of Agriculture, John Wise, in 1985 committed the government to a long-term permanent program, there was widespread support for that idea across the farm community and across all political parties, a real willingness to move that agenda ahead.

Unfortunately, in its first term of government the Progressive Conservative Party chose not to move on that front. I think, without violating my native sense of modesty, the New Democrats did the farm community a real service in the last election by actually pinpointing, or at least suggesting, a particular program, a specific program, the Farm Family Support Program, which detailed a program for family farmers and forced a debate to occur on the whole question of a permanent safety net program.

I think it was a very good program. Certainly in Saskatchewan it was very well received. Saskatchewan farmers, as a result of that in large part, returned a large number of NDP members to this House this session.

There were a few aspects of that proposal that were particularly noteworthy in this context. One is that it set a basic support level at the cost of production, which this year would be about $5.28 per bushel as opposed to the $4.15 which the government is proposing under the GRIP legislation.

Second, the payment was payable at the elevator. You did not have to mail anything in, it did not depend on some announcement down the road, it was there at the elevator, it was part of the cheque when the farmer delivered his grain.

Third, there was a cap on the program which permitted the program to be premium-free for the first 8,000 bushels. There would be premiums above that, but it had the cap on the program so that the maximum amount of money went to the maximum amount of farmers, and therefore achieved the objective of keeping family farmers on the land.

The process was obviously continued by the Growing Together strategy, which I think resulted from some of the political pressure that had been created by the NDP in debating this particular proposal, as well as other farm groups. A consultation process ensued that had several stages, and certainly I want to give credit to the people who were involved in that. There were a lot of sincere people who put a lot of effort into it, and I think in some measure their voices were in fact heard.

However, in the last round of meetings that occurred in the farm community, and is still occurring, there was also a great deal of uncertainty about these programs. Farmers flocked to them in huge numbers. There must have been thousands of farmers who attended GRIP and NISA meetings in the last several months. They were very curious. Over all, people recognized that there needs to be a program, that this at least offered some potential of a permanent, effective safety net program.

However, they were also very skeptical about some aspects of it. They were trying to take an objective look. Some of the problems that people identified are, I think, worth making note of again. One thing is that there is no relationship to the cost of production in the formula, and that it uses the 15-year rolling average to determine the level of farm support.

As one farmer, Lloyd Johnson from Turtleford, wrote in a communication: "What GRIP does in effect is guarantee 70 per cent of a market price that everyone already knows is too low to maintain the farming community."

That is true. If you look over the last 15 years, we have been steadily losing farmers, and to establish a payment level at 70 per cent of that obviously dooms us for some time to come.

Second, this is not a national program. It depends on individual agreements with specific provinces. Therefore, you get a situation where Saskatchewan residents pay $168 per capita, Quebec $21, and Ontario $30; certainly not a national program.

Third, it discourages forage, crop rotation and reforestation on marginal lands.

Fourth, it creates more uncertainty because the temptation is going to be to sign up for the program and then withdraw because the rolling average will create falling benefits. This will put the plan in trouble. As Roy Romanow, Leader of the NDP in Saskatchewan said: "It might well be the shortest long-term program in history."

NISA helps those most who need it least.

The last aspect I would like to refer to is the third line of defence. We have a serious problem this spring. Certainly in that regard we appreciated the $158 million announcement that we heard earlier today, but there is still uncertainty about the rest of the third line of defence. There is a suggestion that it will be tied closely to GRIP and NISA. That is unfair to farmers because the details of those programs are not fully known. Those farmers need that commitment now. The government promised that it would make known to farmers before spring seeding what this payment would be. It is time to do it now.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to participate in this debate. In Canada we have too few farmers now; we need to commit ourselves as a nation to a strong and vibrant farm community that is based on family farms being there not only in this century but into the next.

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to the third reading of Bill C-98, the legislation which provides authority to the federal government to enter into negotiations with the provinces on matters pertaining to the protection of income for farmers.

The legislation does not refer to the present farm financial crisis of trying to support a $22 billion agricultural debt. It merely enables the federal government to enter into agreements with the provinces in matters relating to farm income. Farm people have grave fears about the future of their income stability and although this legislation proposes to establish the now much talked about but confusing GRIP and NISA programs, this legislation contains none of the provisions which will guide the administration of these programs. What GRIP and NISA really are is described only in the agreements to be signed with the provinces and in the regulations yet to be seen.

In other words, with this legislation in front of us, what we are being asked to do is to write a blank cheque for the government to fill in the details later. The crisis on the farm and the future of the prairie family farm, as well as the future of the agriculture industry itself, are much too important at this time to sign that blank cheque.

I have given a lot of thought to this since Bill C-98 was first introduced in the House on March 4, and I must now say that I cannot support it at third reading. For reasons I will explain in a few moments, I cannot support GRIP and NISA in their present forms. Therefore, I cannot in all fairness consent to legislation which allows the federal government to sign agreements which would set these programs in place.

There is a much more immediate financial need that must be addressed, as well as the long-term interests of agricultural sustainability and viability that we must discuss. The government's discussions and consultations which led up to the creation of GRIP and NISA included matters relating to the present crisis and the potential long-term problems in the industry. This government should be bringing legislation dealing with these matters before us instead of Bill C-98. This bill will not save one single family farm from foreclosure in 1991.

• (1750)

Bill C-98 ignores this crisis which is driving families from rural Canada in greater numbers than ever before. This trend must be stopped and reversed. In doing so, ideas presented in GRIP and NISA programs must be significantly changed.

A number of these changes were presented by the opposition in amendments earlier this week, but many of them were rejected by the government whose agricultural agenda is obviously much different than mine and that of the people I represent in Saskatchewan.

Since February 26 when the finance minister tabled his 1991 budget, farmers have been looking at one line in the minister's speech. That one line indicated that $1.3 billion in additional spending had been earmarked for farmers in need.

It is almost five weeks later, and still there is no word on the exact nature of that $1.3 billion. In my speech at second reading and again at report stage in this House, I urged the Minister of Agriculture to talk to the finance minister and get that money released immediately for spring seeding.

The prairie pools, the National Farmers' Union and others say there is a deficiency in agricultural support in excess of $1 billion. That must be made available for the seeding, or seeding is in jeopardy.

Today once again, I say to the minister: Stop playing games. Release the money and do not tie it to the yet unapproved GRIP because there are many producers in my area who will not sign up for GRIP but who are desperate for immediate assistance.

On March 1, when the Minister of Agriculture was in Regina, he said in a speech that the budget's $1.3 billion would be used to help off-set the WGSA deficit, introduce GRIP and provide transitional funding to get into the new safety nets. That word "transitional" is important because that is what we need now.

I hope the minister will rise in his place before this debate is over and announce that transitional funding as part of a spring seeding program. Decisions on the farm are being made now, and the minister knows this.

The minister's Regina speech also talked about new partnerships, dialogue and compromise. I want the minister to know that I agree with dialogue and compromise, but I want to see a little of that from his side of the House.

Farmers and their representatives in this House have identified many problems with GRIP and NISA, and they have suggested many changes. The government would be well advised to show a bit of that spirit of compromise and improve this legislation before us in line with what has been suggested by my colleagues in this House.

There are real problems in the agriculture sector that Bill C-98 does not address, as I have already noted. Is the government aware of many of these problems? Apparently not.

The 1986 farm census conducted by Statistics Canada gave us a very gloomy picture. No doubt the 1991 census will prove even more depressing. That census indicated a dramatic decline in farm population, an increase in the average age of the farm operator and a growing need for farm families to obtain off-farm income to make ends meet.

Some people think government subsidies for farmers are wrong. When we study the issue, we see that nobody subsidizes the farm more than the farmer himself. That 1986 study indicated that 55 per cent of farm family income came from off-farm earnings.

In order to stay on the farm, the farmer had to look off the farm for income. How many other Canadians would keep their jobs if doing so meant that they had to seek other employment just to secure the incomes necessary to pay for their food, shelter and health care needs?

This has meant that there is a growing proportion of farm spouses in the labour force. In 1986, 66 per cent of farm wives were in the labour force and accounted for roughly 25 per cent of the total farm income. We know that that has increased dramatically since then.

This extra income is necessary because during the past seven years expenses have risen sharply, prices have dropped drastically and interest rates on money borrowed to stay in the operation have been sky high.

With a combined farm debt of more than $22 billion, the average interest payment in 1985 was $10,800 per farm. It is worse today. That is interest, not principal and interest, just interest. Farmers have all their other costs to make on top of that, after interest. It is no wonder that the banks and the government's financial institutions are foreclosing. It is because the interest payments have made these farms non-viable.

In 1941, there were 733,000 farms registered in Canada. By 1986 there were fewer than 300,000. In the short five-year period, 1981 to 1986, the number of individual farms declined by a whopping 13 per cent. In contrast the number of corporate farms has increased. Therefore, I am not surprised that the new GRIP and NISA programs will allow pay-outs to be made to non-Canadians because more and more of these corporate farms are owned by people who live outside of Canada.

In 1941, 27 per cent of the total Canadian population lived on farms. By 1986, only 4 per cent were farm residents. By far the largest number of the people living on farms is in my province. In 1986, 17 per cent of Saskatchewan residents lived on farms. They want to stay on the farm, but the policies of this government and the Liberal government before it are driving them away.

Is it any wonder that the majority of Saskatchewan residents voted against these two parties in 1988 when the financial crisis was beginning to hit them hard.

When the Minister of Agriculture was in Regina on March 1, he also said that GRIP and NISA were designed to bring stability, predictability and security to the agriculture sector. Only two of these are correct. GRIP will certainly stabilize the price of grain, but likely at too low a level to make a difference. We can certainly predict what the program will do to farm gate prices over the long term, but there is no security in this.

Security in agriculture, both in farming and in processing, is important. Indeed, it is crucial to the future of the industry. For farm families in rural Canada in general, any and every program put forward by this or any other government must ensure viability and the better future that brings to all rural Canadians.

The minister sees GRIP as one of the first programs in a package flowing from his green paper, *Growing Together*, issued earlier in this government's term. The paper was based on four pillars: market responsiveness, self-reliance, regional sensitivity and environmental sustainability. For the most part this translates into a plan that eventually removes government support in times of need. If we examine GRIP closely, we see that that is exactly how it has been designed.

Farmers will always be committed to high premiums, but in a few years will likely to guaranteed no more than the market price for their grains and oilseeds. With the 15-year moving average provision, we are being asked to buy into a package that will eventually guarantee only low prices, below production cost prices for our products. This is nonsense.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Order, please. I would like to hear the hon. member, if you do not mind. It is a great speech. The hon. member, please.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I realize the member for Vegreville and the member for Kindersley—Lloydminster have a lot to talk about after what I have had to say here. I am very pleased to hear that they are listening so intently.

For a farm to be viable, without total government support and without every member of the family working off the farm, we need to secure prices, at a bare minimum, that cover the costs of production. If not, the debt climbs and more people will be pushed off the farms.

At second reading I outlined other government agriculture programs which are tied into the marketplace philosophy of this government, like the interest free cash advance which was taken away just when it was needed most and the termination of the branch line rehabilitation program which has speeded up the rail lines abandonment schedule. Even the Saskatchewan Conservative government knows this is wrong and is complaining that the federal government is merely passing the grain transportation costs of maintaining the rail beds to the provinces which have to maintain the roadbeds.

That raises one other very important matter. Bill C-98 and the GRIP and NISA programs do what this government is attempting to do across the board; decentralize the economy and off load federal costs on to the provinces. Agriculture is an important national industry and should be treated as such. The federal government should not and cannot expect the Saskatchewan taxpayer to shoulder any more of the financial burden. The national taxpayer and those who benefit from a government supported cheap food policy should assume the costs of maintaining the industry.

For the wage earners of Toronto, Montreal, Winnipeg and Vancouver, to pay a greater share of the Canadian food costs would only be fair.

• (1800)

Then the province of Saskatchewan would be free to look after its own responsibilities like education and health care. I do not have enough time to get into all the federal programs that have been designed to push people out of agriculture, but I stress that is happening and that is happening on purpose.

The numbers speak for themselves. Anyone who has already lost his farm knows exactly what I am talking about. Just two days ago I attended a meeting in a farming community in my own constituency. I was overwhelmed with the sense of depression that existed among the farmers present. Many knew that GRIP was going to reduce their incomes over the long term, and most wanted changes made to the program which none have yet seen in any detail.

For the most part the farmers were resigned to the fact that GRIP would become a reality. Some were saying they would never sign up for it and expressed a desire for deficiency payments to get them through this period of low prices. Other said: what the heck, they will sign up in the early years and then withdraw when the guaranteed price starts to decline. They need the money now and are quite prepared to do almost anything to get it quickly. If that means signing up for a flawed and inadequate program that will eventually destroy their industry, they are willing to take their chances.

The minister knows the threat that this attitude presents. For farmers to take advantage of the program in the early years and then withdraw simply leaves the program bankrupt and debt ridden, which is not the idea at all.

Then the next government—and there will be another government—has to start from scratch repairing the mess and trying to retire yet another Tory generated debt.

However, the biggest threat in my constituency is the fact that many producers have not belonged to crop insurance or the Western Grain Stabilization Program. They have not paid insurance premiums in the past. The premiums are not part of their cash flow at present.

Now GRIP comes along and requires a hefty premium to be paid. That premium of $8,000, $12,000 or $20,000, depending on the size of the farm, is a brand new up-front expense on many of these farms. It is an expense that cannot be met. It is an expense that may mean many will not be able to participate in GRIP, even if they want to participate, because the government has been saying that transition funding, spring feeding funding, or any *ad hoc* funding will be tied to participation in GRIP.

These producers are doomed to an even more marginal existence and a more rapid removal from the land. For the average producer on the prairies, one who is in debt, one who requires off-farm income to make ends meet, one who is confused and concerned about his future, GRIP and NISA are no answer to the immediate and devastating problems facing them.

As I have said, after reviewing Bill C-98, after reviewing testimony before the Standing Committee on Agriculture, and after discussing this with significant numbers of producers in my constituency, I cannot in good conscience support the passage of Bill C-98 and give the federal government my consent to pursue federal-provincial agreements which would set these agricultural programs in place. Rather, I would urge the Minister of Agriculture to pursue another course. I am glad he is in the House today to be able to hear what this other course is.

That other course would include an immediate spring seeding payment, the lowering of interest rates on farm debt, the development of long-term, long-range agriculture support programs which include sound transportation programs and, most of all, a commitment toward an income policy that guarantees a fair price for agricultural products: grains, oilseeds, specialty crops, as well as dairy and meat products. As I have said before, a fair price in my eyes must cover at the very bare minimum the farmer's cost of production.

I continue to believe, as I said at second reading, that the GRIP and NISA programs indicate that even this government knows there is a need for a long-term income stabilization in the farm sector in Canada. However, GRIP and NISA are only a recognition of this point. They are by no means an end. Much has yet to be done.

• (1805)

There is no reason why this government cannot reintroduce its program of deficiency payments to meet year by year needs, until an adequate and fair income stabilization program can be developed. It is the very least we can ask. The industry and the future of hundreds of farm families depend upon it.

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, I think I am rising to close the debate on third reading of this bill.

Today we are faced with massive farm income problems across Canada, brought on in part by the farm bill introduced in the United States several years ago. It has had the effect of creating a world price for wheat and other major grains which is consistent with the loan rates established by the U.S. government.

Its farmers are well protected because they get the loan rate, which currently stands somewhere in the neighbourhood of $2.30 or $2.40 Canadian for wheat. They are also guaranteed the target price by way of deficiency payments at the end of each crop year. U.S. farmers are getting a return that covers the cost of production of a big chunk of their farm community, whereas our farmers are being asked to work under a loan rate which is almost half that price.

In order to compete in world markets we have had in Canada some recognition of the ups and downs of the market. We have had in place the Western Grain Stabilization Act. It has had a long career of almost 15 years since 1976. Today the minister announced what I presume will be the final payment out of that act of $158 million. This $158 million will be appreciated by western farmers, because it will go a little way toward paying the premiums under this new GRIP program. It will pay a fraction of those premiums.

The act itself is permissive. The meat of what is being proposed here appears in federal-provincial agreements to which my friend from The Battlefords—Meadow Lake referred in his speech. Those agreements are not as good as what people had hoped for, but I believe this act has some potential.

In historical and political terms I would place it somewhere in the neighbourhood of the 1935 act to establish the Canadian Wheat Board. It was put in place by the dying R. B. Bennett administration that finally cottoned on to the plummeting that he was taking in the countryside and finally understood that he was not terribly popular in the country. I guess he saw how many Bennett buggies there were out there and decided he was not a popular man. On his almost political death-bed he brought in the Canadian Wheat Board Act because farmers had been attempting to get a wheat board for some 15 years before then. One of his last acts of desperation to try to get support back was to pass the Canadian Wheat Board Act.

I think agricultural historians 20 or 30 years from now will place this act in the same position. Farmers put a great deal of pressure on this government to get part of what we have before us here. As part of the green paper response and various task forces that were set up, one was to look at income stability. While they were not to bring in any report, they persisted and in fact produced recommendations which were acted upon in part with this legislation.

The farmers in that group wanted some form of price insurance or price guarantee to make them competitive with the United States. They were trying to get something like the target prices of American farmers so that they would know if they had 1,000 bushels of wheat to sell they would get about $4 a bushel for it. They could then design their farms so that they could get the maximum production out of them once they knew what the price was. That is what they wanted. What they seem to be getting in the agreements that are being signed between the provinces and the federal government is some form of revenue insurance.

• (1810)

Revenue insurance is not the same. It is simply a guaranteed price under an index moving average price carrying over 15 years times the actual average yield for the area. It is much less costly to the fund and less risk to the program. We have to work on as to how these agreements will work is a bit of hearsay evidence, because the agreements themselves were not available to be put before the committee. The agreements could not be discussed because the government said that it did not have legislation. Because it did not have the legislation passed, it could not sign the agreements and, until the agreements were signed, the provinces could not be asked to make them public.

We have the information that is round and about in Saskatchewan, distributed by the provincial government there. While those pieces of information are still being formed, we think we have some concept of how the proposal will work under the Gross Revenue Insurance Plan.

In order to show the House how it works and to show how it is not the final solution, so to speak, let us suppose Saskatchewan has one farm that grows nothing but wheat and barley. We will use the actual acres in production for that farm of Saskatchewan for 1990. We will apply the GRIP program to that year and just see what results.

We will note that there were 16 million acres seeded to wheat in Saskatchewan last year. It was a fairly good year. The average yield was 32 bushels to the acre. The average price at the elevator was about $3 a bushel. Therefore they took off $1.536 billion worth of production. In the barley production, they seeded 3.65 million acres. The average production was about 50 bushels to the acre, for 182.5 million bushels at a price around $1.40 a bushel, yielding 255.5 million bushels.

Had they been under GRIP, would the income have been a great deal more than the $1.780 billion? That is the question. If there had been an average crop, there would have been only 400 million bushels produced. It would have, therefore, qualified for the GRIP price at the maximum yield at $4 a bushel or $1.6 billion. Instead of $1.536 billion with the good crop that we produced, had we produced an average crop and had GRIP we would have got slightly more money. We would have got about $60 million more in money out the GRIP payment had it been in effect this year, because that was what our coverage level was.

Having produced a 50 bushel to the acre barley crop would we have got a GRIP payment this year? Because the price is only $1.40 per bushel and GRIP coverage should have been around $2.30 a bushel, would we have got a payment? The answer is yes, we would have got about $55 million of payment. In total receipts from the fund, had we produced an average crop this year instead of the crop we did, this year's crop would have produced $120 million from the income account. What would it have cost us to get that? Our premiums into the account would have been in the neighbourhood of $220 million. With the crop we produced this year, if we had had the GRIP program, we would have contributed about $220 million on wheat and barley in the form of premiums and that would have given us the right to pull out about $120 million of GRIP payments.

• (1815)

The point of the story is that if we produce an average crop, we are more likely to get a better return. We will spend less money putting fertilizer and chemicals into the crop. The new market realities for farmers after this particular series of agreements come into effect is that farmers will be encouraged to reduce the amount of production they have.

This is reminiscent for some of the older crowd, including myself, of the LIFT program that Otto Lang introduced back in the 1970–71 crop years. It was LIFT, as you will remember, Mr. Speaker, that was supposed to stand for lower inventory for tomorrow and farmers very quickly said that what it really meant was lower incomes for tomorrow.

When we take the data that was presented from the Department of Agriculture in the committee, when it was presenting its expert opinions, we found that net farm incomes from grains and oilseeds across Canada has run about $3.5 billion to $4 billion the last several years and is expected to go almost to zero for the crop year 1990–91, the year that we are in. By using the example that I have just presented, for Saskatchewan at least, there would have been virtually no advantage to having had GRIP in this year that has just past. Even with GRIP Saskatchewan grain growers are going to have to get used to not having any money for the crop year 1990–91.

The department's estimates for net farm income in future years, 1992 and 1993, are quite optimistic relative to this year. The department estimates we could have $1.5 billion to $2 billion of net income, thanks to substantial GRIP and NISA payments expected in 1992 and 1993. That could all be thrown into a cocked hat if farmers have a good crop this coming year.

The worse thing that could happen to our region with the kind of agreements that are being signed is that we have another crop similar to the one we have just had because we will have contributed more to GRIP than we will get out and we still will not have any money, just as we do not have any money this year.

This is not a perfect program. As I say, the legislation is permissive. It is the agreements that are being signed between the provinces and the federal government that we have to be critical of.

Farmers have been very much aware of the similarity to these agreements and the LIFT program. They did not like LIFT. They felt forced into signing into LIFT because the government of the day told them that if they did not sign up for LIFT, they would not be able to deliver any grain because they would not have any quota. The only way they could get quota for the grain that they had built up in their storage bins was to sign up for the program and then they would get the right to be able to deliver it. They signed but under protest.

When I listen to my farm constituents and people across the west, and some of the mumblings I am hearing out of Ontario as well, they are not liking it but they do not see that they have any choice. I hear people trying to make arrangements. A number of very good operators have told me that their fertilizer has been cancelled. I spoke to a representative of one of the large supply companies in western Canada this morning who said that they have had a number of customers come to them and say: "We will pay you the margin on the fertilizer, but we do not want to take it". In other words: "We will guarantee that you have a profit for having handled it, but please keep it in your own storage. We do not want it. GRIP makes it a liability for us to have it. It just increases our costs and will decrease the amount of money that we will get in return at the end of the year".

It does make some dramatic changes. It will reduce the amount of grain that is in store and will be shipped. It will reduce the amount of money that goes through the western economy by way of fertilizers, herbicides and all the things that go into creating a crop.

• (1820)

Farmers do not like this kind of pressure and these kinds of choices. They have also been told quite clearly that if they are not signed into GRIP or NISA or both, if there is a third line of defence payment, which is the new buzz-word for the hoped for deficiency payment for the 1990-91 income shortfall, hey will not be considered for that payment.

They are very much in a quandary. They are feeling weak because they have had a series of bad years. While they produced quite a bit of grain last year, there is no particular relief in the bank account or in the accounts due, so they are going to join.

Some civil servants sat in on the committee hearings who came up to me afterward and said: "How does this pressure work? Why would farmers sign when they are put under these kinds of strains? Why do they not just stand up for themselves and say no?"

I said: "Put yourself in their shoes. Maybe the best way for you to understand this would be to consider that you and all civil servants in Ottawa were fired last week. The government left you without jobs, and five months later it came to you and said: You can have your job back and we will pay each one of you $7,000 a year". They said: "But this is voluntary. You do not have to do it". I said: "I bet over 90 per cent of you would sign up, because there is no other option for farmers". That is the kind of situation that the federal and provincial governments are taking advantage of with these agreements.

We are not going to see the kind of results the government spelled out when it introduced this legislation and this program. You do not have to be a rocket scientist to understand that this is not a market responsive program. You do not have to be a genius to know that it will disrupt the rotation of crops, because forage crops did not get included in this program.

There will be some predisposition among some farmers to break up some of those acres that are in forage crops. There will be some tendency to shift acreage from the rather small acreages at the moment in specialty crops to take advantages of the fairly high price guarantees for those crops.

There will be a tendency for people to retire early, dispose of their farm, divide it up among family members. All of this will happen and we will have the kind of stories we hear around the coffee shops, where one guy at a meeting I was at said: "Look, I pull chaff wagons behind my combines. I am smart enough to be able to measure when I should be putting $4 wheat in the combine hopper and $2.50 wheat out the back end". Those are the very crass and crude definitions that are going to be applied in order to maintain themselves.

This is the end of seven or eight very hard years for prairie farmers and grain farmers right across the country. Farmers will do what they have to do in order to survive. We will permit that to happen with the passage of this legislation, with the hope that like the Wheat Board legislation in 1935, future governments and future opportunities will arise so that the next series of agreements will provide truly the kind of program the farmers set out to establish when they made their initial report leading up to this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I thought the hon. member for Mackenzie was gong to be the last speaker, but I notice that the hon. member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre has about a 10 minute speech.

Mr. Rod Laporte (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a few remarks with respect to this bill.

• (1825)

The details and the ins and outs of this bill have been discussed many times over, but I think it is appropriate to make a few general comments with respect to this legislation and with respect to the future of rural Canada, family farms, and particularly western Canada.

There has been a need for a permanent farm program for some time, a program that has been promised since 1985. Bill C-98 does allow that program. However, being enabling legislation, we are not sure of the full details of the program and we do not know exactly what is coming out. We are somewhat in the dark. Farmers in my riding and farmers in western Canada are concerned about the future of rural Canada and about the future of family farms. While the government is asking farmers to trust it with Bill C-98, the farmers are saying: "We have trusted you in the past and look what you have done to us."

The erosion of the Canadian Wheat Board has been particularly hard on western Canadian farmers. The removal of oats from the Canadian Wheat Board was done without proper consultation, as was the removal of the two-price wheat system. The free trade agreement, which is going to affect the movement of grain into this country from the United States, is going to take one more slice away from the Canadian Wheat Board.

Western Canadian farmers have lost the fuel price rebate. They have had their cash advance taken away and replaced with a loan that is an interest-bearing loan. Before, they had a $50,000 interest-free cash advance; now it is an interest-bearing one, albeit a quarter of a million dollars. With an advance of a quarter of a million dollars, I don't know how many farmers in Saskatchewan would even qualify for it, let alone be willing to take it.

They are concerned about the transportation issue, the future of the Crow benefit, and the rumours that we have been hearing here and throughout the country that there are going to be some dramatic changes made to the transportation of grain in this country. There is concern over the future of the family farm. They are concerned, with some real justification, that the direction that this government has been taking over the last seven years does not bode well for a viable farming family future.

The government says that, unlike in the past, there has been some consultation, and that is true. It certainly has been much better than in the past.

With respect to the removal of oats, the government said that it had done valid consultation. It said that it had consulted with numerous farm groups right across the country. In fact, when questioned in the House, it quoted hog producing groups, groups such as the Alberta Sheep Growers Association, which has nothing to do with the growing of oats. In fact there was no consultation with the Advisory Committee of the Canadian Wheat Board and there was no proper consultation with oat producers. A Decima poll that had been put out, which the government is fully aware of, made it very clear that farmers at least wanted the opportunity to be able to have the option to decide whether or not oats would be under the Canadian Wheat Board, just as farmers would like to have the option with other grains as to whether or not they would be under the Canadian Wheat Board. There certainly was not consultation there.

With respect to Bill C-98 there has been some consultation, and there has been consultation with most of the major producer and farm groups in this country. The final results, however, are somewhat unclear because we have not seen the final programs. As some of the groups before the committee said, they simply have to trust that the government will come up with a valid and beneficial bill for them.

The concern that some groups have expressed—and certainly one of the concerns that I have and one of the reasons that I am unable to support the bill at this stage—is the process of review. If we are going to have a new direction for the future of agriculture in this country, there is a need for an ongoing review. What we should have is an all-party committee made up of members of the House of Commons, done as other committees are done with the same representation as is in Parliament so that the majority would be, in this case, the Tories, followed by the Liberals and then the New Democrats. But it should be an ongoing committee that can review this legislation, that can provide suggestions and alternatives to the government. As the Minister of Agriculture said, this is only the first piece of legislation with respect to agriculture. He is anticipating, and we are therefore anticipating, more bills to be coming forth. If that happens, we are changing the whole face of agriculture.

• (1830)

It is important that there is a proper review process and an ongoing review process and it is done in an open fashion, an all-party fashion. That is what I think is appropriate for this piece of legislation and for the other farm bills that will presumably be coming down.

The fact that the government is not concerned about the future of family farms is evident in that this bill is not going to protect family farms in the long term. We have in Saskatchewan I think 23 per cent of the farmers in Saskatchewan who are insolvent.

Unless we have this commitment to the family farm, unless we have this commitment to rural Canada, the erosion is simply going to continue.

I want to make some concluding remarks. Once we lose the infrastructure that is now disappearing, it is not going to return. Once the farmers are gone from the land, the family farms are not going to return. Once the small business shops are closed up, they are not coming back. Once the infrastructure is gone, it is gone forever.

We have a chance to maintain a viable, healthy, rural infrastructure in the west based on agriculture, in other parts of the country based on fishing or forestry, or whatever the situation may be. We have the opportunity now. We have to be keeping that in mind. We have to, if we are going to maintain a viable infrastructure, have that as a basis for all such legislation, and certainly this is one piece of legislation that should have that in mind. I think in the long run that is not going to be borne out. In fact, we are moving to larger and larger farms and fewer and fewer people in rural Canada. That is a travesty. It is very sad. It is a situation tht I grieve for every time I go to rural Saskatchewan, every time I go to my riding and I go into communities that are dying, where farmers are hanging on by their fingernails. This government has done really very little to save those people.

In closing, I would say that this bill is going through, we are going to have a permanent program, but the concern for rural Canada and the concern for the future of farming families is still there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed.

Mr. Marcel Prud'homme (Saint-Denis): Mr. Speaker, before we go I think it would be very appropriate if all of us wish you, in both Polish and Ukrainian, *Restos Uskras*—which means "Christ has Risen", or if you prefer, "Happy Easter", or if you prefer "Joyeuxes Pàques", or if you prefer *Kronia Pola* in Greek, or *Buena Pasqua* in Italian. And, as you know, this Saturday it is going to be another event, not for the Christian but for the Hebrew faith. As you know, it will be Passover this Saturday. So I think it is also good to wish to our colleagues "Happy Passover".

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I thank the hon. dean of the House for those kind words and I wish each and every one of you a very, very happy Easter.

It being 6.35 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 28(2) the House stands adjourned until Monday, April 8, 1991 at 2 p.m. pursuant to order made earlier this day.

The House adjourned at 6.35 p.m.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, April 8, 1991

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 31

[*English*]

THE BUDGET

Mr. John Manley (Ottawa South): Mr. Speaker, this morning the Liberal Party launched its campaign to bring to the attention of the public the need to defend Canadian workers against the latest attacks by the Tory government.

In its budget, the government, by example, told every employer to forget about bargaining rights and to threaten workers with job cuts and increase contracting out in order to block wage increases.

From 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. today on Parliament Hill, we are giving provincial and federal Public Service workers, pensioners and members of the employment equity target groups, teachers and the academic community a chance to voice their opposition to such blackmail.

When the government is threatening bad faith bargaining, back-to-work legislation and interference in the conciliation-arbitration process, the rights of Canadian workers and service to the public are in jeopardy.

Other such forums will take place on April 22 in Thunder Bay and Kingston. We encourage all Canadian workers to participate and to help us to tell the government that enough is enough.

[*Translation*]

TRIBUTE TO THE LATE LIEUTENANT-COLONEL MAURICE HALLÉ

Mr. Marcel R. Tremblay (Québec-Est): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Brome—Missisquoi, Gabrielle Bertrand, who is not here today, has asked me to inform the House of the passing on April 5 last of the former member for that riding, Lieutenant-Colonel Maurice Hallé. Mr. Hallé served in this House from 1940 to 1947.

To Mrs. Hallé and her family we offer our deepest sympathies during this trying time.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. member.

* * *

[*English*]

HOUSING

Hon. Alan Redway (Don Valley East): Mr. Speaker, the Allaire report and the C.D. Howe Institute have both recommended that housing become exclusively a provincial responsibility.

Before rushing to a decision, let us remember that federal government housing programs are available everywhere in Canada. Let us remember, as well, that only federal government mortgage insurance is available everywhere in Canada, and that mortgage insurance has helped to build one-third of the homes in our country. Let us also remember that the federal government programs have made possible 640,000 homes for low-income Canadians, homes which form an essential part of our national social safety net.

If housing does become exclusively a provincial responsibility, will mortgage insurance be available everywhere in Canada? Will we have a housing social safety net? Will our taxes go down? What do you think, Mr. Speaker?

S. O. 31

REFORM PARTY

Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Mr. Speaker, over the past weekend the Reform Party held its convention in Saskatoon. It was clearly a well stage-managed production. I am a little concerned, that with all the lights and the hoopla, what actually transpired over the weekend may have been lost: the Reform Party has already sold out.

It is a shock for me to see that the party that was so quick to join with the NDP in the fight against the GST actually back-pedalled on the issue this past weekend. They now support the hated GST. It was truly disappointing. They are beginning to look more and more like the Tories already. Like Tories, they support user fees for medicare. Like Tories, they want to tear down the Wheat Board and orderly marketing for farmers. Like Tories, they want the free trade deal to go even further. And like Tories, their well-heeled backers call the shots.

Mr. Speaker, the well-financed, well-polished image the Reform Party projected over the weekend was no mistake. The Reform Party is nothing more than Tories in a hurry.

* * *

CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

Mr. Fred J. Mifflin (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception): Yesterday I joined many of our colleagues and thousands of Canadians to witness three Canadian warships return to their home port after nearly eight months' absence.

On Sunday, April 7, Her Majesty's Canadian Ships *Athabaskan, Terra Nova* and *Protecteur* sailed proudly into the dockyard in Halifax, returning with the same professionalism and dignity they displayed during their impressive and reputable contribution to the Persian Gulf war. These ships stopped 1,800 merchant vessels and boarded 22 in their enforcement of the United Nations economic sanctions against Iraq.

This House and all Canadians can look back with pride at this example which shows the ingenuity, dedication and commitment displayed by all those officers, men and women in the Canadian forces and with the Department of National Defence who knew their duty and did it well.

[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, on March 20, the House of Commons Board of Internal Economy decided to cut $5.6 million in the 1991-92 Budget for the Parliament of Canada.

The cuts affect the committees' operating expenses as well as the printing of parliamentary publications and the discretionary expenditures of parliamentary associations and delegations. Moreover, it was decided to use only one telecommunications satellite instead of two for the parliamentary television network.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud these cuts, but we could do more by cutting down on our discretionary and other expenses of the Parliament of Canada and the Senate.

Mr. Speaker, later this week, on April 11, I will disclose to the people of my riding the total cost of my discretionary expenses and of running my Parliamentary offices. Can the members of the Bloc Québécois do the same, yes or no?

* * *

[*English*]

UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr. David Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, the latest unemployment figures were released at the end of last week and revealed that unemployment stood at a shameful 22.2 per cent in Cape Breton, which was double the national average.

These figures do not include those whose unemployment insurance benefits have run out, those who have simply given up and those who have lost all hope of ever finding a job.

It is another bleak spring for Cape Breton, with no hope for a better or brighter summer. That is bad news for young people who are seeking summer employment in order to pay for their education. Tuition fees are rising, prices are rising, taxes are rising, but opportunities are declining.

Once again this Prime Minister and this government have failed. They have failed to respond to the severe economic problems Cape Breton and the country continue to face.

I call upon the Government of Canada and the Department of Employment and Immigration as well as ACOA to introduce emergency funding for job creation programs to assist Canadian families in those regions in this their hour of economic need.

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[*Translation*]

LEADER OF THE BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS

Mr. Denis Pronovost (Saint-Maurice): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Bloc Quebecois has just given us another example of his lack of financial responsibility.

The new spokesman for Jacques Parizeau in this House is now ready to choose the American dollar as the currency for his future independent Quebec. This is another evidence, Mr. Speaker, of the leader of the Bloc Quebecois' unrealistic approach in spite of his heated rhetoric.

One day, the Bloc Quebecois requests a common currency with Canada, the next, they want a separate currency, only to change their mind again the day after and talk about aligning the Quebec currency with the American dollar. With this death wish theory, they even consider abandoning at some point the American dollar and creating a new Quebec currency.

So much for consistency! How politically irresponsible! The people of Quebec will not entrust their future to such adventurers who seem only motivated by anger and passion.

[*English*]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Jerry Pickard (Essex—Kent): Mr. Speaker, all across this country farmers want to prepare for spring planting. This should be a time of anticipation and hope. But this year it is marked by fear and anxiety; fear because farmers are uncertain of their future; anxiety because many are unsure of how they will finance their operations this year.

• (1410)

The past few years have been unkind to agriculture. Low commodity prices, natural disasters, floods and droughts have decreased earnings and depleted savings. Man-made disasters, such as the government's free trade deal, high interest rates and a high dollar have caused irreparable damage to Canadian agriculture. As farmers attempt to plant the 1991 crops, this government sits idly by without giving immediate assistance.

In the past year, over 2,000 jobs have been lost and at least 12 plant closures or slowdowns have occurred. In Essex-Kent, two processors are gone and others are in danger of closing. Thousands of acres of fruits and vegetables are in jeopardy. Farmers' livelihoods are being lost.

I call upon this government to act now to save farming and the agrifood industry.

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IMMIGRATION

Mr. Stan Wilbee (Delta): Mr. Speaker, Asian gangs are becoming a serious problem in Canada. In Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto and Montreal we read of murders, gambling, extortion, drug trafficking, prostitution, immigrant smuggling and other serious and violent crimes, all connected to ruthless Asian gangs.

It is even more disturbing to read the reports that these gangs are actively recruiting more and more members, many of them school-aged youngsters.

I want to commend the police in these cities who are dealing with the gangs as best they can with the resources available. I also want to say that I appreciate their frustration with a system that is not screening out criminals and bogus refugees; a system that makes it difficult to deport immigrant gang members that are convicted of crimes in Canada.

I call on the government today to take a closer look at what we can do to strengthen our immigration laws and to prevent these violent and dangerous criminals from entering and staying in our country, and quickly deporting those convicted of serious criminal offences.

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INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Saskatoon—Humboldt): Mr. Speaker, the Mulroney government is again reneging on its commitment to international development; its promise to the poorest of the poor.

Without any consultation, the government forced CIDA to cut millions of dollars of support from Canada's development NGOs. NGOs, including CUSO, Canada World Youth, Canadian Crossroads International, and others, are losing funds to a shadowy ODA reserve fund, yet another government slush fund.

Two important points have to be made. First, by cutting funds to Canada World Youth and Crossroads, the government is cutting programs which foster international understanding through cross-cultural exchange.

Second, these funding cuts undermine all development NGOs' ability to operate in a business-like manner. Our NGOs are very prudent in their planning and management. Now, by breaking its funding contract with the NGOs, the government puts at risk the very future of these highly regarded development NGOs.

* * *

CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

Mr. Len Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Mr. Speaker, the last few weeks have seen the return of many of our military personnel from the Persian Gulf—members of the first Canadian hospital from CFB Petawawa have return; RCRs from London; three ships with full crews, and many other military personnel.

Those of us who had the privilege to welcome many of our dedicated and professional service personnel home were very impressed by their comments. As a couple of young women said: "When you are facing a crisis, there are only a few things in your life that really matter. It helps you to put important things first and the rest becomes rather immaterial". Many said: "It takes an experience like this to emphasize that we do, in fact, live in the greatest country in the world and we should develop a greater appreciation for that fact".

It is up to the rest of us as civilians to keep this country united and strong. Only in this way can we honour them and pay them the rich tribute they deserve for being excellent Canadian ambassadors and service personnel.

So let us get with it Canada, and do our part by building a great Canadian nation so that Canada can continue to play an important role both here at home and in international affairs.

REFUGEES

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, today some three million Kurdish civilians, mostly women and children, are scattered in the valleys and mountains of Kurdistan without food, shelter or adequate clothing. Under harsh winter conditions where snow covers many mountains, they are fleeing Iraqi troops, desperate to reach Turkish and Iranian borders. The roads are jammed, children are dying and Iraqi forces have fired into this stream of helpless humanity.

These victims believe that they were betrayed by the American President and the world. For the Kurds the new world order looks very much like the old. In 1988 the world turned a blind eye when Kurds were gassed in Halabja in March 1988. Indeed, as historian Arshak Safrastian said: "In the world there is probably no ethnic group that has been more persistently abused and misrepresented than the Kurdish race".

In view of this desperate situation, I call upon our government to vastly increase the level of humanitarian aid and to ensure that Kurds are treated with the same generosity as refugees in coming to Canada, as Canada has historically treated other refugees. Plainly, Canada must support the 25 million Kurdish people in their struggle for democracy, for justice, for peace and self-determination.

We stand in solidarity with the Kurdish people, with their brothers and sisters here in Canada, who have been denied justice for far too long.

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CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. John Reimer (Kitchener): Mr. Speaker, on March 21 the Supreme Court of Canada decided that the foetus is not a human being within the confines of the Criminal Code. In the absence of any other law in the Code, the court had no choice but to come to that decision.

However, that same court had invited Parliament in January 1988 to decide "the precise point in the development of the foetus at which the state's interest in its protection becomes compelling".

Parliament did just that in Bill C–43. Although Bill C–43 offered very little protection for the unborn, its underlying principle was that the state was protecting the foetus from conception to birth.

Given the Senate's rejection of Bill C–43 and the most recent decision of the court, I call upon all who want to protect life to accept their responsibility and work together to produce a realistic, incrementally sound strategy towards the goal of full legal protection to all human life from conception.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*English*]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, first I would like permission to say thank you, to the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Leader of the NDP and members of Parliament from all sides who wrote me notes or telephoned wishing me well. It is proof once more, that despite differences, we are all members of the same club, in a way, to fight for a great country. So I would like to say thank you everyone.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, for more than a year, the Canadian economy has been in a recession. All economists now agree that this recession will extend until at least the fall. Statistics Canada said on the weekend that in Montreal, 223,000 unemployed people are now looking for work. At 14.1 per cent, there is more unemployment in Montreal than in cities with traditionally high jobless rates like St. John's, Newfoundland; Saint John, New Brunswick; Halifax and Moncton.

I therefore ask the Acting Prime Minister: Has the time not come to stop talking about inflation, about the high Canadian dollar, and get busy creating jobs for Canadians who want to work now, especially in Montreal?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, most Canadians want interest rates to go down even more. For this, we must reduce the inflation rate. Inflation has come down very well, resulting in interest rates that are 4 per cent lower than last spring.

I think that the reduction in the inflation rate can continue. I think that is the best way to improve the economy and that is the most important objective in our Budget for reducing interest rates. Every part of our Budget is meant to help bring down interest rates. We have been successful at it since spring and I think it is possible to be even more successful in the future.

• (1420)

[*English*]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I do not think this answer will put any Canadians to work or put a pay cheque in the pocket of any of the unemployed in Canada. There are 220,000 people in Montreal who would like to work; 200,000 people in Toronto who would like to work; 80,000 people in Vancouver, your home town, who are unemployed today. The big cities of Canada are becoming economic graveyards.

The people of Canada would like to know when this government will stop talking about inflation. It has been talking like that for the last six years. We have 1.4 million Canadians who want to work today to gain back their dignity. When will the Minister of Finance do something about that?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition says that reducing interest rates is not going to—he is shaking his head. He says that the reduction in interest rates is not going to create jobs.

I have been involved in consultations with people right across this country. The one thing that each one of the groups said to me was: "Get interest rates down." That is what we have been doing over the course of the last eight months. A 4 percentage point drop in interest rates is one of the largest drops in any industrialized country in the world during that period. The result is going to be a renewal of the economy in this country.

We have seen, during the course of the past few months, where there has been, because of the drop in interest rates, a substantial increase in activity in—

Some hon. members: Where?

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): The people opposite wonder where. If they would read the newspapers they would see that there is a substantial increase in the amount of activity in the housing market. That is going to lead directly to housing starts. The increase in housing starts is going to lead to increased business for the forest products industry and for all the industries that supply the new housing markets. That is how we are going to create jobs in this country.

* * *

TRADE

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, we will solve these problems when we have a different government and a different Minister of Finance.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Chrétien: I have another question for the government about its economic policy, this time about its foreign economic policy. I would like to ask the Minister for International Trade this question.

The President of Mexico, in a discussion we had with him this morning, made it absolutely clear that energy will not be on the table at the trade negotiations with the United States and with Canada.

If Mexico can say that energy is not on the table, why can Canada not do the same thing, and make sure that Canada will be like Mexico, which controls its self-sufficiency and the security of supply in energy?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, quite obviously, Canada and Mexico have different interests with respect to energy. It was in the national interest of Canada to try to get a more secure market for our surplus of natural gas in the United States. Mexico is not in the same position. Their Constitution states the government must own the oil resource. So we recognize that this is the case.

I am glad to see the hon. the Leader of the Opposition back. He looks in good shape. He is sitting in a very dangerous position, but he is looking in good shape.

Mr. Simmons: He will not be there long.

Mr. Crosbie: That is true.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Much of this conversation could take place after Question Period. Perhaps the minister could answer the question.

Mr. Crosbie: I hope that the voice of Clyde Wells is not being heard in the House, Mr. Speaker.

The President of Mexico said today in an address at lunch time that doubts that spring from reason with respect to future economic activities are certainly understandable, but that doubts that arise from fear are not. I would suggest to the hon. Leader of the Opposition that he heed that advice. If he has any doubts, I hope they will spring from reason and not simply from fears that somehow are conjured up by the Liberal caucus.

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Etobicoke North): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pursue the questions to the Minister of International Trade about free trade within North America. The minister is on record as saying that the United States–Canada free trade agreement could be reopened in the upcoming trilateral negotiations. And yet today, here in the House of Commons, the Prime Minister said that the free trade agreement will not be reopened.

When will the government make its position clear and how does the government believe that a trilateral agreement can be concluded without reopening the bilateral agreement?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, in the event there was actually some difference between what I said and what the Prime Minister said, I would be inclined to follow whatever the Prime Minister had said.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Crosbie: I would still have my own opinion, but it might not be the opinion of the government. However, I do not think there is any difference between anything the Prime Minister has said and that I have said.

The United States has agreed and we have agreed; we are not negotiating to open up the U.S.–Canada free trade agreement. But if we get some improvements, if we get something better while we are negotiating the tripartite agreement then there might consequentially have to be some changes to the U.S.–Canada free trade agreement. But we are not opening up the negotiations. So I do not think I have said anything different from the Prime Minister, but if I have, I am sorry.

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Etobicoke North): The minister's apology to the House is stimulating but hardly illuminating.

The Leader of the Opposition has drawn our attention to the contradiction between Canada's position with regard to energy in the bilateral free trade agreement, and Mexico's position with regard to energy in a trilateral agreement.

Let me address a further question to the minister. There is a contradiction, surely, in the fact that the United States government has rejected a recent decision of a binational panel in Canada's favour. That casts serious doubts on the effectiveness of the trade disputes mechanism in the agreement.

Will the government take the opportunity of the upcoming Canada–Mexico–U.S. negotiations to remedy such flaws in the bilateral agreement?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): I do not believe the matter to which the member alludes is a flaw in an agreement. In our opinion, the United States has launched an extraordinary challenge with respect to the matter of a pork countervail in violation of the spirit and the intent of the free trade agreement. We are not responsible for the actions of the United States. We hope that the judges who were appointed in this extraordinary challenge will deal with that in a very convincing manner.

• (1430)

It does not matter what provisions you have in an agreement. Two sides have to administer it and it may be interpreted and administered differently in different places.

It does not matter what provision we have in the U.S.–Canada–Mexico agreement, there will doubtless be differences about interpretation and different approaches in the two areas.

I am not gainsaying the fact that we believe that in this particular case the United States has acted in a way that is contrary to the intendment and meaning of the agreement, but we realize we are in a very sensitive position right now with respect to obtaining authority from Congress for a fast-track approach to other negotiations.

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. We have had the Canada–U.S. trade deal now for a little over two years. What we do know is that Canadians have lost over 260,000 jobs in this country.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Ms. McLaughlin: We do know, and Canadians increasingly know, that the Canada–U.S. trade deal has been a bad deal for Canadians—

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Ms. McLaughlin: —and that now this government is determined to make a bad deal worse by entering into the tri-level negotiations with Mexico.

My question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. We believe that there should be fair trade. We believe that there should be expanded international trade. When will this government come in with a policy for fair international trade that will serve the interests of Canadian workers, and also international workers?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, the hon. Leader of the New Democratic Party says that there should be expanded trade, but she is against every effort to expand trade. She is against the U.S.–Canada Free Trade Agreement which will expand trade. She is against the U.S.–Canada–Mexico negotiations which might, or may, or can possibly expand trade. She is very equivocal about the Uruguay Round, and she cites the loss of 250,000 jobs, which is against all the evidence.

I will just refer to one study. Peat Marwick shows Canadian firms investing $30 at home for every dollar spent on foreign mergers and acquisitions last year as compared to the situation before the U.S.–Canada Free Trade Agreement. In other words we have given confidence to our own people to invest in Canada. I can quote the boss of Proctor and Gamble who says: "We have become substantially more efficient in the last two years and clearly we now have more jobs in our Canadian plants than we would have had without the agreement". That is Proctor and Gamble.

I could go on indefinitely, Mr. Speaker.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is for the Minister for International Trade. The Minister for International Trade can go on and cite how good the trade deal has been for multinational corporations, but maybe he should talk to Canadians who have lost their jobs in plants that will not open again.

I want to say to the Minister for International Trade that there are many elements to the trade deal that I think will make the global economy more fair and serve better the people of all countries. Last December I asked the Minister for International Trade if he would consider in a trade deal looking at working conditions for workers, health and safety standards and environment, and the minister said it was a silly idea.

I say to the minister again, if he is truly interested in international agreements that serve the workers and all citizens, will he insist that in every international trade agreement working conditions for workers, health and safety standards, and environmental conditions are part of those trade deals?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, in reply to the hon. lady might I say that exports, for example, in agricultural products to the United States from Canada went up 20 per cent in 1990 as compared to 1989.

Farmers are not the corporate spooks that the hon. lady refers to. In 1989 agricultural product exports to the U.S. went up 13 per cent compared to 1988.

I hold in my hand here, from Mexico, a document which the hon. lady can have: "Mexico Towards a Better Environment", which is printed on recycled paper containing up to 40 per cent straw cellulose which shows what the Mexicans are doing with respect to trying to combat environmental and pollution problems.

The environment is the concern of us all. The more prosperous Mexico becomes, the greater its ability to combat pollution, the more assets it will have in order to increase salaries and improve the working conditions for people in Mexico.

Why is the hon. lady against giving Mexicans a chance to improve?

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, this party stands for making working conditions for all workers, domestically and internationally, safe and environmentally sound.

The Minister for International Trade talks about making the lives of people better.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, the government says that a North American trade agreement would help Mexico's poor. This statement is hard to believe, because the gap between rich and poor in the United States and Canada is wider than it was before Canada–U.S. free trade.

My question for the minister is this: Where is the evidence that the situation would be different for the poor, for the working people of Mexico and Canada with an agreement between the three countries?

[*English*]

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, the proof is that in the world since 1945 and the adoption of liberalized trade policies by most countries of the world, including the United States, trade has expanded exponentially.

As a result of that, we have all become tremendously more prosperous, including Canada. Thirty per cent of our GNP comes from trade. Mexico is also becoming a trading country. It has reduced and changed its whole mercantilist regime.

Until four years ago, Mexico followed the same kind of blind, hopeless polices that the hon. lady advocates. It has changed them. It is now full of dynamism and hope. It is joining the world community. It knows it can only gain wealth and strength by being competitive with the world.

Mexico is turning its back on the old socialist, mercantilist policies. That is what we have done, and we are not going back in the direction that the hon. lady wants us to go back to.

* * *

REFUGEES

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

I think the minister, we on this side and all Canadians are shocked and horrified by the tragedy of the Kurds five years after the international community stood by and watched them being gassed by the same group of the Saddam regime.

Under the so–called new world order, should it not be a case where the international community takes direct action when, clearly, conventions on genocide are being abused? Why are we talking about normalizing relations with Iraq under the UN cease–fire resolution when the tragedy that occurred has not been addressed?

Can the minister tell us if Canada would support international action to maintain a sanctions program until this brutal terrorism against the Kurds comes to an end?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, not very long ago in this House, the hon. member and others were asking the government to take action to ensure that help could be extended to children and to others who were disadvantaged in Iraq.

Mr. Peterson: Don't be cheap.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Somehow the member for Willowdale regards that kind of action as cheap. I do not quite understand that kind of logic.

Mr. Simmons: You wouldn't.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): No, I do not understand that kind of logic.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): What we are very much in support of is action that tries to help people in Iraq who are victims of that regime.

That is why this government took actions beginning in the summer that resulted in a withdrawal from Kuwait by Iraq and its aggressive action. That is why we are supporting the United Nations now. That is why we announced on Friday of last week an additional $3.3 million Canadian to international humanitarian organizations to kelp the Kurds. That, as the member knows, is in addition to some $77 million for humanitarian purposes that we made available in the summer and on which we had not only made promises, but actually delivered the help to the people who needed it.

• (1440)

That $3.3 million will be expanded as the need increases. Our strong tendency is to continue to work through international organizations, whether Red Cross, Red Crescent or the organizations of the United Nations.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, my memory recalls the amount of money we pledged to help the tragic suffering of the Kurds is about the same amount the government spent on advertising the GST program. I do not think there is any comparison between the two.

If we are truly interested in stopping that suffering the minister knows is continuing, should it not be the responsibility of the international community to go beyond just condemnation and to take specific action?

Second, I want to ask the minister if we have made representations to our Turkish allies under NATO to make sure that Turkish refugees are given full asylum in that country and that we will promise and take leadership in ensuring that a major aid program is provided in order to give comfort and security to the Turkish government and the Iranian government, which must provide that refugee program.

Is this not, in scope, similar to what we faced in Indo-China back in the late 1970s and early 1980s? This is a tragic problem, and I would like to know seriously what you are doing about it.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I certainly would be interested in knowing what specifically the hon. member, I presume on behalf of his party, is suggesting is independent action that Canada should be taking with regard to that situation. I would be interested in the precedents that he would invoke and I would be interested in his view as to the implications that would have for the sovereignty of nations in which there is an uprising.

With regard to activities of the United Nations, I would remind the hon. member that he and his party, or at least many members of his party, were not prepared to support the United Nations at an earlier phase. They are certainly now prepared to support the United Nations very actively in all aspects of this matter.

Some hon. members: That is a lie.

With respect to Turkey, I had the opportunity yesterday morning, to speak—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: There are a lot of people who would like to know what the answer is with respect to Canadian policy. I would ask all hon. members to give the minister a chance to reply.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity yesterday morning to speak to the Foreign Minister of Turkey. He was on his way to the border areas. I will be speaking to him tomorrow. We are very conscious of the problems that the Turks feel they face with regard to becoming a place of domicile, even on a temporary basis.

We have made it clear that we think the most effective help the international community, including Canada, could give would be to people who were either within Iraq or within temporary camps on the border, on the Turkish or on the Iraqi side. This is obviously a terrible tragedy and one that requires the whole of the world to respond as effectively as we can. We think the most effective response is going to be by way of international organizations.

As others have mentioned at earlier times in the House, one of the difficulties we are dealing with there is quite simply a difficulty of terrain. That makes more direct deliveries of food aid, for example, much more problematic than it might be in other parts of the world.

We are considering all options that would allow Canada to continue to play a constructive role. As I said, we were among the first nations to respond with humanitarian assistance in August. We have increased that now. We are prepared to continue to increase that as conditions warrant. We would prefer to do that within the framework of existing international organizations.

* * *

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, the government has choked the CBC's budget in real terms and now, adding insult to injury, the government is rewarding one of its free trade friends with the pitiful patronage appointment of John Crispo to the CBC board of directors. It is just plain chutzpah.

Does the Deputy Prime Minister share the views of the appointee, John Crispo, that the CBC is, and I quote: "a lousy left-wing Liberal-NDP pinko network"? If that is the case, I understand what he has done. If not, will he withdraw Mr. Crispo's appointment immediately?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Crispo supports the CBC as an institution.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Weiner: Different people have different ideas about how the CBC should be run, but we all begin as supporters of the CBC. I think that is what is critical.

Here we have an individual, Mr. Crispo, an eminent economist. The CBC represents all Canadians and, therefore, it should reflect the great diversity of opinion that exists in this country.

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, this is the most gross appointment and you are certainly not supporting it. You are aborting the CBC.

Mr. Speaker: I know the hon. member would want to put her question through the Chair. Please put the question.

Mrs. Finestone: The CBC board gave a unanimous vote of confidence in the integrity of its news and its current affairs services, while the new appointee, John Crispo, calls it biased, left-wing and, to the journalists, a disgrace to professional journalism.

Is the Crispo appointment now the Prime Minister's way of censoring the CBC news or is this just another way that the government uses its cheap tricks, showing lofty contempt for the CBC?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Mr. Speaker, I was not sure if I heard a question. As far as I am concerned, the CBC has a significant budget to administer, with global receipts of some $1.4 billion. There are other instruments by which funding has also been made available.

As far as I am concerned, I start my day by listening to the CBC, and I am a very strong supporter of that institution. I am not sure whether the member would want to get that involved in administering what should be a public corporation at arm's length and independent from the government.

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. Last week the Prime Minister appointed Uni-

versity of Toronto Professor John Crispo as his hired gun to carry out this government's vendetta against the CBC.

As we know, Mr. Crispo is notorious for his unabashed hatred of the CBC and views Canada's public broadcaster as a nest of anti-government, left-wing "pinkos" and a dangerous, if not evil force on our society. Those are his words.

Why is the Prime Minister intent on heightening his attack by engineering even more strife on Canada's public broadcasting system and why is he using Mr. Crispo and his take-no-prisoner rhetoric to carry out his scorched earth policy against the CBC?

Mr. Loiselle: You missed a couple of cliches.

Mr. Epp: That is okay, he will get a supplementary.

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Mr. Speaker, there are 15 members of the CBC board. I do not have an indication of the political affiliation of the members of the CBC. In fact, the only person I may know personally is the wife of one of the senators who, I am sure, is deeply committed to the continuance and to the operation of the CBC.

• (1450)

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): Mr. Crispo was one of this government's most ardent and vocal supporters of the free trade during the 1988 elections.

In light of U.S. trade negotiator Carla Hills' comments that under the Mexican Round, Canadian cultural industries will be on the free trade table, I would like to ask the Prime Minister through his deputy why it is his intention to use Mr. Crispo to dismantle the Canadian public broadcasting system under a trilateral free trade pact with the U.S. and Mexico. Or, does he just figure he has not done enough damage to the system already?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Every time Carla Hills speaks the NDP shakes, but we do not. The United States might want to discuss the issue of cultural industries. We are not against discussing anything with anybody. But we do not propose any changes in the U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement, which protected our cultural industry, and we are going to continue protecting our cultural industries.

The Mexicans are not threatening our cultural industries. So the hon. gentleman should not quake every time Mrs. Hills speaks.

* * *

TRADE

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): My question is also for the Minister for International Trade.

I would like to say to him that when John Crosbie speaks Canadians laugh, and it is not a laughing matter.

Since the introduction of the free trade agreement, we have lost 220,000 manufacturing jobs across this country. Since the arrival of the GST, we have lost 71,000 jobs in the service sector.

Given that the minister admitted earlier in this Question Period that the Americans are violating the spirit of the current free trade agreement, why is he pursuing willy-nilly a new trade agreement with another country with no conditions attached?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): We do not have an agreement yet with any other country. We have one free trade agreement so far, and that is with the United States.

We have got certain very firm benefits from that. We know that the United States is worried about its economic position in the world and there are very protectionist influences there. We know at the present moment the President is trying to get authority from Congress for an up-or-down power with respect to negotiating trade agreements, the fast track authority, and that therefore has some influence on what American officials say.

We have to live with the United States. It is right next door to us. We have been living with it now for some 125 years. The hon. lady does not have anything to fear. We are here protecting her and all those who think like her against the perils of living next to this giant neighbour. Because we have got this agreement, we now have a solid foundation with which to defend our interests in the United States whenever they are threatened.

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): I do not need your protection. The people who need your protection—

Mr. Speaker: I would ask the hon. member to remember that she should put her questions through the Chair.

Ms. Copps: The people who need protection are the 1.4 million Canadians who are losing jobs a result of the devastating economic policies of this government. GST, a failure; free trade, a failure.

I ask the Minister of Finance what specific programs can he offer to Canadians today to put our people back to work. Never mind the Mexicans and the Americans; why don't you put Canadians back to work?

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): I am sure that my hon. friend was here this morning listening to the speech and she should reflect on the fact that Mexico went through the wringer in 1982 because of the high debt, high deficit problems that they have, and they had difficulty getting out of the economic problems that developed at that time.

It is instructive to note that a country that has gone through those difficulties is following the policies that this government is also following: getting the fiscal problem under control, getting the debt problem under control, combating inflation, deregulation, encouraging greater flows of foreign capital, changing the regulations of how foreign capital is treated in this country and the sale of public enterprises.

I think the point here is quite clear. Policies that they are following and policies that we are following are designed to improve the quality of the economy and designed to improve the capacity of individuals who are out of work today who want work.

My friend opposite wants to go back in the dark ages of economic policy and look back at ways that led Mexico into problems, that led this country into problems and—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre–Dame–de–Grâce): Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of Finance.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, as our leader already said, Montreal is the city with the highest unemployment rate in Canada. Montreal is also the city with the highest rate of poverty in Canada. The situation in Montreal is a national tragedy and the government has decided to forget Montreal. My question is the following: Why has the government not approached the governments of Montreal and of Quebec to initiate a special program to reverse this horrible situation in Montreal? Why not?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, I think that it is absolutely wrong when the hon. member for Notre–Dame–de–Grâce says that there is no agreement between the Government of Quebec and the Government of Montreal. I met the Mayor of Montreal on Friday morning. We already have two areas of Montreal where millions of dollars are being spent, in the east and the southwest. Of course, there is a problem of industrial infrastructure in Montreal. We are trying to change that. A month and a half ago, you had the announcement of $300 million for the Space Agency in the Montreal ara. Other announcements are imminent. Once again, I ask the hon. member to be honest. The situation in Montreal today is difficult, but it is not comparable to what it was in 1982.

[*English*]

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre–Dame–de–Grâce): Mr. Speaker, the situation in employment is worse now than it was in 1981–82 and that answer will not relieve the thousands of unemployed in Montreal at the present time.

One out of four Montrealers now lives below the poverty line. There are 192,000 more poor in Montreal than in all four Atlantic provinces. The government has a special development program for Atlantic Canada and for other regions in Canada. Why not such a special program for Montreal?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, I just said to the member that we have two special programs in the most hurt parts of Montreal, which are southwest Montreal and east Montreal. We will continue to work. We work with the province of Quebec. I heard that this province should

make a few announcements in May in its budget and we will make other announcements.

But we have to work with the reality. It is what we do. Nobody wants the layoffs and the job losses that we have in Montreal. We are working on it, but we have to work in such a way that those jobs will be permanent, will help Montrealers and the great city that Montreal has always been.

* * *

TRADE

Mr. Rod Laporte (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade.

Sometime after May 1, American wheat will begin entering Canada without restriction as a result of the free trade agreement. Regrettably, once this occurs the decision can never be reversed. This cause has been triggered partly because American subsidized grain sales have directly affected traditional Canadian markets in violation of the free trade agreement.

Will the government today advise the U.S. that American wheat will not come into Canada freely and that an action will be commenced against the U.S. for a violation of the free trade agreement under article 701.4?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, when the U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement was negotiated, Canada received an advantage because it was agreed that Canadian wheat and other grains would be eligible to be exported to the United States without impediment.

• (1500)

At the same time, American wheat and other grains would not be exported to Canada freely until such time as any subsidies received by American grain farmers with respect to American grains were at the same level as the assistance given by governments to Canadian farmers.

Now, after several years of the agreement, the situation changed with respect to oats, as I recall it, a year or two ago. American oats had been permitted to be exported to Canada under this arrangement. If American assistance for wheat is no greater than Canadian assistance in the coming year, American wheat would be eligible to be exported freely to Canada. Is there anything more fair than that? We have had the advantage, if anything, for the last two or three years in selling our wheat and other grains in the United States. If the American subsidy level decreases and becomes the same as the Canadian subsidy level, surely they are entitled to be able to sell their product up here in Canada. Could anything be fairer than that?

Mr. Rod Laporte (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre): That clause has been invoked because the United States has violated the free trade agreement. The Canadian Federation of Agriculture, the National Farmers' Union and Prairie Pools and others have all been calling on this government to act.

It is clear that U.S. subsidized grain sales have hurt our traditional markets and have violated the free trade agreement. When is this government going to finally stand by Canadian agriculture and give farmers the support it promised them when it announced the free trade agreement in the first place?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I have just explained how the free trade agreement worked to the advantage of Canadian farmers. The present estimates of support by government in both countries are still preliminary. This year, American levels of support may or may not be higher than Canadian levels of support. That is a different issue than the abhorrent American Export Enhancement Program which they devised to assist them in competing with the European community, which has an even more abhorrent system of subsidizing exports. While they are battling the European community, they are not paying sufficient attention to who their friends are. We certainly do not agree with that procedure, but with respect to the main question of the hon. member, we were treated very well under the free trade agreement. We have had the advantage and we will have to see what happens in the future.

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PRESENCE IN GALLERY

Mr. Speaker: I wish to draw to the members' attention the presence in the gallery of a parliamentary delegation from Hungary, led by Dr. Ibolya David, member of Parliament of the Hungarian Democratic Forum.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

* * *

POINT OF ORDER

COMMENTS DURING QUESTION PERIOD

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. During Question Period, my friend from Burin—St. George's made a comment which I think he would like the opportunity to withdraw.

Mr. Speaker: I have not heard complaints about the remark. The hon. member may be able to repeat it.

Hon. Roger C. Simmons (Burin—St. George's): Mr. Speaker, if I had said something which offended the right hon. member I would be the first to withdraw it. I would like to see *Hansard* to see exactly what I said. At the time, the right hon. member was saying that we did not support the United Nations and that is not true. We do support the United Nations. We do not support kowtowing to Bush.

Mr. Speaker: I will look at *Hansard* and examine the record, if there is one.

Mr. Jack Shields (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I heard distinctly what the member from Burin—St. George's said. He called the external affairs minister a liar twice. He should have the courage to stand up in his place and withdraw.

If the hon. member said that, he should withdraw. If the hon. member wants to see whether it appears in *Hansard*, I am prepared to wait.

There is no question that if it was said, it should be withdrawn.

Mr. Simmons: Clearly, I do not know what all the fuss is about. I called a lie a lie. If it is not parliamentary, I withdraw it.

Mr. Speaker: There are a lot of different ways to say things in here, but the *raison d'être* for a rule against unparliamentary language is a very simple one.

It is based on the fact that when it is used, it creates disorder. As a consequence we do not have free speech. That is why the rule is there, and hon. members have to support it.

It is not just for the Speaker to go through a list in Beauchesne and remind hon. members of what, from time to time, has been ruled unparliamentary.

In supporting it, if somebody has become excessive, a withdrawal has to be a complete and unequivocal withdrawal, or we are not supporting the convention. I would ask the hon. member to assure the House that his withdrawal is unequivocal.

Mr. Simmons: I thank you, Sir. The withdrawal is unequivocal.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. member.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PRIVILEGE

OFFICE OF THE MEMBER FOR RICHELIEU

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu): Mr. Speaker, I sent you a letter raising a problem, because my rights and privileges as a member were violated in an exceptional and unacceptable way last Sunday, that is yesterday.

In my absence, with no authorization or consent from me, my confidential files and everything I had in my office were taken. My office was plundered. It was opened without permission, without my giving the keys, without my staff being warned, without notifying me. All my documents and personal effects and those of my staff were taken away to another building, without my consent.

My rights as a member are in your hands. As Speaker of the House, will you let such a thing be done to me? I never received a notice from you to change my office. What I asked for in writing—I wrote to you a month ago—I never received a reply, except an acknowledgement of receipt. I therefore want to go over the facts, because I think it is not only a violation of my rights as a member of Parliament but also contrary to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms for people to raid a member's office without a warrant and without him being there.

I spoke to the person in charge of moving to tell him that I could not be there on the 3rd, that you were out of the country and that I did not agree with that waste of money. I therefore said that I would not take part and that I would contest the legality of expelling me from my office and spending $10,000 for nothing. And I said: When the Speaker gives me an order by letter, then I will know whether the Speaker of the House is there to represent not the three party whips but all members equally. Who can claim office space for me based on my seniority of a member first elected in 1984? No one, because the Bloc and independent members are not recognized.

The Speaker of the House must make this request. He must defend me. He did not do so as far as I can see. I want to know. I talked to Mr. Riedel, who is in charge of all physical arrangements on the Hill, on Friday and said to him, "On Monday, I will ask the Speaker of the House whether he will defend my rights as a member in the same way as others. We will wait till Monday." He said, "Very well." And he is supposed to be in charge of all physical arrangements. He agreed to wait until Monday to be able to talk with you. Now without warning, on Sunday morning, they moved, paying the movers, telephone installers and fax installers overtime. Everything was moved under special surveillance, it seems, with extra staff. Those are unacceptable expenditures! It was moved to another place on Wellington Street and I was even offered to have everything redone if I kept quiet—to have the carpets changed, to have painting done, extra walls put up and so on. I do not accept that.

• (1510)

I ask who authorized this move because I received no letter from you. If the authorization came from the Chair, well, you acted in a partisan way to the detriment of my rights and privileges as a member, Mr. Speaker.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker: First of all I listened very patiently to the hon. member whose office was moved from one to another. I am prepared to discuss the matter with the hon. member, or any other hon. members, but I have to advise the hon. member that it is not a question of privilege. He may or may not have a complaint. It is a matter of administration and there is quite a lot more to the story than we have heard and I am prepared to discuss that at another time, and that is the end of it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Plamondon: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry, but it is not a question of privilege. The matter is closed in this House.

Mr. Plamondon: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member on a point of order.

Mr. Plamondon: In that case, Mr. Speaker, forcing my door without my permission and taking my confidential files—how is that not a question of privilege and how are my rights—

Mr. Speaker: Once again, I am sorry, but it is not a point of order.

[*English*]

A point of order is something that rises out of the rules of this place. This is an administrative matter and will have to be settled one way or the other to the member's satisfaction or otherwise, but not in this Chamber.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

PETITIONS

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 39 petitions.

[*Editor's Note: See today's Votes and Proceedings.*]

VIA RAIL

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Madam Speaker, I have the privilege and the honour to present a petition signed by 173 Canadians. Most of the names were collected on the VIA run between Truro and Halifax a week and a half ago. The petitioners call upon Parliament to support the NDP plan to restore VIA Rail services, cut on January 15, 1990, maintain and where appropriate upgrade remote services on which many Canadians rely. They do not think train service is a laughing matter. They ask as well for a legislative mandate for VIA Rail, and to make available the resources it needs to become a modern passenger rail system in a class with those throughout the rest of the western world. This petition is also signed by a number of residents of Cape Breton who attended the Sydney East Richmond annual general meeting of the NDP.

[*Translation*]

CANADA POST CORPORATION

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Madam Speaker, it is my duty to present four petitions signed by citizens of my riding of Ottawa—Vanier who condemn the decision by Canada Post Corporation to close the franchise at 580 Rideau Street.

The petitioners maintain that this will inconvenience all customers in the area, especially all the retired people who live nearby and will be deprived of an essential service that they need.

For these reasons, the undersigned ask Parliament to call on Canada Post to review the decision to close station 23.

[*English*]

UKRAINIAN CANADIANS

Mr. Ross Harvey (Edmonton East): Madam Speaker, it is my honour to present a petition signed by many residents of the city of Edmonton, many of whom are descendants of original Ukrainian settlers. They wish to bring to the attention of the House—and I quote from the petition—"That during the First World War and after Ukrainian Canadians were unjustly interned in concentration camps, deprived of property and valuables, deprived of liberty of movement, and deprived of the right to vote." Therefore, these petitioners pray that the Parliament of Canada will pass a resolution acknowledging these injustices. That is all they ask, surely it is not too much.

[*Translation*]

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Douglas Young (Acadie—Bathurst): Madam Speaker, I have the honour today to present a petition from people who still oppose the Goods and Services Tax. These residents of Pont-Lafrance, Sheila and Pont-Landry in the Tracadie region still bear the unacceptable burdens imposed by the Goods and Services Tax.

[*English*]

CANADA POST

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the honour to present further petitions in addition to the thousands already tabled.

The petitioners are calling upon Parliament to ask Canada Post to honour Marie Sklodowska Curie by issuing a commemorative stamp on the occasion of the 125th anniversary of her birth, November 27, 1992, which I might add is also the 125th anniversary of Canada's birthday.

COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today and present quite a number of petitions from many parts of British Columbia. They come from communities such as Burnaby, Hundred Mile House, Surrey, Vancouver, Langley, Coquitlam, Pit Meadows, Vernon, Kelowna, Prince George and a number of other locations.

These petitions, which total about 1,040 names, ask the Minister of Communications and this government to oppose UNITEL's bid to compete with Canada's telephone companies in long distance telephone services.

They urge the Minister of Communications to consult with all affected parties, specifically those citizens living outside Canada's main urban centres, who will be impacted very severely by this form of deregulation.

Lastly, they urge the minister to hold local hearings in our communities before deciding the fate of Canada's telecommunications system.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Ross Reid (St. John's East): Madam Speaker, it is my honour and privilege today to present to the House a petition signed by thousands of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, which asks Parliament to do what it can to ensure that the many hundreds of Bulgarians who have come to Newfoundland and Labrador are not sent back to the uncertain state of that country and sure persecution. It asks that they be allowed the opportunity to build a life in Canada, not only for themselves and their families, but also for other Canadians.

I want to add that this is a petition that I personally support very strongly.

CANADA POST

Mr. Gilbert Parent (Welland—St. Catharines—Thorold): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present two petitions asking that Marie Sklodowska Curie be honoured for her scientific contributions to humanity.

This is a request made by many of my constituents and constituents of the Niagara Peninsula. I would ask that this House consider these two petitions in the name of my constituents.

* * *

[*Translation*]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, I move that all questions stand.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Shall the questions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS

The House resumed from Tuesday, March 26, consideration of the motion of Mr. Andre (p. 19027).

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing on a point of order.

Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Madam Speaker, I have a different point of order from those raised before and I will be as brief as I can.

This relates to the possibility of dividing Motion No. 30 into categories so that we can make an effective decision on each, because Motion No.30 is complex and contains several distinct proposals. I think it is not possible for members to give a yes or no answer to the question of whether this motion should be adopted. It is over 30 pages long and contains 64 clauses touching on virtually every aspect of the operations of the House.

• (1520)

I suggest dividing the proposals into perhaps five groupings: One, proposals to change the dates and hours of House sittings and to limit the debate on supply, the budget, the Throne Speech and so on; two, proposals to alter the operations of committees; three, proposals to amend the passage of government bills and government business including reduction in time of some speeches, to refer those bills to standing committees, to facilitate the use of closure and time allocation, to remove the right to divide on first reading, et cetera; four, proposals to override the denial of unanimous consent; five, proposals to change the conduct of Private Members' Business.

I would like to refer to Beauchesne, fifth edition, page 150, paragraph 415 where it states:

> (1) A motion which contains two or more distinct propositions may be divided so that the sense of the House may be taken on each separately. The Speaker has a discretionary power to decide whether he should divide a motion.

It should be noted as a precedent that in 1964 the Speaker make a landmark decision on that particular provision in Beauchesne when he decided to divide what was a short nine-line motion. At that time the House was seized with a motion which sought to change the Canadian flag and sought to enable the Union Jack to continue to be flown.

The Speaker at that time recognized that many members wished to say yes to parts of that motion and no to other parts of it. He relied on British practice and quoted one British Speaker from 1912, I believe, who said: "The rule of course is if any member feels embarrassed on voting on a resolution that the Chair shall revise the resolution in order that the member may if he wishes to vote yea on one part and no on the other not be embarrassed by having to vote yea or no on the whole of it".

In that particular case the Speaker of our House ordered the flag motion divided.

Since then the House has been offered many complex or complicated questions, including constitutional amendments for example, and often an accommodation is made among the parties to permit the proposal of a

series of amendments which would give members an opportunity to state their positions clearly.

The House has also considered amendments to Standing Orders which touch on one or more aspects of our House business. Today's motion though is unique in that it does not come from a committee study, where an opportunity exists to put forward concerns, and nor has their been an arrangement made among the parties to reach some accommodation with regard to voting.

It will not be possible for Motion No. 30 to be amended sufficiently to permit members to divide up the question for themselves and vote yes to those sections they support and no to others. The government, it is reported, will not entertain a long debate on this motion. It has been suggested that closure will be moved later this week.

If that is the case, it is unlikely that there will be an opportunity for more than one amendment to be presented. The two major parties will have the opportunity to have their views on the record; the government's view contained in the motion and the Official Opposition's view contained in its amendment. There will not be an opportunity for an official view to come from the New Democratic Party, from the Bloc Quebecois, from the Reform Party, from any of the independents or indeed any opportunity for government backbenchers to voice their concerns.

Unlike the experience of the House on constitutional issues, there is apparently no willingness in this House to accommodate those members by permitting a series of amendments to be put to the floor. My colleagues on all sides may agree with much that is contained in Motion No. 30. I agree with many of the 64 proposals, but I disagree vehemently with others, as do other members in the House.

How can we vote yes to something that contains so much with which we disagree and vote no to something that contains so many sensible proposals?

Madam Speaker, I would ask you to use your discretion, as is clearly possible in this circumstance, and consider the precedent of 1964. I ask you to divide Motion No. 30 into the five distinct motions I mentioned earlier and to permit each to be debated, amended and voted on separately.

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, I will not be long in my intervention, but I do want to indicate a few difficulties that I have with the proposal from the hon. member for the New Democratic Party.

To begin with, the relationship between hours of sitting and other rule changes respecting the manner in which legislation is dealt with and so on is not separate, they are related. One cannot, on the one hand, change the rules respecting the days, hours we sit and so on while, at the same time, carrying along those rules respecting length of speeches, length of debate that were appropriate for a different calendar. They are related. The separations that the hon. member suggests would be inappropriate because you cannot have one without the other.

I do acknowledge that there are some separations. The committee —part of it— does stand on its own from the other things. Certainly, if that were suggested as separate votes, I do not have any particular problem with that.

I do have to take this opportunity to make a couple of points. The hon. member said this is unique in terms of rule changes. He is inaccurate. In 1969, there were major rule changes brought forward. This is not a unique occurrence in that regard. They did not come from some other source, they came from the government.

The other problem I have is this. These rule changes are a result of negotiation discussions that go back over a year. I will go into some more detail on it during the debate. What we have is this phenomenon. I proposed, on behalf of the government, a major set of changes which I gave to the other major parties and said: "Consider them". They came back and said: "We do not like this, we do not like that, we do not like this". Some of what they did not like we said: "Okay, we will take that away even though having them would have been nice from the perspective of the government House leader". In other words, we negotiated. We negotiated and arrived at a final package that had a lot of give–up on our side and acceptances. We did not accept all their suggestions. I am not implying that. Nor did they say at all times that they agreed fully with the total package, but we did have a negotiation.

Now what the hon. member is really saying by his suggestion is we now want the opportunity to put into our pocket, as collected and received, all of those things we gave up in the negotiation, but we want the right to challenge and vote against, in as many different ways as possible, those things we did not. It is a kind of have your cake and eat it philosophy. It is the way they have been operating in committees, I am told, where in fact they sit down in a standing committee study, demand that the

report reflect their point of view, the committee accommodates their point of view and, at the end of the day, they say: "Fine, now that we have got that we are going out with a minority report".

Mr. Harvey (Edmonton East): Which one?

Mr. Andre: Which committee, the hon. member for Edmonton East says. I can give him a score of examples.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, order. The hon. minister is getting into debate at this point. The House has heard the points presented by the hon. member for Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing. I think the hon. minister has given us a good idea of where he stands and he will certainly have time to express more of those ideas in debate.

Is there one more point the hon. minister would want to make, but I would not want him to get into debate at this point?

Mr. Andre: I accept the Chair's admonition. My point in raising that in the first place is to accept that as a principle is to interfere significantly with our *modus vivendi* in terms of working with the House leaders in terms of negotiations. If the Chair is to accept their principle that everything must be broken up and they must have an opportunity to challenge each of the items separately, then one can see, I think, that there would be very little incentive for the government to negotiate and discuss these things. Rather it would be in our interest, since in fact we are going to end up with a debate and vote on each and every item, to develop our own proposal totally independently and bring it forward, present it to the House and say: "Okay, let us debate and decide ".

• (1530)

I think that would be a significant diminution, if you will, in the way we ought to operate. It is for that reason I would ask the Chair that the request of the New Democratic Party for the opportunity to separate all of the groupings they talked about not be considered.

It would challenge the fundamental way we operate. More than that, we cannot separate the calendar from those aspects of the rule changes which are designed to make it possible for us to accomplish what we need to accomplish within the context of the proposed calendar.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Madam Speaker, very briefly to the same point of order of my hon. friend from Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing.

Listening to my hon. friend, the government House leader, I want to make it clear that in no way was there any suggestion that the 64 different sections of the motion before us be broken up for obvious reasons in terms of the difference and the unrelated nature of each of these parts.

They are obviously inter-related. The point my hon. colleague was making was that there were five categories. Perhaps Madam Speaker, on behalf of the members you would identify two or three.

We are simply saying that to change the way not only this House operates but the way the members of Parliament do their work within the parliamentary precincts and within the general nature of their responsibilities is to acknowledge the fact that work done in committee, while it may in some way be related unquestionably to work being done in the House, is really a separate kind of behaviour.

We are talking about rule changes: what time of the day we should meet, how long a period we should have for presenting petitions and what time the House will adjourn for the day.

This set of changes, I think we all agree, is related in a very similar way. It has nothing to do with sizes of committees and members of committees and the way committees ought to operate.

Madam Speaker, we are simply asking you on behalf of all members of the House to provide an opportunity, not to debate on a whole number of different items and vote. I agree with my hon. colleague that discussions have taken place and so on.

On the other hand, he also agrees that perhaps there were two or three different major items on which the House could render a decision.

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Madam Speaker, I just want to briefly add to the arguments of my two colleagues.

When my colleague from Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing spoke, he made reference to the fifth edition. I have what appears to be the first edition in my hands, dated 1884. It says: "A motion which contains two or more distinct propositions may be divided so that the sense of the House may be taken on each separately".

It is clear that for well over 100 years, the right has been given to the Speaker to make that determination on behalf of members so that we can make an appropriate judgment on the various components of the motion before us.

I would think it would be in the best interests of all members of Parliament, and not just opposition members or independent members but government members as well to have the opportunity to say "yea" or "nay" on the particular groupings that have been suggested.

Mr. Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Madam Speaker, very briefly I just wanted to reply to two things that the government House leader said.

He said that I had mentioned that this was a unique motion. I did not say that. I merely said it was a very complex one, and I think he agrees with that.

I want to point out that he did suggest that at least the proposals relating to the operations of committees could be treated differently.

I think you have some indication of recognition of the point I was making at least with regard to one of those sets of proposals. I would urge you to consider the possibility of dividing them into five categories so that we can really address them properly rather than in a confused state all mixed together.

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Madam Speaker, I did not intend to speak but, as someone who has been a Whip now for two years and a bit, when somebody stands in the House and says that committees are not related to the hours of the House et cetera, I can simply say out of my experience they are intertwined.

One affects the other. Attendance, the hours of the House and all these things are intertwined in the same way that a large statute like the Bank Act which runs several hundred pages from time to time of revisions are intertwined.

We can go down a very slippery slope if we start breaking things up to the point where we pass something which on its own may make sense but has an impact on the other side. Certainly, these rule changes have been examined from the perspective of all three parties. They have been shared with large numbers of members of the House. They track back to the original parliamentary reforms package in 1984–85, and they are interconnected in a way that I did not want to leave unacknowledged in the House. Interconnection between these changes does, in fact, exist.

[*Translation*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: The Chair had undertaken to hear other points of order that could be presented during the consideration of these changes to the Standing Orders that govern us. I therefore listened very attentively to what first the hon. member for Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing and the hon. Leader of the Government in the House, the hon. member for Kamloops, the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan and the hon. member for Calgary South said to us.

[*English*]

The hon. member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan will allow me, I think, to wonder about the author and date of the book he cited. I do not think that Beauchesne was really part of our lives in those years, but nevertheless it was something quite interesting and certainly gave the chair the opportunity and the possibility of dividing things which are put to the House.

At this point I can tell the House that the Chair will look into it and will re-read all the arguments put to the House at this time. The Chair will come back with a ruling in the shortest possible time.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Calgary Centre.

Point of order, the hon. member for Kamloops.

Mr. Riis: Madam Speaker, just to seek clarification, when we were last here a case was made about whether proceeding with this debate would be appropriate.

Could you give some indication of when the Chair would be indicating its response to the arguments put forward at that time?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I can assure the hon. member that a response will be forthcoming as quickly as possible. We do not feel at this time that it should prevent us from proceeding with debate.

The hon. member for Calgary Centre.

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak to Motion 30 which introduces significant, and in my view long overdue, changes to the rules under which this House operates.

[*Translation*]

Parliament's task is to debate issues and to make decisions and the Standing Orders of the House guide this process. They govern the proceedings of the House and establish a framework in which the government carries out its legislative program and the opposition questions the government in an orderly way and hon. members debate issues and make decisions by a majority vote.

The modification to the Standing Orders before Parliament is the result of a year of discussions and great co-operation among the House leaders. It is the most important series of changes proposed in the modern history of the Canadian Parliament.

The proposals seek the following objectives: to improve Parliament as a forum for good relevant debate through the modernization of obsolete and vague rules, a greater contribution from members to the parliamentary process, but also recognition of their obligations towards their constituents.

[*English*]

I want to talk about the public environment. Parliament and politicians are held in disrepute, and there is a heightened and dangerous sense of cynicism in the public of Canada concerning this institution, about which we should all be concerned. People are demanding more contact with members of Parliament and more involvement. The days when they were satisfied to have their representative act in their best interests in Parliament are long gone. They want now interaction on a more regular, routine basis.

• (1540)

We hear it exemplified by demands for referenda and recall elections. Free vote is a part of it. We hear incessantly that people want to have more impact, more interaction and more influence on their members of Parliament. Some of that is healthy, some is not. The demand that we represent our parish, our constituency to the exclusion of every other interest is at this time quite dangerous because you hold a country like this together by accommodating the points of view in other parts of the country.

If we parliamentarians cannot see the other point of view, if a person like me from Alberta cannot appreciate the concerns of someone from Cape Breton, Newfoundland or Quebec and cannot participate or vote in concert with those colleagues, but is required by the exigencies of political pressure to say: "I vote in the affirmative only for those things which benefit Calgary and in the negative for everything else", then we are not serving the country very well. One cannot keep a country together like that, one cannot keep a family together like that. Yet we are hearing those demands.

I am not saying parliamentary rules are the source of all this public concern, but parliamentary rules cannot be excluded from it. Parliamentary actions and the reputation we have as parliamentarians are certainly a part of it. Therefore, we should approach the question of how we function, how the rules govern us, not just from the perspective of what it does for our partisan advantage in our adversarial system, but also what it does for the institution and for the country over the long haul.

The public is saying it wants more information and less rhetoric. It feels insulted in a lot of ways by what it sees here. I think we in Parliament have all experienced school kids visiting, sitting up in the gallery, watching us function and going away shaking their heads saying that if they acted like that in the classroom their teachers would discipline them severely.

I am not suggesting there is something wrong with this current group or that it is a reflection of who is on which side of the House, because it has been occurring frequently. Part of the problem is the way in which the public is informed. The vehicles used to inform the public do not work very well.

The March 25 CBC news item on the rule changes is perhaps a good example. It was clip-by-clip effort to give the viewers the message that the government is out to stifle Parliament. Nothing could be further from the truth. There were inaccuracies in that three-minute story, just plain factual inaccuracies. It is no wonder that no one understands Parliament when they are 50 feet off this hill.

We know many Canadians rely on television for their news. If they had to rely on that particular news story, they would have a very distorted view of what in fact is happening. Apart from the errors and lack of facts, there was a cynical and partisan tone. It simply reported and accepted the partisan response of opposition. No wonder the people are cynical.

Even on a non-partisan issue like this, only the base politics came through. We saw only the accusation that this was Fascist, stifling and Draconian. These kinds of shrill, loud adjectives when used bring us all into disrepute. It is something that you are going to see various members of the New Democratic Party objecting to; my condemnation of the use of those words. I want to ask them to reflect sincerely. If they believe that public debate helps and that their reputations as parliamentarians help when they go on television or in public for various reasons, do they really think using words like Fascist and Draconian brings respect on themselves or this institution? Is it is helping to bind this wounded country together, to generate jobs for people, or helping anybody in any way? I want to ask them to reflect on that sincerely before they so glibly defend that kind of thing.

We live in an adversarial system. The government proposes and Parliament disposes. There is the give and take, but taken to extremes and under the glare of television I wonder what we would do. It was Bismarck in the last century who said: "There are two things people should not watch being made, one is sausages and the other is laws." Well, like it or not, modern communication has the people watching laws being made. If we do not want to make them all sick to death of our democratic institutions we should bear that in mind as we perform in this Chamber and look at these things.

Mr. Riis: Harvey, you are turning us into a sausage factory.

Mr. Andre: There is my friend from Kamloops who participated in these discussions more intensely over the last couple of months, but was aware of them going back a year. He never once in private said to me that these are Draconian, Fascistic and would stomp on Parliament. Never once in our discussions did he use any such language. Sure, he did not like every clause, I acknowledge that, but he has to acknowledge that we made some changes to reflect—

Mr. Riis: Name one that we suggested. Name one that the NDP suggested.

Mr. Andre: We will name several, as a matter of fact, that were changed in reflection of the changes suggested. He knows that the day before his public utterances there was a three hour meeting in the office of my colleague, the parliamentary secretary. He knows that substantial changes were made then. He knows what he said privately at that time. He then walked out of that private meeting and said: "This is Fascistic, this is Draconian." Then, when my parliamentary secretary said: "Well, you know that in view of your statements we can no longer agree to those changes." He said: "I understand that." That is the root of the problem. You participate in good faith in negotiations and discussions and then at the opportunity for partisan advantage, for a shot on television, you have got to make sure you use the noisiest adjectives you can: "Draconian", "Fascistic", "stomping on Parliament". All the things that will get you on national television. You then sit down and say: "Is it not sad that we are brought into such disrepute as politicians."

Mr. Riis: It is not politicians, it is the Tories who are in disrepute.

Mr. Andre: Right. The editorial in today's *Ottawa Citizen* is I think instructive to the hon. member for Kamloops and to everybody else. I will just read a part of it:

> The juvenile antics and partisan performances of our elected politicians in the House of Commons sometimes make it very difficult for Canadians to care much about what goes on there.

Amen.

> And as our political leaders lose credibility they're diverting attention away from the seat of democracy by relying on commissions of appointed officials to address the woes of the nation that should be addressed right here, in Ottawa, on the Hill.
>
> In short, our elected leaders are making Parliament irrelevant.
>
> Thus it is difficult to understand all the opposition politicians' complaints and moans about the Commons rules changes recently introduced by Government House Leader Harvie Andre.

These reforms would do more to restore some credibility to the House and its occupants than another roving committee of so-called great Canadians could.

• (1550)

It goes on, Mr. Speaker, but I think it makes the point very well.

The Canadian political system can no longer tolerate that level of debate, that kind of language, the extreme shrill noisy level of debate, a level which I humbly suggest has sunk far too low with those last outrageous claims by the opposition parties, particularly the New Democratic Party. Canadians deserve a better opposition, not just opposing for the sake of opposing, which is what we are seeing here. They need more rational, intelligent opposition and analysis through better quality debates, more fair and technical review of legislation, through more pre-study and constructive committee work. That is what these reforms are all about, making us more relevant to the times, recognizing what Canadians have been asking for, better quality representation both in Ottawa in Parliament and in the constituencies in direct contact with the elector.

However, rather than that constructive and reasoned input Canadians are fed the standard pat, shrill claims from the outraged opposition.

Not once in the last several months during our almost daily discussions with the Liberals and the NDP have I heard about these objections. There was never a word about constitutionality, not a peep about the theory that we would only sit one day, no mention that the NDP will take these to court, not one word in all of those meetings.

It is offensive that they both actually contributed items to the package. How can they take such active part on the one hand and yet profess the extreme indignation on the other?

Our work with the opposition has a long track record and tradition. Just to go back over the history: Prior to March 1990, my predecessor, the present Minister of Transport, actually raised the issue. In March 1990, discussions on rule changes were held and I was present, as were the current leader of the New Democratic Party and the past House leader of the Liberal Party.

In July 1990, as a result of an all-party agreement, the House leaders travelled to the United Kingdom to review standing orders and discuss the British parliamentary practice. There were two representatives from the Liberal Party, there were three from the Conservative Party, and at the last minute the representative of the New Democratic Party had to cancel.

A package of proposals was assembled through my offices and on December 5 I wrote to the Clerk of the House indicating that with the approval of the three House leaders, we would ask the Clerks to provide expert assistance in writing into the language of our rules those proposed rule changes that were written out in more descriptive fashion in the proposal.

On December 20, 1990, we put forward an initial package with some degree of clarity to the opposition for its review and comment. On March 1 the House of Commons Clerk prepared a preliminary draft of the rule changes for review and discussion in a package. On March 19, after several discussions between them, the House leaders met and final discussions and negotiations were completed before caucus presentations on March 20.

On March 20 the New Democratic Party contacted the House of Commons Clerk, withdrawing approval for any further drafting assistance. On March 22 we filed the rule changes with the House of Commons at 2.15 p.m.

Every step of the way it was a fully co-operative process. There was no sneaking up with rule changes that had not been fully discussed.

That is not to imply there was approval with every single step. It is to say, as I said earlier, there were no surprises and there was no indication to me that these were Fascistic, Draconian or perhaps subject to court challenge, as is implied by the House Leader of the New Democratic Party.

What do they do in general? Key to the rule changes was the question of a calendar that would provide for more time for members of Parliament to be in their constituencies. Initially we had two proposals on the table, as a matter of fact. One proposal would have us go to a four-day week, with not sitting on Fridays. The other proposal was for a program that basically said one week a month would be free for members to do other things.

In the end it was agreed, particularly by the New Democratic Party, but of members from my party from western Canada who also felt quite strongly that the one week off a month was the preferable option because of distances involved, and the difficulty they had in getting back to their constituents and then back to Ottawa.

That was what was proposed. I should say that leading up to that, I had asked for a little bit of research to be done. It was done by the Library of Parliament. The research was on what other jurisdictions around the world do. What do other democracies do? How long do other legislatures and parliaments and congresses and so on sit in other countries? It was an interesting piece of research.

Australia sits an average of 66 days a year. Its parliament sits 66 days a year; 89 per cent of the bills introduced by the government are passed, for an average of about 14 per day of government business.

Denmark sits an average of 106 days a year; 89 per cent of government bills are passed, for an average of seven bills per day of government business.

Canada sits, although the calendar provides for 175 days, but because of unscheduled non-sittings, an average of 155 days a year over the last 10 years. Only 56 per cent of government bills are passed, for an average of one bill per government day of business.

France sits 149 days. Western Germany sits 17 days. Japan sits 43 days. The Netherlands sits 100 days. New Zealand sits 100 days. Norway sits 180 days.

There is the first of that list, countries that actually sit more days than Canada. Spain sits for 88 days. Sweden sits for 134 days. The United Kingdom sits for 170 days. There is a unitary state where they have two levels of government. They pass an average of two bills per government sitting day, compared to the one per sitting day in Canada, so they get twice as much legislation through than we do.

The United States sits 144 days. We sit longer than the U.S. Congress. The European Community sits 65 days. In other words, only Norway and the United Kingdom actually sit longer than Canada's parliament in terms of sitting days per year.

If somebody could demonstrate that in fact we have better laws, that we are more democratic than the rest of the democratic world, then I think a case could be made for even sitting longer. But with a country this size, this diverse, to suggest the best thing we could do is keep members of Parliament here in Ottawa as many days a year as possible is absurd. It is an absurd proposal. We know that our provincial governments, many of which pass just as many pieces of legislation as we do, do not sit anywhere near as long as we do. Everywhere from New Brunswick at 42, to Manitoba at 98. Quebec is at 74, Ontario is at 84 days a year. Nova Scotia sits 62 days a year.

In the context of this national constitutional debate we are having, members of the legislative assemblies, national assemblies, provincial parliaments, are in their constituencies talking to their constituents, interacting with them.

• (1600)

Members of Parliament, who have a national mandate, are not able to be in their constituencies with the same frequency, with the same opportunities for interacting. Is that really something we should applaud, underline, repeat, particularly when we have examples of other legislatures around the world which manage to do more business in less time? If somebody can demonstrate that they are less democratic than we are and that somehow their people are worse off than we are, then I would like to hear those arguments.

In proposing the rule change for one week off a month, basically we will be sitting the same number of hours; more, as a matter of fact, because there will be an additional hour a day added to the calendar. So, effectively, on an hourly basis we will not be sitting less.

The new calendar will give more time to members of Parliament, particularly those from the more remote regions who cannot easily get to their constituencies and back in a two-day weekend. It will give them time to be with their constituents, to interact in a manner that Canadians are increasingly demanding.

Some have suggested that fewer Question Periods are somehow going to significantly weaken our democratic system. I offered to extend Question Period time a little bit, but that was not received.

I do not want to get into this debate too far, but I think it would be instructive to have, perhaps, some independent observers, perhaps from political science departments, to reflect on the degree to which Question Period helps or hurts our democracy and democratic institutions.

We cannot deny that it is an important check on potential abuse of government power; or deny that it is an important vehicle for members to bring forward the concerns of their constituents. But we cannot deny that the manner in which we conduct Question Period brings disrepute on all of us. It is more theatre than exchange of information. We adopted it from the United Kingdom, the mother of all Parliaments.

To give an example of the difference, twice a week for 15 minutes each day, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom must be in the House. On average, in that 15 minute period, 20 questions are asked and answered.

In the first 20 minutes today—and I was looking at the clock—there were five questions, many of them lead questions from the Official Opposition.

That is not a total measurement or the be all and end all of what Question Period should be. However, the House Leader of the Official Opposition, on a point of order, raised the question of whether we could not improve the efficiency of Question Period by reducing—he referred primarily to the length of the answers, but acknowledged that, perhaps, the length of the questions might be examined as well. At that point, I did say I would welcome that discussion. I would welcome the opportunity to have some appropriate discussions. Maybe I would want witnesses the next time we get together to discuss rule changes in private. Perhaps a committee of this House could look at the rules of Question Period to see whether we could not make it more effective than it is. That is something that could be done.

I dispute absolutely the accusations made that somehow we are less than democratic because we might have 20 less Question Periods a year. The suggestion by some that 20 less Question Periods a year makes us less democratic is just absurd. You wonder if they could be watching Question Period. I can understand, from some journalist's point of view, that Question Period is pretty useful. A journalist can get up, go to the office, clean off his or her desk, come over and watch the show for a while, get the story, go back and write it up and be be back in the press club having a beer and the day's work is done.

If the journalist doesn't have Question Period, he or she is going to have to dig for a story. So I can understand some objections. But I do not understand anybody who says in all sincerity that we are well served by the way our Question Period operates, and that somehow we are more democratic.

If a person is ultra-partisan, yes maybe; but if he or she is really looking at the respect the institution should have if it is going to guide this country into the next century, I don't think anybody in all sincerity would say that we couldn't look at some changes. I hesitate to add that these rule changes do not affect Question Period in any of the ways that I have been talking about; that is something that we will need to consider later.

There are rules to improve debates; allowing more speakers by reducing time limit on 20-minute speeches after five hours versus eight hours. Now we have half-hour speeches, or 20 and 10 for the first eight hours. The new rules will be for the first five hours and then we will switch to 10-minute speeches. It is going to force a longer speaking list and more concise arguments; it will be a better quality and more lively debate.

The fact that this place empties out after Question Period and nobody pays much attention to the debate ought to be a cause of concern to all of us. Anything we can do to sharpen up the debate should be welcomed.

It is interesting to look at other legislatures and what they do to sharpen up debate. There are some interesting lessons that we could learn.

This change allows the Whips of each party to split the time allotted so that they can accommodate the members within their own caucus in a better way than is possible now. It promotes the objectives of the McGrath commission report, such as the question and comment period we added last time, as well as the committee changes, the five envelopes to develop expertise in the membership in each envelope, and to allow members to focus on their own area of expertise.

There is a clear distinction between legislative and standing committees. The intent of the McGrath commission report was that legislative committees would be different from standing committees. They would exist temporarily to handle legislation. However, they have become a kind of duplicate of the standing committee and have gone off on national tours and what have you with legislation. That was not the intent. In a sense, it is a contempt of Parliament when they do that, because when legislation passes at second reading in this House it has received approval in principle—the principle is approved. The role of the committee is not to debate again whether the legislation is appropriate in principle, by touring the country and hearing from groups about the principle, but rather to look at all the details.

Earlier the opposition was concerned that we were going to exclude the ability of groups to appear before these committees in the language used, that we would talk about technical witnesses. It was not intended to exclude in that sense and it will not be used in that sense. I think the amendments to the language are appropriate. The intent is to signal clearly what the McGrath commission had recommended, and to which everybody agreed, that a legislative committee should act a like legislative committee and that people appearing before the committee as witnesses should be there to critique the provisions of a specific bill, not the principle of the bill. Therefore, they should be knowledgeable in that sense. We think that is an improvement.

The envelope system will permit more government consultation on policy development. It will improve consultation prior to drafting, hopefully making for better laws.

We are providing the rules to experiment with television in committees, giving the same access as print, following the recommendation of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections.

We are allowing, formally, minority reports to be tabled in the House. We are also allowing the member to speak to it on the floor of the House, which is a change.

• (1610)

Private Members' Business will adopt the 21st report of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, another example of the government acting on the McGrath commission report. There will be only three hours of debate before a vote, instead of five, with an extra hour added on Wednesday to facilitate the substitution of Private Members' Business which we know will be helpful.

I have not gone into all the details. The parliamentary secretary, the member for Peace River will in the course of his debate be more specific on the details.

Let me say that the work of my parliamentary secretary, the member for Peace River, has been extraordinary in this whole exercise. Indeed, he has followed a long tradition in this regard.

He was a member of the McGrath commission and as a result is very familiar with the rules. He feels very intensely—as intensely as I or any other member of the House—about the importance of these rules and this institution operating in a business-like fashion. He has done an extraordinary job, and I want to say in this public way how much I appreciate the work he has done. In a very real sense, these changes would not be here but for the work he has done in this regard.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Andre: Madam Speaker, we live in an extraordinary public environment today where all politicians, particularly those at the federal level, are held in disrepute.

I saw some public polling data the other day which asked people in every province of this country which government they felt closer to, the provincial government or the federal government. Every province was basically the same. About 12 per cent felt closer to the federal government and 78 or 80 per cent felt closer to their provincial governments.

Mr. Milliken: That's because they've had a Conservative government for six years.

Mr. Andre: I heard the member for Kingston and the Islands say it is all due to the fact that one party is in office at this time. I hope that was said in jest. I hope he feels that we do have a sincere, genuine, real problem in this country with respect to how people treat and feel about this institution, and how they feel about us. I hope he shares my view that that is very much a part—not the total—of the constitutional problems, the lack of unity that is evidencing itself throughout this country.

I hope he feels, as I do, that it is important that we not trivialize these debates over rules and this debate in the House of Commons by excessive partisanship and extreme language about motives.

I hope he feels that we do not need any more the extremes of our adversarial system. What we need is more evidence to show to the Canadian public that we can work together, that in the end, we have an interest first and foremost in this Parliament as opposed to our particularly partisan advantage.

These rule changes were negotiated in good faith. I outlined the history of what happened. There was every indication that there was a high level of consensus and agreement. That is why we proceeded with them and that is why we are proceeding them now.

In a sense, these reforms are stage two of parliamentary reform. The McGrath report was stage one. This is not the be all and end all. I think we need a stage three to reduce the particularly bad and damaging aspects of our adversarial system.

We need to do this with some urgency. We need to recognize that we have a responsibility to this institution and I hope, pray and to a degree expect that after some genuflection towards our partisan instincts, goodwill and common sense will prevail. We will deal with these rules in some reasonable fashion, have them in place and the country will judge and I think see that they work a little better than the rules they are replacing. Hopefully, that will give us the energy to carry on with phase three.

[*Translation*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 38, it is my duty to inform the House of the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment: the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier—Official Languages; the hon. member for Edmonton East–The environment; and the hon. member for Saint–Léonard–The economy of Montreal.

We continue the debate with the hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond.

[*English*]

Mr. David Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): Madam Speaker, much has been said by the government House leader, but I wanted to refer to a number of passages which I think will clarify some points for members on both sides.

I rose in my place as the opposition House leader and indicated the following to the government leader as well as my colleagues. I wish to quote from those remarks. This is from *Hansard* February 25, 1991:

> This is the first time that I have been called upon as opposition House leader to co–operate with the government in arranging the business of the House. I want to make it perfectly clear that I hope I shall be in a position to provide this kind of co–operation on most occasions.
>
> It should be noted, however, that co–operation is very much a two–way street. It is my intention to approach discussions about House business as my predecessors have done in a reasonable and understanding manner, and I expect that the leader of the government in the House will do the same.
>
> While the underlying assumption in parliamentary democracy is that the majority shall in the end prevail, it is essential as a facet of the process that the minority has the right to express its views in full. This House represents all of the people of this country, including the 57 per cent who did not vote for the government in the last federal election.

I quote those words because we, as the Official Opposition, have attempted at every opportunity to be reasonable, to be pragmatic, to try to facilitate what we believe to be the important business of the House. What are some concrete examples of that? We agreed with the government on the setting of the budget debate. It needed a consent order from this House, which it received from my party and, if I may indicate, co–operation was also forthcoming from the New Democratic Party.

There was speedy passage of the borrowing bill. I believe, if my memory serves me correctly, and I am sure hon. members opposite will jump to their feet and correct me if I am not, it was I who indicated in our discussions that perhaps an extension of the hours might be appropriate in order to give members of my party as well as others an opportunity to debate in full the contents of that particular piece of legislation.

We co–operated in expediting the passage of the agricultural bill, which our critics debated very vigorously in committee, as well as on the floor of the House of Commons. However, due to the pith and substance of that bill they thought it very appropriate that it have passage in order to provide farmers who are in desperate need with some form of financial assistance in the foreseeable future.

In the expediting and completion of the Parliament of Canada Act, my predecessor, the member for Ottawa—Vanier, did a superb job on behalf of our party. We again demonstrated to members opposite our willingness to co–operate and give quick passage of that particular piece of legislation once we received the amendments from the upper House.

• (1620)

The Financial Administration Act was another piece of legislation where members of the Official Opposition co-operated with the government. The passage of the Bretton Woods agreement amendments was another piece of legislation we adhered to.

With the legislation that has come forward from the government, we as the Official Opposition have been reasonable, have been respectful of the majority opposite. We have stated our case and in many instances we have lost the battle in terms of the democratic debate and subsequently, of course, the vote.

I think the record has to show that, notwithstanding the co-operation, we did demonstrate clearly and unequivocally on the floor of the House of Commons that when it came to the proposed rule changes, since assuming my position on or about February 1, 1991, and thereafter in subsequent meetings both privately and public, I have indicated quite clearly to the government members that in no way could we agree with the contents of the proposed rule changes. That is not to suggest that there were not discussions which followed thereafter. In fact, there were discussions that followed thereafter. There was a working committee to look at some of those proposed new changes.

My colleague from Kingston and the Islands has done a superb job, not only with regard to the rule changes, but other matters as it affects the business of this House.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Dingwall: I had some discussions with the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader. I am a bit surprised and in some respects quite offended at the government House leader suggesting and implying that somehow we consented to these rule changes and then at the ninth hour backed off. That is not the case at all.

We said early on, clearly and unequivocally, that we were opposed. Yes, there would be some discussions that would take place with this working committee, but let it be said once and for all that there was no agreement either by myself nor by my predecessor with regard to these proposed rule changes.

I think the record ought to show that very, very clearly, so that no member in this House can have the interpretation which I believe the government House leader tried to imply in his remarks.

I note that he is not here and perhaps it is not appropriate for me to say that in his absence. Nevertheless, I say that in all sincerity.

The presentation by the government House leader endeavours to present the government's amendments to the Standing Orders as being necessary to make Parliament, as he says, "more efficient". The minister might well have borne in mind the words of Professor Franks, the founding chair of the Canadian Study of Parliament Group when he wrote, and I quote:

> Reform of Parliament is not simply a technical matter of making Parliament more effective and more efficient, although it is often presented in those terms. Reform is also a question of the purposes for which political power is to be used in Canada and how various interests and viewpoints succeed and fail to influence political choices and outcomes. The balance between Parliament and government affects the balance between an emphasis on the particular and on the general welfare. There are many collective public goods that can only be provided by government and will only be adequately ensured if a strong voice defending a general public interest is heard in politics. Fundamental and often competing goals of equality, freedom, justice, private and public goods and economic growth and stability must be balanced in the political process.

The government's proposals are heavily weighted towards what it considers to be parliamentary efficiency and effectiveness. The government, unfortunately, has lost sight of the whole picture. There is more to Parliament than the legislative efficiency of its workings.

First, Parliament provides, through the electoral process, the political legitimacy of any government. Second, it provides government with the resources necessary for governing: the authority, the funds, the dollars and the cents if you will. Third, Parliament exists to make the government behave, to be the public's watchdog. Fourth, it is an important function of Parliament to provide an alternative government, that is, to enable the opposition to present its case to the public and to the country. Fifth, Parliament provides a forum for the development of political leadership. Finally, Parliament provides a focus for political communications when its discussions express the mind of the people, informing both society and government of grievances and problems.

There are many more expectations of Parliament than the processing of government legislation. It was the late Right Hon. John George Diefenbaker who put it so well when he said: "Parliament is not a sausage factory".

The government is presenting its package of so-called reforms less than five years after the House embarked on what the Hon. James McGrath called the most ambitious attempt to pursue major and comprehensive reform in the more than 100 year history of the Canadian House of Commons.

Perhaps Professor Franks' more realistic view on the subject commends itself to the House today when he said:

> The record of reforms of the past decades is not one of unblemished success—Many reforms have not accomplished their stated objectives, while others have had unanticipated and undesirable consequences. Reforms that are not solidly grounded in reality are not likely to succeed. Quite the reverse, they are likely to create unlikely and unreal expectations which cannot be met. The resulting failures lead to disillusionment, pessimism, and a loss of legitimacy for the public and for the participants. Constant reform can become as much a habit as immobility and can be as inappropriate a response to problems.

It is with this in mind that I question the appropriateness of the government presenting this package of major changes to our procedure at this time. There has been no general blockage of the legislative mills in recent years. There has been no major blockages of these legislative bills or statutes that have come before us. Even the most offensive and most unpopular bills have been quite readily forced through the House using the existing rules we now have. Nor do I hear any crying out by the populace that their members of Parliament do not spend enough time with them. To the contrary, most of us find that our electors expect us to spend most of our time here in Ottawa attending to the affairs of the nation.

Quite frankly, I suspect that the government's real motivation in presenting this package at this time is merely a matter of what the members of the Cabinet perceive to be convenience. Ministers of the Crown are irked by having to attend the House and by having to answer for their inadequacies. Madam Speaker, I do not have to inform you of the numerous inadequacies on the front bench of that side. By having to report daily to the public who employs them, Parliament is an irritation to these ministers of the Crown. In presenting this package of rule changes, ministers of the Crown are seeking relief.

We, on this side of the House, will not allow Parliament to become a subcommittee of Cabinet. We will not allow that.

The government forgets that the only source of its legitimacy is the House of Commons. It will find that its efforts to denigrate the institution further will only diminish what little public support it has left. It will soon be reminded of the wisdom of that old folks saying: "If it ain't broke don't fix it".

• (1630)

Let us turn now to the specific proposals. First, there is the proposed new parliamentary timetable. There are two facets to the government's proposals, a revised parliamentary calendar and a revised daily sitting times.

Essentially the government is proposing that the House adopt an annual calendar that would see it sit for eight fewer weeks of the year. Eight fewer weeks of the year. The normal Christmas, Easter and summer adjournments would be lengthened. In addition to the mid-trimester breaks in the November and February, the House would have weeks off in May and in October. This would reduce the number of sittings per year to about the number common in the post-second World War period. It is interesting to look at the history of the House calendar to assess whether the government's proposals are much of an improvement to that time.

This is a matter that has gone through many changes. The one constant has been that the House, once called into session, has sat Monday through Friday. Until about 30 years ago, standing committees often met on Saturdays, and for the first 40 years after Confederation, a session typically began in January or February, and continued into the spring, usually until late May or June.

Usually the House would adjourn as a result of a government motion for a week or two to enable members to go home for Easter. On occasions, sessions would begin in November or December, in which case the government motion would provide a few weeks adjournment at Christmas.

On a number of occasions the usual spring prorogation was forgone in order to permit certain committee work to proceed, and the House adjourned pursuant to government motion over the summer.

Earlier in this century, the pressure of business led to late autumn openings of the session becoming more common, with a Christmas adjournment on government motion becoming the norm.

During World War II, and in the post-war years, sessions became longer and adjournments at Christmas, Easter and for the summer, on the basis of a government motion became a source of frustration because of their unpredictability. As early as 1947 there were proposals to establish a regular parliamentary calendar, but these were not acted upon. By the 1960s it was not unusual for the House to sit into August.

The adoption of the present supply system in 1968 with trimesters built into the calendar gave rise again to proposals for a set calendar for sittings. But the guessing game about Christmas, Easter and summer adjournments continued, and on occasion, such as Christmas in 1971, the normal adjournment was missed altogether. It took the long, acrimonious, pointless debates on the question of a summer adjournment in 1980 and 1981 to cause the House finally to act. It has been the conventional wisdom that it was the government that wanted to keep the House sitting to pass legislation and that the opposition wanted it to adjourn.

It is even said that for many years, Mackenzie King resisted improving the air conditioning in the Chamber because he thought the hot and humid Ottawa weather in June and July acted as a legislative catalyst.

This conventional wisdom, however, is based entirely on the wrong-headed, simplistic and anti-democratic view of Parliament as a legislative sausage factory. Any government as slap-happy over closure as this government naturally would be happy to keep the House open even less.

There is that much less time for the opposition to call the government to account. There would be fewer Question Periods to probe the government's inadequacies. There would be fewer opposition days to criticize the government and to put forward ideas. There would be less time for debate and discussion designed to inform the public. I would remind you that the public wish to be informed of all the facts, coming both from the government as well as opposition.

When the House sits less often, it is not the legislative function, it is the watch-dog function that is diminished. The bureaucracy gets its legislation and the public gets the wool pulled further down over its eyes. Ministers of the Crown then have the opportunity to vacate Ottawa and do what they do best, or what they think is best, and that is to be political.

The government makes the argument that members can better serve their constituents by spending more time with them.

If members are to understand fully what their constituents think about the issues of the day or what issues are of particular interest in their own regions, they obviously must spend a great deal of time in direct contact with their electors.

The present parliamentary calendar combined with the excellent facilities made available to members already guarantees that any conscientious member can keep himself or herself fully informed about the issues in their constituency.

Members have always had free postal privileges and for more than 20 years, free telephone privileges. In addition, members have up to 62 round trips by air each year that permits them frequent travel between Ottawa and their constituencies.

An effective member of Parliament does not need an additional eight weeks a year in the constituency to improve upon his or her services. What is needed is the opportunity to pursue constituents' problems or grievances both through private communications with the government and its agencies and through parliamentary processes, including questions, debates, private members' proposals and others.

A further eight-week reduction in the time that Parliament sits can only serve to diminish a member's ability to serve his or her constituency. The government is proposing to give members more time to hear about problems, while on the other hand less opportunity to do anything about these problems.

I heard the government House leader refer to the fact that members wanted to spend additional time with their constituents. I think what members of the general public would want, as was so ably demonstrated during the discussion with regard to the goods and services tax, is not necessarily for members of Parliament to spend more time with their constituents, but to listen to their constituents and thereafter act on their behalf. That is what they want their members of Parliament to do.

The ability of the House of Commons as a whole to call the government to account is also being reduced. The reduction of the normal annual sitting time by eight weeks means that there are 40 fewer days during which the government is obliged to deal with the Question Period. There will be 40 fewer days in which ordinary citizens' petitions may be presented to Parliament.

There will be 40 fewer days in which emergency debates to deal with urgent national development may be proposed, and there will be 40 fewer days in which it is likely that committees will be able to find quorums in order to pursue their business.

There will be 40 more days each year in which the government will be able to function in semi-secrecy. There will be 40 more days for the government to pursue its own hidden agenda, whatever it may be, and 40 more days for the government to escape the public eye and the scrutiny, if you will, of the national media.

The government asserts that its proposed eight fewer weeks a year is designed to make members of Parliament more effective. In fact, this proposal can have no effect other than to make members of Parliament less effective. It represents a 20 per cent dilution of the focus of parliamentary work, and it represents an attempt in my view and in the view of my party of an unpopular government trying to hide its misbehaviour from the people of Canada.

It is not content with reducing the time that the House sits. The government also proposes to make it more difficult for members to be effective when the House is permitted to sit. It proposes to add hours of sitting. That will reduce the time that members have to make adequate preparation for debate, diminish the amount of time available for committee meetings and erode the amount of time available for members to perform the very constituency related duties that the government claims it is so concerned with.

Until very recently, changes in the sitting hours of the House was very slight and came very slowly. After Confederation, the House sat at 3 p.m. on Monday through Friday and since most members lived well over a day's journey from Ottawa, Saturdays were often used for committee meetings.

This was not as leisurely an approach as it appeared because the House did not have automatic time of adjournment and frequently sat into the small hours of the morning. Nonetheless, it left mornings free for constituency work or in the case of ministers, departmental work and members could find the time for a fulsome and unhurried Victorian lunch before settling in for the day's debates. That was years ago. Some members at that time complained that the rigours of late night sittings left them in no condition for the next day's work, but the hours of sitting were unchanged for well over 40 years.

• (1640)

In 1906 the hour of meeting was advanced to 2 p.m. and Wednesday night sittings were eliminated. For 85 years the institutionalized Wednesday evening off has been invaluable to members for meeting their constituents, for dealing with many other non-parliamentary obligations and in the case of those who have brought their young families to Ottawa, for giving them at least one night in seven of something approaching a normal family existence.

For another 20 years the House did not have an automatic adjournment hour, although there was a working arrangement under which the government would usually move the adjournment around 11 p.m.

For the 40 years after World War II there was frequent experimentation with the sitting hours, and most significant and enduring of which was the replacement of Friday evening sittings with Friday morning sittings in order to enable the majority of members to travel to their constituencies for the weekends.

Finally in 1982, all of the often disruptive and counter-productive evening sittings were replaced by morning sittings.

Now the government is proposing to add an hour on a day of government business to each sitting. It is doing this by asking the House to sit earlier on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays and later on Wednesdays and Fridays.

There are some questions as to the validity of replacing days with hours that will be raised later. First, one might take note of the ill-advised proposals for Wednesday evenings and Friday afternoons.

As mentioned earlier, Wednesday evenings have been kept clear of House sitting for 85 years. This has been a recognition that members of Parliament do have extra-parliamentary duties or family responsibilities that require at least one week night to be kept free. Wednesday has virtually for the entirety of this century been institutionalized as the evening embassies, interest groups, regular visiting groups have planned for years ahead to have various events scheduled for that particular evening.

Now the government proposes to create this unnecessary chaos. No doubt there are bureaucrats perhaps in the Prime Minister's Office or elsewhere or some other place who cannot envisage members of Parliament being required in Ottawa some place other than Parliament Hill probably because they themselves are restricted in their undimensional existences.

The proposal to extend the hours on Fridays is even more of a surprise since the present sitting arrangements for Friday are entirely the product of the Conservative backbenchers who a few years ago proposed sitting at 10 a.m. on Fridays and adjourning at 3 p.m. in order to facilitate members keeping constituency engagements on Friday evenings.

The government claims that it needs these additional hours to replace the legislative time it is losing by sitting eight fewer weeks in a year. One might well marvel at the ignorance of the way the House functions on the part of the bureaucrats in the Privy Council Office. Sausage makers may be judged on the number of bangers per hour but legislators think in terms of days and weeks. This proposal I suggest is a foolish government miscalculation and ought to be dropped.

One must not diminish or dismiss so lightly the application of this principle to the so-called opposition days, which are really government days allotted to the business of supply, to permit the opposition to choose the topic for debate. Part of the government's proposal is that the number of so-called opposition days be reduced from 25 to 20. The government argues that the additional sitting hours compensate for the lost days. In fact, the proposal reduces the number of issues that the opposition may raise before being compelled to vote the government the money it requires and needs.

The business of supply is the essential business for which the Crown summons Parliament and the principle of—and I quote— "grievance before supply" is absolutely central to parliamentary democracy. The opposition day system is the main vehicle for the maintenance of this principle and it is absolutely unacceptable for the government to attempt, in the guise of making Parliament more efficient, to bring about a major erosion of the exercise of this principle by reducing the number of grievances that the opposition may raise by some 20 per cent.

There is an even more insidious move by the government buried in those proposed rule changes; that is the proposal that if the government uses its majority to stop the House from sitting when the rules normally require it to sit, the number of opposition days is further reduced. In other words, if the government used its majority to force an adjournment from the end of March to the middle of June, it could do away with virtually all the supply days. That is at the very time that the Main Estimates, the government's principal spending plan for the year, is before the House.

I ask you, Madam Speaker, is that fair? Is that just?

Mr. Peterson: They don't want democracy to work.

Mr. Dingwall: The government is proposing to give itself a vehicle for preventing the House of Commons from giving any consideration at all to its main spending plan.

This strikes at the very purpose of calling Parliament into session at all.

Earlier this year we proposed to the government a modification of the supply rules whereby the allotment of supply days would be determined, not by the calendar but by the nature of the estimates, the nature of the demand for supply that the government at any given time had before Parliament. We felt that this would give the government some much needed flexibility, while protecting the right of Parliament to examine the estimates and to "grievances before supply".

Our proposal disappeared into the great bureaucratic maw, and what came out instead was a proposal that would diminish the absolutely fundamental parliamentary activities.

This is totally unacceptable.

Thus, we see that the government's parliamentary timetable, presented as a vehicle for efficiency and effectiveness, is in fact just another power grab, just another attempt to reduce the means for holding the government to account to Parliament and through Parliament to the people of Canada.

This desire to silence the opposition is reflected not only in the timetable proposals but also in a series of proposals regarding the length of speeches and debates.

Arguing that the reduction in annual sitting days ought to bring about a corresponding reduction in the number of days that are devoted to the already limited-by-rule debates, the government proposes to reduce the debate on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne from eight days to six days.

In its drafting the government has also eliminated the opportunity for the opposition and for a third party to move a second amendment or subamendment, thereby eliminating yet two more opportunities for the confidence of the House in the government to be tested.

The address debate, more colloquially known as the throne speech debate, is a unique event in a session in that it gives members virtually unlimited scope to raise in Parliament all issues that they consider worthy of attention and action.

The session opens with the Speech from the Throne by the Governor General in which the government's priorities are outlined. Government backbenchers then propose an address in reply, thanking the Governor General for his or her speech. The opposition proposes amendments to the address in which issues that it deems require different or greater attention are raised. By the end of the debate, members have had a wide opportunity to deal in general with the state of the nation and are ready to get down to specifics.

In a House which has grown to 300 members, this was a real opportunity for backbenchers in all political parties to come to the House and to express their views during the throne speech debate on a variety of issues, some national, some regional and, yes, some which were of particular significance to their constituency. I recall that in 1980 as a backbencher when we were in government having that opportunity to express the concern of my constituents. It was an opportunity in which I participated and I would recommend very strongly to members of Parliament, of all political parties, that they should also participate. But by reducing the number of days you are prohibiting the number of members of Parliament who have legitimate concerns, not partisan, testy issues where barbs are thrown back and forth, but a real opportunity to lay before their colleagues and members of Parliament real issues of substance and great concern.

• (1650)

I suggest at a time when our country is debating the very structure of what we wish to have in the future, by removing this opportunity for members of Parliament, it will not add in any substantive way to greater understanding, or appreciation of the regions and of the different peoples who make up this great country.

Originally there was no time limit to the address debate and in the first few years after Confederation, the address was sometimes adopted after only one day. The address in the early days was a lengthy one, sometimes with many paragraphs referring to specific government proposals in the Speech from the Throne. These were voted on separately, and amendments were infrequent.

Early in this century the address changed to a single paragraph expressing thanks for the speech and amendments commenting on the inadequacies of the government became more common. The address debate also became lengthier, culminating in a 26-day marathon in 1926 that had to be ended by closure. Originally amendments to the address were not automatically considered non-confidence items and at least twice in 1899 and as late as 1951 amendments were accepted by the government.

In 1959, however, Mr. Speaker Michener ruled that amendments had to directly challenge the government's policies. After the 1926 fiasco pressure mounted for a limitation on the length of the address debate and the establishment of a framework for consideration of amendments.

The present system was adopted in 1960. In recent years governments have drifted away from annual sessions with a result that the present government has now been in office for almost seven years but has permitted the completion of only three address debates.

Thus for years on end members have been deprived of this valuable opportunity to air the issues that concern their electors. Consequently they have been forced to seek other vehicles for putting these matters before the House and there has been a somewhat disruptive effect on the conduct of other business.

Now the government seeks to further institutionalize the reduction of this valuable time, an action that seems likely only to institutionalize the consequences for the length and tone of other debates.

So I ask the government: Where is the rationale, where is the thinking if you want members to go back to their constituencies, meet with their electors, listen to what they have to say but then be denied the right to come to Parliament and to express their views, or a particular view? Where is the logic? There is no logic, none whatsoever.

Similarly, the government proposes to abbreviate the budget debate by two days. In the 19th century there was no formal budget debate. The Minister of Finance made his annual financial statement either on a motion to go into the committee of ways or means or in a committee of ways and means or of supply.

After 1912 the statement was always made on a motion to go into committee of ways and means. There was great reluctance by the House to limit the length of the budget debate since taxation is so fundamental to the role of Parliament. In 1955 the debate was limited to eight days and this was reduced to six in 1960.

The rationale for limiting this debate on the general budgetary policy was that there would still be ample opportunity to debate the specifics in considering the various bills emanating from the budget.

I wish to underline that. The rationale for limiting this debate on the general budgetary policy was that there would still be ample opportunity to debate the specifics in considering the various bills emanating from the budget. I will come to that very briefly.

In 1968, debate on specific ways and means motions was eliminated and the committee on ways and means was abolished. Thenceforth, the six-day budget debate has been on a motion: "That the House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government."

Tax measures cannot be introduced until this general debate is completed, and until 1985 the committee stage of tax bills had to be in a Committee of the Whole. The insistence of the government in 1985 that tax bills be referred to a standing or legislative committee further eroded the focus of the House as a whole on these fundamental fiscal issues.

Now the government is proposing a further reduction in the time the House may spend on its fiscal policies. It not only proposes to reduce the budget date by two days, it also proposes automatic closure after two days debate on any budget-related bill that increases the government's borrowing authority. This is another unacceptable abridgement of Parliament's fundamental role.

Again, I come back to my point. Spend more time with your constituents, yes, but why on the other hand do you want to deprive hard-working members of Parliament—and let us take a minute or two here. There are numerous members of Parliament in all political parties who work very hard, diligently on behalf of their constituents, who do not ask their electors what political partisanship or party they belong to. They represent them all, in most instances very well. And now you say to those members of Parliament in the Throne Speech, you are going to slap two days off; on the budget debate, slap two days off; opposition days you are going to cut to five.

To the casual observer it does not mean anything, it is just a few days off. But we represent people, live people in all regions of this country, and they have particular views and concerns that only members of Parliament who are aware of them can present in a sound, reasonable and rational way.

The government is not content with the abbreviation of the three so-called set pieces, namely the address, the business of supply, and the budget. It is demanding new, more Draconian rules to limit debate on other legislation as well. So it just does not stop there, it goes well beyond.

When the House decided in 1968 that most bills should be referred after second reading to a standing committee rather than to a Committee of the Whole, it was thought that the second reading stage might be treated by members with somewhat less urgency, that many members might prefer to wait until third reading stage when the bill was in its final form before participating in the debate. That did not prove to be the case. Second

reading debates frequently continued to be lengthy and after a couple of days of debate, it was noted, tended to be repetitious. In 1982 it was decided that after eight hours of second reading debate, that is after about two sitting days, further speeches would be reduced to 10 minutes. That is the present system.

That was an experiment that appeared to be working, but one which the present government has been generally unwilling to facilitate. Almost no second reading debate has been permitted by this government to pass the eight-hour threshold before this government has invoked some form of closure.

Now the government proposes to reduce the eight-hour period to five hours, about one sitting day. It also proposes to apply this rule not only to second reading, but to the third reading as well.

• (1700)

In addition, the government is removing the provision for a 40 minute speech length for the first spokesperson for the third party and it is eliminating the heretofore unlimited speech length for the first two speakers at third reading.

We do not have to say it in a loud voice. We can say through you, Mr. Speaker, to the people of Canada, that this is a very well thought out package of rule changes. It does the following.

Members of Parliament draw a salary of some $64,000, a $20,000 in tax free allowance, as well as other perks for telephones, postage, office and staff. I think it would be safe to say that we would average roughly $100,000 a year in income or thereabouts. We are now being told by the government opposite that we will be paid that sum of money not to be in Ottawa for 235 days. When we are here, the government does not want us to talk too often. It does not want us to participate in the budgetary debate of the Minister of Finance. It does not want us to participate in the Speech from the Throne.

Opposition days will be reduced by 20 per cent. Individual statutes, some of which you have expressed great concern and interest over the many years that you have served in this Chamber, members of parliament will be cut off on second reading and will be cut off on third reading.

If the general public does not understand what is taking place, I want to say that this is taking place 18 months before the next federal election. Do you see what is happening? This is an attempt by a government that is so low in the polls to put together a package which would enable them in some way to allow their colleagues, their members, to go to their constituencies in the hope that they might be able to soothe the anger, the frustration, the disappointment, the contempt that the general public has for them, their leader and their party.

An hon. member: They are wasting their time.

Mr. Dingwall: As my colleague from Newfoundland, a distinguished House leader in that assembly, said just a moment ago: "They will never do it. It is not going to work". It is just not going to work. Canadians must realize that this is a contrived document. I suggest it came from the Privy Council Office, the Prime Minister's Office and, of course, the government House leader and his very able—and I want to underline this—parliamentary secretary to the government House leader, very able, but misguided in every way.

There is little justification for any of these proposals. The elimination of the 40 minute provision for the third party's principal spokesperson is, in my view, and I say to my colleague of the New Democratic Party, peevish and it is petty and a removal of the unlimited time for the principal speakers from the government and opposition at third reading is unnecessary and probably in the long term will prove to be counter productive.

It is at the third reading stage that the House finally has before it the bill in the form in which it is to be passed. This is the only opportunity on which either the government or the opposition has to comment fully on the bill and all of the issues and circumstances pertaining to it. The unlimited time provisions are virtually never abused. In fact, it is a short-sighted government that proposes to do away with it. I do not think it is necessary to give that up. All that will happen is that more speakers will want to speak longer. Rather than improve the quality of the debate, this proposal will unfocus it.

Keep in mind, that it is a part of the grand strategy to tell members of Parliament, representatives of the respective political parties, that: Yes, you have a complete statute before you, a complete bill before you, with various amendments, and after it goes to committee, second reading, third reading, report stage, the whole works and it comes back and you want to have ample opportunity as say the Leader of the Opposition or party spokesperson, the government does not want to do that.

Even with all of these incursions into members' time, the government opposite is still not satisfied. It is not enough for them to reduce the number of supply days, it is not sufficient to cut off the budget debate, it will not do to sacrifice 25 per cent of the address debate, even the premature shortening of the speeches at second and third reading will not satisfy the government's appetite for beating up on members of Parliament. It needs something else. It needs a streamlined time allocation rule as well.

When time allocation rules were adopted by the House in 1969 it was written into their text a device to discourage governments from unilateral action. If the government could reach agreement with all of the parties, it could move a time allocation order without notice and see it decided without debate. If it had a majority of the parties but not all of them it could proceed without notice, but the order would be subject to a two-hour debate. In cases where it did not have the agreement of a majority of the parties, the government would have to give a day's notice before the two-hour debate.

These safety valves have not been onerous. Successive governments have not been inhibited from using the time allocation rules and members of the present government uses them almost as often as they change their own socks.

Nonetheless, the Conservatives are an impatient lot and they find it hard to live with the fact that the day on which a time allocation motion is debated cannot be counted as a day within the allotted time.

Now the government proposes to make all time allocation motions non-debatable and to make the day on which such an order is adopted count as a day within the allocation. This will save the government a whole two-hour debate. It will accelerate the passage of the bill by one calendar day or perhaps two if time allocation is used both before and after committee. What it removes, however, is any inhibition of the government attempting to ram legislation, no matter how undesirable or unpopular, down the people's throats. It will also remove any inducement for the opposition to co-operate in any way with the government in moving its program forward. Making time allocation easier for this government is like giving an alcoholic the keys to a distillery.

The government will find, more and more, that it is compelled to use the rules rather than other forms of persuasion. On legislative items that might otherwise have been passed after a moderate amount of debate will not proceed unless the government uses the rules that it seeks to make more convenient. These rules, to which the government now too readily turns for relief, will have to be depended upon in the normal course of events. Without co-operation from the other parties, the overall progress of the legislation will be slowed by the constant invoking of the rules that were meant to be used only in exceptional cases.

Earlier, it was mentioned that at least some of the motivation for these proposals at this time was pettiness and peevishness. The government's motion contains a number of proposals for which there can be no other explanation. For example, there is a proposal that the loss of a quorum should mean only that the House adjourn for the day and that the item under consideration not disappear from the Order Paper, unless restored later. A government with a majority has a responsibility to keep the House open and it should be prepared to pay a price for not being able to live up to that responsibility.

A government with a majority should be able to keep 12 per cent of its members in the House to keep its business moving and, if it cannot, it should not be able to get off with so light a penalty as merely having the House adjourn for the rest of the day. Similarly, moving the axing hour of closure from 1 a.m. to 11 p.m. merely serves to make Parliament's most unseemly rule even less severe. A government desiring to use the guillotine of guillotines should be forced to keep the House open to a very late hour, not merely to give more time to the debate that is due to be cut off, but also to provide more disincentive to the use of this severe rule.

• (1710)

The proposal for which there appears to be no explanation at all is the closing of the Notice Paper at 2 p.m. on Fridays. This comes in a package that proposes to keep the House open until 4 p.m. on Friday. Surely the Notice Paper ought to be open as long as the House is sitting. This proposal must come from the bureaucrats or politicians interested in political games. Nevertheless, does it add anything to the facilitation of government business? Does it add anything to the principles of natural justice where in any court of law, where before any tribunal, quasi-judicial or otherwise, one would be given an opportunity to have notice and the government wants to slam it down at 2 p.m. as opposed to 4 p.m.?

I want to be candid with all members of this Chamber. There are some proposals in this package that are either acceptable or could be acceptable in other circumstances. For example, the government is proposing that the introduction and first reading of all bills be deemed to have taken place after notice. That is, no vote be permitted on the introduction and first reading of any bill.

It has always been a principle of our party that every member of the House should have an unfettered right to bring in a bill. The first reading stage is merely an offer to print a bill and its adoption at first reading in no way implies approval of the substance of that bill.

The circumstances in which this proposal is being made, however, make it more difficult to support it. The government is attempting in this package to cut off as many vehicles as possible for which members may voice their constituents' discontent. When legitimate channels for grievances are blocked, the grievances will find less constructive routes for their expression.

On occasion forcing a vote on the first reading of a bill has been that route. The government in proposing to make that stage non-votable is blocking a comparatively harmless safety valve for the House of Commons. It will find that the grievances will be channelled elsewhere, quite properly and probably along an even less agreeable route.

A similar proposal is the provision enabling the government to do by notice what it heretofore has had to do by special order in arranging the presentation of the budget. The government's proposal is rather loosely worded and may lend itself to manipulation. I would not want to leave the impression that the government opposite would want to manipulate the workings of the House of Commons. I would not want to suggest that, but I am sure other commentators would, Mr. Speaker, as I am sure you can refer to them at length. In itself it does not appear to impair the functioning of the House.

The government is also proposing some refinements of the process of recording divisions. It has only been a few years since the House began to defer divisions and it is natural that we should now be considering some revisions to this process.

Similarly, the specific ending of the possibility of repetitive ringing of bells when the House is involved with successive divisions merely reflects what has become the common practice of the House today. The whole process of recording votes in the House has been unsatisfactory to most members for some time. The McGrath committee recommendations were not fully acted upon and there have been other recommendations over the years that also bear further examination.

Finally, the government is proposing a process that would formalize pairing. In previous years pairing was quite common and members often took the time of the House to record them. My party, as of this moment, has not decided to accept the principle of pairing, but if other parties in the House so choose it is willing to let them record their pairs as they so desire.

The government package does contain a number of quite positive measures. First, there are refinements to the process of the adjournment debates, the so-called late shows. These refinements will allow more members to participate, will allow more current topics to be discussed, and will provide some resources for members to whom the government refuses answers to written questions on the Order Paper.

Similarly, the government has taken a positive step in proposing that motions dealing with Senate amendments to the bills be put on the Notice Paper. This will greatly facilitate the House in dealing with matters that are frequently quite complex and very technical.

Finally, the government is to be congratulated for continuing the process of modernization of the handling of the Private Members' Business. This began with the McGrath report and now the government seeks to make permanent the refinements recommended by the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections.

On that note, I wish to thank publicly on the floor of this House of Commons the superb work done by my colleague from Kingston and the Islands with regard to that.

Another proposal the government makes that is rather intriguing is its proposed new Standing Order 56.1. The government seeks to circumvent the awkward and downright debilitating doctrine of unanimous consent.

For many years the House of Commons has used this doctrine to circumvent its rules, usually those involving notice. If nobody present objects, then it is considered fair to ignore the normal rules and proceed on the grounds of expediency.

There are some proceduralists who have always questioned the doctrine of unanimous consent on the grounds that, since the request for leave to circumvent the rules is usually in itself done without notice, the rights of members absent to be protected by the rules are subverted by the doctrine itself.

The government proposal goes a long way to correct this error. The government may have been motivated by a desire to avoid being obstructed by one or two members when the leadership of all groups in the House have agreed, but what it has come up with is, in fact, a considerable improvement, in my view.

Under the circumstances in which the government is proposing this rule, it is not improbable that unanimous consent on the spur of the moment will be less easily obtained, but this proposed rule offers a compromise, a method whereby a form of notice is in fact provided, and a fail-safe whereby a reasonably small number of members, at a time when attendance is usually high, may prevent the circumvention of the rules.

The remaining area of procedure that the government deals with in its proposal concerns the working of committees. This is a subject that has been actively discussed by members at least for the last 20 years in the House and is likely to continue the evolution of the committee system for many years to come.

In the post-Confederation period, there were only a handful of standing committees, each of which consisted of several dozen members and none of which did much more than consider the merits of proposed private bills, a procedure that occupied a great deal of parliamentary time before general laws concerning incorporation, transportation, communications, et cetera, were enacted. From time to time standing or special committees conducted special investigations of issues, but only at the initiation of the House itself.

Any bill that was referred to a standing or special committee still had to follow the regular legislative process, including a committee of the whole stage.

Gradually, the memberships of the standing committees were reduced to more workable sizes and, commencing in the mid-1950s, estimates were referred to standing committees for detailed study, although the estimates still had to be examined by the committee of supply as well.

In 1968, the foundations of the modern committee system were established with the procedural reforms that sent all estimates to standing committees and abolished the committee of supply and also sent most bills to standing committees rather than to the committee of the whole. The number of subject matter investigations increased as well.

Over the years the standing committees have continued to evolve. Their powers have been more clearly defined and enhanced and they have gained real roles in both the legislative and policy development processes. Many members, especially backbenchers on both sides of the House find that their most gratifying work comes in the less formal and less partisan form of committees. These bodies, however, are creatures of the House and inevitably reflect the political conflicts that preoccupy the House as a whole.

• (1720)

Until recently the government and opposition alike had no problem staffing committees. In the last 18 months, however, the political situation in the country has made, in my view, the government's backbenchers less willing to spend time on committees, thus making the task of the government whip in maintaining the government majority on committees far more difficult.

The response of the whips on the government side last autumn was to attempt to force a radical reduction in the size of the committees, thus reducing the number of government backbencher bodies that would have to be

produced for any given committee meeting. The opposition parties whose members remain as eager as ever to participate in committees resisted this unfair reduction in opportunities for committee membership.

The result was that the September report of the Striking Committee was never concurred. The functioning of the committee system has been impaired since that time.

The government proposal for the committee system leans heavily to the government side. In order to rationalize the staffing and meeting of committees, committees are placed in five envelopes containing the number of specialized standing committees and two legislative committees. Each envelope of committees will have certain dedicated rooms and priorities will be clearly established, so we are told.

Legislation will go either to a standing or legislative committee after second reading, depending on the workload and the issues before the various committees. In discussions over the winter the House leaders and whips have agreed on the size of the committees and taken together with the envelope system, it is hoped that the differing point of view will be reconciled. I suggest that only time will tell whether it can be reconciled.

There are a number of general considerations, however, that the proposals for committees bring to the forefront.

First, there is the question of minority reports. The government proposes to place in the rules the right to amend minority reports and to comment on them when the report is presented to the House.

Second, the question of broadcasting committees. The proposed new rules for the first time mention this possibility but do so in such a way that the possibility of such broadcasting may actually be reduced. A government like the present one which is so desperate in the polls may actually use these rules to retard the progress in this particular regard.

Third, the question arises as to how the proposed new Standing Committee on House Management can deal effectively with its heavy burden. This committee is to function as the Striking Committee, the Management and Members Services Committee, and the Privileges and Elections Committee. It is to be a comparatively small committee and it is to accept the burden of staffing other committees, bird-dogging the administration of the House of Commons, operating the complex system of Private Members' Business, considering ongoing questions of procedure and electoral reform, and dealing with any matter of privilege or contempt that may come along.

This is an awesome burden for any committee, especially one that is going to be rather small. It is likely to be dominated by very senior members and there is a serious danger—and I do not wish to imply the motives of anyone because that would be totally inappropriate—that it will tend to operate unduly in closed and even secretive ways. I am talking about in-camera sessions.

The potential for making the House of Commons look as if it is an Old Boys Club is a real one with this kind of proposal, and consideration will have to be given to a less exclusive approach to dealing with the matters proposed for this particular committee.

If not, the charge will be made and the perception I suggest could become reality within a very short period of time.

Finally, there is the question of the witnesses that may be heard by committees on bills.

The proposed new rule refers to these committees being permitted to hear only, and I quote: "technical witnesses". The government seems to think that only government departments and agencies can provide witnesses with sufficient technical knowledge to assist committees in the legislative process.

That means if a bill is referred to a legislative committee, members would only have the right to summon before it individuals within the bureaucracy or the department to give a specific explanation of how the law or the statute is read, hence classifying that individual as a technical witness.

I suggest that is very unfair. A lot of the time and on a lot of occasions, members of Parliament need the assistance of those groups and individuals who are the victims or the beneficiaries of the legislation to explain how it will actually work. It is a different perspective and it is a different view, but on many occasions they are very helpful.

For instance, I remember when we were debating Bill C–21, the Pharmaceutical Act, some years back and both we as opposition parties and the government summoned experts from across the country. They were able to amplify, not only the meaning of the technical language, but its far–reaching effects; not only in three months or six months, but in two or three years. Of course, you always have jurisprudence. You may have common law or decisions reached in other countries which may have a particular effect on our legislation. There may be some judicial decisions before the courts. To limit ourselves as members of Parliament to quote technical witnesses and restricting what a technical witness can be, I think we hamper substantially, the work that members would want to do in terms of improving a particular piece of legislation.

The opposition fully understands that the community at large has many technically competent persons who are not only able, but also are very much needed by any committee on a variety of legislation. Government officials cannot possibly possess adequate expertise to help a committee assess the impact of any piece of legislation. Business, labour, interest groups and academics, potential beneficiaries and potential victims of legislation will all be able to provide the kind of technical assistance that committees require on legislation.

Any ill–conceived attempt by the government to narrow this definition will not merely lead to political difficulty in the House of Commons, it will lead to further public frustration of being shut out of government. That, unfortunately, is the real thrust of the government's proposed rule changes. The real impact is to shut people out of government.

So much for the Prime Minister's statements of an open government. The government must think it clever to claim that its package is intended to do the opposite. It claims that it will give members more time in their constituencies to interact with the people. What it is really doing is reducing both the time and the opportunities for members to try to do something on behalf of those very people.

The government claims its package is designed to enhance the reputation of Parliament. Yet, virtually every one of its proposals is intended to de–fang Parliament. To make it more difficult for Parliament to deal with the issues that concern the people of Canada. All the government will achieve with these proposals is to frustrate Parliament.

• (1730)

It can be sure that the frustration will gain expression most probably, Mr. Speaker,—I say this to you, Sir, being cognizant of the many years that you have spent in this House—in some unforeseen way that is highly unlikely to enhance the reputation of Parliament, let alone the Government of Canada.

The government proposes to deal with a number of procedural issues that simply do not cry out for change, except that in responding to the people they create inconveniences for the government.

Even in cases where the government makes proposals that do need further procedural evolution, the government is acting in a pre–emptory manner or, in the case of the committee system, planting the seeds for future efforts to shut people out.

I wish to be clear on behalf of my party that we are opposed to this package of rule changes and have said so consistently.

I listened to the government House leader talk about the effectiveness in Parliament, the efficiency of Parliament and the cynicism of the Canadian people. He suggested having fewer sitting days because other countries have fewer sitting days than we do, but he did not talk about the geography of Canada. He did not talk about how Canadians are displaced all across this great country. Basically, we have a small population; hence the need for further dialogue and debate, and better appreciation and understanding of different viewpoints.

He makes reference to other countries. As I said earlier in my remarks, it is part of the grand strategy to shut Parliament down.

For a moment, let's talk about the national media. What will it do to the national media in this country? It has a role to play. Sometimes it is not very complimentary to the government and sometimes it is not very complimentary to the opposition. Nevertheless, we live in a free and democratic society and the media has the right to probe, to make ministers accountable for various speeches that they may give across the country.

By shutting down Parliament and by having us sit 40 fewer days, if you will, that will deny the media real access to ministers of the Crown. It will preclude us as members of Parliament to raise issues on the floor of the House of Commons which enable Canadians, through the media, to understand what is going on whether they be valid points of opposition or not. The Canadian people will judge.

Canadians are cynical, yes. They are very cynical about the government. They do not want their members of Parliament to be in their constituencies listening on the weekend in the coffee shops, in their constituency office, at a Rotary Club or a business luncheon or at an ethnic group sitting.

That is not what Canadians want. It is part of the equation. It is a very important but small part. Canadians want their members of Parliament to act on their behalf. What better example of hypocrisy of the government House leader and the government opposite than the goods and services tax?

Every Canadian I have talked to in my constituency, every small business person, everyone who pays taxes in this country—we have had some unprecedented levels in tax increases with this particular government—have opposed the goods and services tax.

They have petitioned members of Parliament. They have petitioned ministers of the Crown. We have had a lengthy debate in the House. We have had a lengthy debate in the Senate. We have had committees travel this country and what has happened? The government has said: "Up yours, we are not going to listen". So what is this argument, this smokescreen of spending more time so we can find out the problems? That is fine, but what are we going to do about the problems? The Conservatives did nothing with regard to the GST. It had 57 per cent of the Canadian population against it in the last federal election. It has many economic measures which are opposed by labour groups, by various regions in this country, whether it be health care, whether it be post-secondary education, a whole host of things.

The argument is being made and written by some of the editorial writers in this country that Parliament will become more efficient, that yes, it is wise to send members to their constituencies. No one has said it is not wise to send members to their constituencies, but do they ever stop and think that a government has to act when it talks and when it listens to people? This government does not listen to people because if it did, it would not be where it is in the polls today.

I find it rather shocking and disturbing that the government House leader would come forward today and say: "Canadians are cynical". Do not paint every politician, every political party with the same brush. We are the ones who opposed the free trade agreement. We are the ones who opposed the goods and services tax. We are the ones who opposed the cutbacks with regard to health care in this country, with regard to post-secondary education. We are the ones who opposed the cutbacks to VIA Rail, the privatization of some of our Crown corporations. We are the ones who opposed the unprecedented level of higher taxation in this country.

This government has not listened. Do not tell me, do not tell my party and certainly do not tell the Canadian people that all of a sudden the Conservatives have taken a shower and all of the toxics inside have now come out and have gone and that they are going to start listening to Canadians because they are 18 months before a general federal election. Let us not be cynical, Mr. government House leader. Let us not be cynical. Let us be candid. Let us be realistic. Let us be pragmatic. Let us be honest with ourselves that these rule changes are not in the best interest of Parliament. They may be in the best interest of a few ministers of the Crown and maybe a few backbenchers on the other side who wish to get to the constituencies a little bit more often.

Surely to God we can work out systems within our respective caucuses to allow members of Parliament, if the need be, to spend more time in their constituencies if the issues and the subject matter arise. That is the real crux of the problem that we are facing here today.

People are not demanding to speak to their MPs. They are demanding positive action on their behalf. As a result, they want to have their members of Parliament whom they believe, by and large—I do not know of any public opinion poll that would substantiate this sentence—but I think most constituents understand that their member of Parliament, whoever he or she may be, whatever political party, is working very hard on their behalf. They also believe that we are paid a fairly good wage. To get that wage the government is now telling us: "You will get that big salary but you are going to spend 235 days in your constituency".

What is going to happen, Mr. Speaker, if these rule changes pass? There are a number of scenarios. You are in for three weeks and you are off for one. Members of Parliament are in their constituencies. They come to Ottawa. We have an extra hour of debate every day on government business. We have sessions on Wednesday. We have a committee system which is quite different. Some changes have evolved there.

Do you think committees are going to be sitting those three weeks, Mr. Speaker? Do you honestly believe that those standing committees of the House of Commons are going to sit on a regular basis?

• (1740)

I would venture to say that they will be scheduled to sit, but because of other demands, because members are being circumvented in terms of making presentations here before the House of Commons, we will have very little opportunity to participate in meaningful ways in committees. That is not to suggest that they will never meet. They will meet. There is no question about that. But what will be flawed, is: do not meet tonight, do not meet tomorrow, you can meet while you have the week off. So the three weeks are up. You have the week off to be in your constituency, or you can be in a committee in Ottawa. You know what is going to happen. Members will have to go back to their constituencies because they will tell people for three weeks that they have to be in Ottawa but they have a week off and will be back.

Where does the committee work go? Where does the examination of the estimates end up? Will there be a focus in committee? Some, yes, but perhaps for many, no. Members will be torn, they will be torn: stay in Ottawa, participate on special committees, legislative committees, standing committees, or go back to their constituencies because they have been told by the government that is the week you spend in your constituency so that you can listen to your constituents.

It all fits. It is just like putting your hand into a leather glove. The scenario is very, very smart, if you want to choke off debate in Parliament, if you want to provide less time for ministers of the Crown to be accountable to the opposition parties and to the national media and to the interest groups across this country, less time for those of us in opposition to be the public watchdog as to what is taking place with regard to the government activities of the day; less debate on the budget; fewer opposition days; less debate on the Speech from the Throne; less opportunities with regard to second reading on a particular piece of legislation; less opportunity to speak on third reading of a particular bill; a more effective—if you will—time allocation rule for the government, not the opposition; committees which will meet or may not meet.

It is a pretty neat, sophisticated package. A neat package for a government that is in political trouble. I say to members opposite: "This will not save you. What will save you in the next election is if you were to listen to the Canadian people".

Members who are here with me today make the point that it is too late. It is too late for members opposite to change their ways, to correct their sins of the past. But perhaps they ought to try. Perhaps they ought to try to do the democratic thing that they talked so much about from 1984 to 1988. Perhaps they ought to try to give members of Parliament greater latitude in discussing the various issues of the day. My colleague, the member for Kingston and the Islands, and I think other members, have alluded to the government that not every motion that comes before the House has to be a non-confidence motion on every occasion. We understand the realities of quorum and people, et cetera, being here. We could accommodate that. But they do not want to hear that. They believe that just by getting back to their constituencies for that week, that will be able to resolve their political difficulties. I am afraid they will be sadly disappointed after the next federal election when the hon. Jean Chrétien and the Liberal Party of Canada become the governing party in this country.

Mr. Hockin: I doubt that.

Mr. Dingwall: Hon. members say they doubt that. Perhaps if they are true to their conviction, and I see the minister for small business who has particular responsibilities in an area that I represent in the Parliament of Canada, and I say this in a kind of shy way because I am kind of shy, but if the minister really believes that his policies are so good, if he really, really believes that his privileged status as a minister of the Crown has endeared

him to the people of Canada, why does he not try to convince his colleagues in cabinet to do an honourable thing and we will have a little vote. If you do not want to call a general election just have a little vote in your constituency and winner takes all. Better still, have a vote in my constituency and the winner takes all as to whether or not they have confidence in the hon. member opposite or whether they have confidence in this hon. member who represents the constituency of Cape Breton—East Richmond.

I suggest that the minister opposite, who has a privileged status—and I underline that—earned but, nevertheless, status. Not only does he get $64,000 a year, not only does he get $20,000 in tax-free allowance, he is a cabinet minister and they make the big bucks. They get the chauffeurs to the car, they get all the deputies, they get all the assistants and they get all the big invitations.

I say to that hon. minister, run. Let us have an election and winner takes all. You will see that the sins of the past and your present attitudes toward various policies which exist at the present time and your attitude with trying to choke off the democratic ways, the House of Commons will not meet the test that Canadians expect of parliamentarians in the next election.

An hon. member: I win when I run.

Mr. Dingwall: The hon. member says he wins when he runs. Well, I have just given him an opportunity. If he is so believes and has conviction that they are running such a wonderful government and that these rule changes meet the test of the Canadian people, perhaps he should put something on the line. I say that somewhat in jest because I know hon. members opposite do not want to go to the polls. They are hoping by some miracle that the phoenix will arrive from the ashes and that Mulroney will do an about face and become popular among the Canadian people. Quite frankly, that will not take place.

In closing, I wish to say that the two—

An hon. member: Not yet.

Mr. Dingwall: If the hon. member wishes me to speak longer I will accommodate him and I will speak longer. If he is enjoying my intervention that much, I will try to accommodate for a while yet. I want to thank the hon. member for his vote of confidence.

I have another speech, but there are two points. I indicated to the government House leader and I indicated to the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader that we, the Liberal Party of Canada, were opposed to these rule changes both privately and publicly. I indicated to them quite clearly that there ought to be a process. Let us move from the substance and let us go to the process. It is all well and good for individuals to have some discussions with regard to rule changes, but I have indicated clearly to him that we should have a standing committee, perhaps a special committee.

In fact, my colleague for Kingston and the Islands even made the intervention at one of our meetings with regard to having the whole matter referred to the Standing Committee on Elections and Privileges in order that we may examine, have witnesses come in, have Canadians see and be consulted. That was not to be. We have asked for a special committee of members of Parliament, not necessarily to travel the country or go to other jurisdictions, but perhaps to bring people here and discuss these in a reasonable manner if in fact rules have to be amended and changed. That was denied.

• (1750)

What was given by the government was a mere discussion of some of the rules by a working group which I believe the parliamentary secretary, my colleague from Kingston and the Islands, and a senior member of my staff had. But there have been no "substantive changes with regard to their proposals". They have backed off a few things, but nothing overly substantive that could cause a reasonable person to conclude that this package is in the best interest of Parliament, of parliamentarians, or of the Canadian people.

They score very low in terms of process and in terms of substance. So the cliche that has been used in this House on many occasions, the Old Boys Club, is the route that they elected. That is the route that they follow, but they were told along the piece at all times that there was no deal. I know—this may sound unfair and I hope members will forgive me—that the government House leader was the minister responsible for Bill C-21, amendments to the Pharmaceutical Act.

I do not know if he has a cold or is on some form of drug, or whatever it is, but he has certainly forgotten some of the facts as I have enunciated them here today. Some have suggested that he has used bully-boy tactics. I leave that for others to discuss at another time. But let it be clear that we oppose these rules. We will debate them in the weeks ahead, Mr. Speaker, and I see you nodding

your head and you are in agreement as well and I am sure you would want to participate and I welcome your participation because as a distinguished member of this House you, too, realize as I am sure many members do how Draconian and how terrible this package of rules is for Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, I accordingly move, seconded by the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands:

> That the motion be amended in the first paragraph by deleting proposed amendments numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 12, 16, 17, 21, 25, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 36, 37, and 45 and by deleting section 73(5) in proposed amendment numbered 24.

Mr. Speaker, I was intending to sit down but since the hon. member opposite has wanted me to speak for another period of time I want to accommodate him because it is not often that I get a chance to speak in this Chamber, particularly on a subject which is so vital to our deliberations here.

I know the hon. member opposite who made that statement is a long-standing member of the House of Commons and he, too, will probably want to participate in the debate over the next number of weeks as we approach June, and that he would want me to put other items on the record.

I want to assure him that there are many members of my party who will now want to speak, particularly after the interventions which have been made by the government House leader. I know my colleague from Kingston and the Islands and the member for Ottawa Vanier will want to participate at length and they will have other things to say. I do not want to disappoint the hon. member, but I want to tell him that they will have, shall we say, an enlightened view on some of the proposed rule changes, perhaps very similar to the views that I have expressed here today. I hope that he would be in the Chamber and afford them the same kind of opportunities and courtesies by listening to their interventions which we believe, and which we know, will add a great deal to this particular debate on a very important subject matter.

Finally, I want to say thank you to my colleague from Kingston and the Islands and to members of my staff who reviewed this legislation. But I want to thank the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader and the chief government Whip for their deliberations on this particular subject matter. I know in my heart of hearts that way deep down, both those hon. members know very well that these rule changes are wrong, and probably on Wednesday when they go to caucus they will stand in their place and echo the sentiments that we are echoing on this side of the House: No, no, no to these rule changes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I find the amendment moved by the hon. member to be in order.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, I must say we enjoyed listening to that exhaustive examination of the proposed changes to the rules of the House. Now, of course, we are debating government motion No. 30, rules of the House of Commons and changes to the Standing Orders.

It sounds very straightforward and perhaps rather inconsequential in many respects to those listening to the debates and watching the discussions. Thirty pages in our books, 64 different clauses. Let's face it, there is quite a range of issues here, some very trivial issues that simply needed to be brought up to date in terms of the modernization of dealing with the legislative material.

Others have touches of totalitarianism associated with them, major changes in terms of how the House of Commons operates.

Perhaps it is not by mistake. You will notice how it is dark over the House of Commons today. When you look out the windows there is a dark cloud hanging over the House of Commons. It is symbolic, I might add, in terms of the dark cloud that hangs over the Parliament of Canada and the dark cloud, indeed, that is hanging over parliamentary democracy as we know it in this country.

I must say that what we are debating today is perhaps one of the most important issues that we will debate in this House for the next number of weeks and months. Today, when the Prime Minister introduced the President of Mexico, he referred to the House of Commons as the "crucible of parliamentary democracy". When the President of Mexico spoke, he referred to this House as "the House of democracy in which is determined the will of the people of Canada".

This is a crucial House of debate. This is where the duly elected representatives of the people of Canada come to reflect the views of their constituents and reflect their views as elected people regarding government policy and government programs. We were asked to study and to examine these government policies, programs and proposals, to examine their impact on different regions of the country and on different groups within our society, whether it was the free trade agreement or the goods and services tax. I refer to these as perhaps two of the largest and most important pieces of legislation we have had a chance to discuss in this House in the past number of months.

• (1800)

I think all of us, certainly the people of Canada, would recognize that it is very important we debate issues that the government of the day brings forward and that we examine legislation in detail, that we hold the government accountable for its deeds or for its actions or for the various acts of individual cabinet ministers. We have seen over the past number of months, as a result of that accountability, whole sets of ministers of the cabinet have had to resign or have seen fit to resign.

The government House leader spoke of the anger and frustration of the electorate and the fact that they hold members of Parliament or politicians, generally, in contempt. May I suggest that one of the many reasons for that is that people feel a sense of powerlessness. They have strong views on certain issues, whether it is the GST or the free trade agreement, and they bring it to their members of Parliament. They raise their issues at parliamentary committees or through other avenues, and the government totally ignores them.

When a government House leader says that it is important for members of Parliament to go back to listen to their constituents, we all know that constituents have been saying to members of the government for months and months on end: "Do not proceed with the goods and services tax", in every constituency across the country. Those of us in opposition have risen to reflect the views of our constituents. Many of us on dozens and dozens, and perhaps hundreds of occasions, have reflected their views that this tax is punitive, cruel and mean and is the wrong tax to be bringing in at this time.

I look across the aisle and I know that some of my friends on the government benches hold meetings in their constituencies and they are publicized. The media attends and reflects the mood of the constituents and the questions being raised. Once again, hundreds of thousands of people have registered their opposition to the goods and services tax or to the free trade agreement or to the changes to the unemployment insurance legislation, and the government just ignores their concerns.

Some hon. members: They are not listening.

Mr. Riis: No wonder people are frustrated. No wonder the electorate feels that the government does not care, because it has not shown in any way, shape or form that they, in fact, do care about what the people who elected them are concerned about.

I think people are saying that they are fed up with government arrogance. What they call this government, essentially, is an elected dictatorship, where the government is elected for a period of time and it feels it has the mandate to do anything it wishes. It does not matter that the programs and policies it is introducing was not discussed or raised during the last federal campaign.

As a matter of fact, I think it was the present Minister for International Trade who said, not many weeks before the last campaign that: "We could not tell the people of Canada what we were going to do, because if we did, no one would elect us". So, obviously, they fooled the people of Canada. They did not say: "If we are elected, we are going to introduce the goods and services tax".

So when the government House leader says that Parliament must be reformed, I must say that we can have all the rules in the world and unless the will is there, it is not going to change behaviour. We know that as parliamentarians. We can have all the rules and regulations of the House, but unless there is a will to make this place work properly, it will not work properly. We know that as parents. You can have all the rules for your children that you want, but unless there is a will, if you like, to do the appropriate thing, to act appropriately, to conduct your business in ways according to accepted traditions, it does not take place.

That is why I say, if the government is hoping that this type of parliamentary reform they are now introducing, and will eventually jam through the House of Commons, because again they will have to use the heavy hand of closure to get their way.

This is not going to change the situation if the government continues to ignore the people of Canada. What we see month after month and year after year, we hear people speaking out. Why is it so critical that we have an opportunity to discuss these issues in depth?

I want to use one example. When the government brought in the idea that we should de-index pensions, it said: "We should de-index the pensions of all those people who collect old age security." In other words, we should erode those pensions over time.

The opposition said: "We have got to let the people of Canada know what this is going to do. We have to let pensioners and future pensioners know what the impact of this legislation is all about." We debated the issue day after day, and slowly the people of Canada recognized what the government was attempting to do. It was going to erode the pension system of Canada, and the people spoke out.

The Prime Minister, to give him credit, said that the government was wrong, that it should not have done that. I tell you, Mr. Speaker, under these new rules with the government's ability to move legislation through quickly, the people of Canada would not have a chance to react, those pensions would have been de-indexed and the pensioners of this country would see their pensions erode.

That is why we say we want the opportunity to examine legislation, to study it and to invite experts and other people from the outside to come in and look at the government's plans.

I do not think the government is reforming the parliamentary system. It is deforming the parliamentary system to allow it to impose its political agenda on the people of Canada that much more quickly. That is what it is doing.

The government wants to turn this into some sort of sausage factory, not a legislative assembly but a legislative assembly line that just moves legislation through and does not give people a chance to examine it. It does not want to give the opposition a chance to study it. It does not want to provide the same opportunities to hold the government accountable during Question Period.

It is no mistake that it is called Question Period. All we hear are the questions. We never get any answers back. This is one way we have of bringing to the people's attention what the government is doing. I hate to say it, but as a result of questioning in this House of Commons, one after another, cabinet ministers have had to resign their seats: One, two, three, four, five, six. It goes on and on.

It would not have happened if we had not had a chance to raise questions during Question Period concerning a minister's behaviour. Now we are going to see that erode as the government attempts to do away with Question Period for certain times of the year.

The government House leader went on at some length to explain why it is appropriate that members of Parliament get home to listen to their constituents. I pointed that that argument is rather hollow. Obviously the track record would speak for itself that this government does not listen to people. The members can go home every day of the year and nothing will change.

The point is that when their constituents tell them what to do or what not to do, the constituents know they will be totally and simply ignored.

There is another aspect of this. It was pointed out to me by my colleague from Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing, who I want to say at this point has been extremely helpful. His wisdom and the thought that went into this process has to be recognized by all as leading to some very meaningful discussion inside and outside our caucus in terms of the changes being proposed to the government and essentially what they will do. He pointed out to me the other day that the political landscape of this country is changing.

What this government does through these changes is perpetuate the two-party system. We tried to make the case during our so-called negotiations that there are now other viable parties in the House of Commons. The New Democratic Party, a newly elected party, ought to have some recognition in terms of the rule changes, but that was essentially ignored.

We have seen changes introduced to attempt to block small political parties from playing a role in the House of Commons. I refer to the new definition that the government House leader has of unanimous consent. Until

now, we had to seek unanimous consent to change the rules at will, virtually.

Sometimes, and as a matter of fact often, it was to the benefit of the House that we alter a rule for a particular afternoon or we change a way of doing business to facilitate a piece of legislation or to assist members in the performance of their duties. The government has changed that. What unanimous consent means is unanimous all but 25 members, so that during Routine Proceedings the government can introduce a motion to pass a bill at all stages or to change the Constitution or to carry out all sorts of what could be termed Draconian changes. Unless 25 members leap to their feet immediately, it is done, just like that. It can be used and abused so easily, but again it will enable the government to facilitate introducing its political agenda through the House of Commons.

• (1810)

I know the government always says: "We have to become more efficient. We have to become more effective". It was very frustrated when the opposition spoke against the goods and services tax and tried to point out why this was the wrong tax. The government was very frustrated when we spoke out against the major changes to the unemployment insurance legislation that would do irreparable harm to families, particularly in the regions of the country. The government was frustrated when we spoke out against the free trade agreement. It said we take too much time talking in the House of Commons.

We appreciate that democracy is not always the most efficient way of doing business. The parliamentary system is not the most effective and efficient way of conducting government business. The most effective way is a dictatorship. That is the most effective way. That is the most business-like way; simply impose the legislation and Parliament is nothing but a rubber stamp if it exists at all.

That is why some of us have felt so strongly about these changes, because that is the direction in which we are moving, where the government simply says: "Here is our agenda". There will be no vote at first reading of a bill. We are going to pass this in principle and put it into a legislative committee where we cannot take time to discuss the bill in any sort of depth. We can only discuss technical aspects.

Mr. Speaker, that would mean that the GST legislation would be introduced, sent off to a committee and unless you were a tax accountant or a tax lawyer, you would not be welcome. You could not call witnesses to say how is this going to affect the farm community, the fishing community; how this is going to affect various sectors of the economy or other elements of society. Oh, no, Mr. Speaker, you could not talk about that. You have to talk about specific details of the legislation.

This is something that we do not support. We think this is wrong. What it means is that rather than the people of Canada, through their organizations, groups or individuals having input into legislation, lobbyists will have input into legislation. They will be the ones who are able to advise the government members and their officials. The people of Canada will be frozen out of the process. That is one of the many reasons why we say we cannot support this package.

The government House leader said that we consented in some way to these rule changes, that he felt that somehow we had agreed during the process that these were acceptable. I think my hon. friend who spoke on behalf of the Official Opposition indicated that that was not the case. It is a bit like being sentenced to death and saying: "Let us negotiate how this is done". We could determine that it could be done by hanging, it could be done by injection or there are a variety of ways to do this.

That is essentially what happened. The government said: "Here are all the changes we want to make so that this place will be more effective, more efficient and more business-like", to run more like a corporate boardroom as opposed to a parliamentary democracy. We said: "We cannot accept these". There are some changes that we can accept. There are some that are rather trivial and simply reflect a changing House of Commons, but there are some measures that we simply cannot accept.

For example, supply days are one of the most important aspects of our work here. Supply days go back to when the king wanted money, he had to set aside certain days to discuss on the part of the duly elected people whether this was an appropriate expenditure or not. We have those days. We have 25 of those each year. We are required to have at least 25 days where the government schedules a day for debate on whether the government is using taxpayers' money adequately and whether their plans are appropriate in terms of more expenditures.

It is a long-stated tradition that 25 days during every calendar year be set aside to discuss how the government is spending our money. Now I know the government is doing away with days to debate the budget and the throne speech, and so on. We could talk about those. However, what this one measure does is that it enables the government, if it ever wished, to have the Parliament of Canada sit for only one day a year. What it says is that when we do not sit, those normal supply days will be eroded, will be just ignored. If the government chose not to sit, other than for just one or two days of the year, that is it. There is nothing in the Standing Orders that could change that.

Mr. Speaker, you have signalled that I have one minute left. This is part of the problem. I notice that the government House leader spoke for an hour. The representative of the Official Opposition spoke for an hour and a half, and the New Democratic Party speaks for 20 minutes. That is it.

Does this reflect the true nature of the House of Commons? No, it does not. It reflects an old-fashioned view of the House of Commons where there are two political parties. Mr. Speaker, does this reflect the emerging political reality in the country where we might have four or five or six political parties represented in this House after the next federal election? No. It is just going back in time. That is why we feel this is inappropriate and I simply want to conclude by saying the following.

The government believes that by introducing these changes, which I say tend towards fascism, and I use that term consciously, where the government House leader and the Prime Minister will have the tools now to more effectively muzzle the opposition, to more effectively muzzle the free press, because they too depend on Question Period. That is the only time they have access to the Prime Minister when he dashes up the stairs. He does not call press conferences, and so on.

If the government believes that by imposing these new changes that will severely restrict the opposition members of the House of Commons from doing what they are expected to do on behalf of their constituents, that this is going to allow them to fool the Canadian people sufficiently so that it will be re-elected, it will not work. It will not work. The people of Canada know that this government is not operating with their best interests at heart. They know that this government, after years and years of experience ignores their calls, their pleas. I would say this is a dark day for the democratic system in this country. It is a dark day for the Parliament of Canada, and that is why we in the New Democratic Party feel that these rules cannot be approved and supported in this House.

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, we have been listening to a rather familiar refrain about dark days. For somebody with such a light head, that is really quite a comment to make.

The hon. member was speaking of muzzling and the high-falutin, high-sounding words on the other side, how all members of Parliament are important and it is important for each one of us to have our opportunity in the House. Then he condemns a package which says that more members will have more opportunities to speak in this House, and that is what the package says.

Let us come to the guts of a test for the member opposite. The members in this House who are muzzled during Question Period sit on this side of the House. Of the 158 of them, 120 do not sit in the cabinet. They get an average of five or six questions a week, to 60 on the other side, for a group that is smaller. If he believes in the principles he has been espousing, will he stand up in this House at this time and adopt the system that exists in Australia, the system that exists in England, where questions go back and forth across the House and all members are treated equally and one side is not expected to be muzzled. Will he agree to that principle?

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, it seems odd that we are now getting into a discussion of what the Standing Orders ought to be. May I suggest, Mr. Speaker, as has already been proposed, that this be referred to the appropriate standing committee before it is closured off and jammed through the House of Commons. This is the kind of situation that ought to be discussed. My hon. friend is sitting there screaming at me now. That is the appropriate response, presumably, in terms of the government. It cannot handle any kind of criticism.

• (1820)

The point is the following: So-called negotiations never did take place. The member is now suggesting that there are all sorts of changes that we ought to be discussing. I could not agree more. He also knows that the idea was that standing committees ought to be spending more time in pre-study of proposed legislation. That is not in the Standing Orders. These are simply discussions that we have heard.

If we were doing the correct thing, and if he really believes that these changes were to make this institution more effective, it would be appropriate then to have more people brought into the process, but the process that was followed was in secret. People were not involved in an open way. This is why I say some of us have offered to the government the suggestion that this be referred to the appropriate standing committee where all the committees are represented in the open, with nothing to hide, and to discuss ways and means of making this more effective.

Again, the old approach, a handful of people in a back room operating in secret is somehow the best way to proceed. I say it is not.

I should use this opportunity, while I am on my feet, to move a subamendment.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Order please. If I am not mistaken, the Standing Orders do not allow a member to move an amendment during the period for questions and comments.

I therefore remind the hon. member that we are still in that period.

[*English*]

Mr. Harvey (Edmonton East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hawkes: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): On a point of order, the hon. member for Edmonton East.

Mr. Harvey (Edmonton East): Mr. Speaker, might I suggest you inquire of the House as to whether or not there is unanimous consent to allow the House leader to propose his amendment and, in the spirit of the proposed amendments to Standing Orders, see if there are fewer than 25 members who object.

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up with a brief supplementary and we will follow another one of his suggestions. The first principle was muzzling, the second principle was freedom of expression in the Chamber. It is so easy to follow through on his principles that I simply say to the member, let us have unanimous consent to continue this debate until midnight tonight so that we could all have a better chance to talk about it. I am asking for unanimous consent to continue the debate until midnight, to follow through on his principles. Does he want freedom of speech or does he not?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Does the House give unanimous consent to extend the—

Some hon. members: No.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, further to the amendments on the changes to the Standing Orders of the House, I would like to make a comment to the hon. member. We must not forget, Mr. Speaker, that the government worked for months on this with the opposition; there are no surprises for anyone in this House. The opposition can hardly be surprised by anything in this package. What we see is its biased reaction to what is a good reform that will make Parliament more effective and bring it closer to the people. That is what Canadians want.

I think that it is important for a member from a large region like Abitibi, which is 555,000 square kilometres to be in Ottawa for three weeks and in my riding for one week. It is important for Northerners, for a member from a region like mine, to be in the riding at least one week a month. Earlier, the member said that the government wanted to do away with Question Period. The government wants nothing of the sort, because during the discussions that you had with the government, you never asked to extend this question period by an hour.

I will give you an example of what democracy is. Today, during Question Period, I was scheduled to ask the Hon. Minister Benoît Bouchard a question through the Speaker of the House of Commons.

I was unable to do so. You had the opportunity during that period to ask several questions. As a member of the government party from a large region like the Abitibi, it is important for members from large regions to be there one week a month. In this House, we often notice,

although you are present a month at a time, that half your colleagues are never in Parliament.

[*English*]

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I do want to make one comment. He referred to one of my colleagues who was asking a question. I said that he had to speak to him only in one language.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think that is necessary in the House of Commons. Here we are able to speak whichever of the two official languages we choose. I do not think I have to feel obligated to speak one language or the other.

But Mr. Speaker, you will recognize in your position as Speaker today that—

Mr. Saint-Julien: *Je n'ai rien compris en anglais. C'est pour cela.*

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, earlier I made the case that proceeding with this particular motion was inappropriate and the Speaker indicated that he would be rendering a decision on that argument some time soon. I would seek the right to be able to move an amendment after the Speaker has rendered his decision. I do not think, at the moment, that either the amendment that has been moved or my proposed subamendment would be in order in light of what I hope the Speaker will say when he renders his judgment.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Just a word to say that the Chair will certainly note the comment by the hon. member for Kamloops and will make its decision as soon as possible.

The hon. member for Surrey—White Rock—South Langley has the floor.

[*English*]

Mr. Benno Friesen (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I have been following this debate not simply for the two or three hours just passed, but over the many years that I have been in the House along with some of my colleagues here from Newfoundland and so forth. We have taken a great deal of interest over the years.

When I first came here in 1974 I remember very clearly the attitude that some of the members at that time still had about the revised rules of the House brought in in 1969, I believe it was, which varied the rules considerably. To them it was still convulsive to think about the radical changes that were brought in such as having opposition days instead of committee of the whole for a lot of the bills, especially the money bills.

Change is always very difficult, but I want to begin by complimenting the House leader for the Liberal Party on the contribution he has made to the debate today. I thought he spoke and contributed very well to an understanding of the issues that are before us. He did it dispassionately and as much as it can be done in the Chamber like this, and we cannot always absent ourselves from partisanship, he did it at a very high level. I want to compliment him for that. I cannot say the same thing for the House leader of the New Democratic Party.

I think we ought to assign someone here to keep a box score of the number of cliches the member for Kamloops can throw about in one of his 10 or 20-minute speeches. The degree to which he banters them about is almost beyond counting. It is worthy to note that while he spoke in his address about the need for further debate, the muzzling of Parliament, and all of those cliches that roll so quickly off his tongue, when we gave him the opportunity to extend the debate so that his members could take part, he said: "No, we don't want to extend the debate. We just want to talk about the way Parliament has been muzzled". Give them a chance to talk and they say "no".

We have had a further display of this. I noted that one of the things that the New Democratic Party is opposed to is the fact that we want to change the times when the House is sitting. We would have one week a month away from the House when we could do constituency work. They do not like that idea. The fact is that in reality, they are already on a platoon system. They are already doing it. They are off in their ridings one week out of the month.

• (1830)

An hon. member: That is right.

Mr. Friesen: They do not want to give that privilege any kind of official endorsement. They want to do it quietly so that nobody notices.

I noticed, particularly this morning, when that party which is so interested in developing countries had an opportunity to support the president of a developing country like Mexico, it had 15 members here this morning, I counted; 35 per cent of its caucus was here, 65 per cent was somewhere else. Yet, when that party ran

for election it said: "We want to represent you in Ottawa".

Mr. Keyes: Do not throw stones in a glass house. How many were you missing?

Mr. Friesen: That brings me to the real dilemma which all members of Parliament confront. All of us, when we stand for election, when we go through an election campaign, face this dilemma. In one way or another we are saying to our constituents: "I want to represent you in Ottawa". We say it regardless of party. We say it with all sincerity, and we want to do this. We want to go to Ottawa and take the needs and the concerns and the issues of our people and give them voice here in this Chamber.

I remember toward the end of my first campaign, an elector, an elderly gentleman said to me, talking about all of the candidates: "The trouble with you guys is that once we elect you, we never see you again". Prior to, and in the 1950s and 1960s that was almost unavoidable. Travel was by train. The person elected took the train from Vancouver to Ottawa, spent three months in Ottawa and then came. Obviously, the geography of the country determines that once they are elected it is not going to be very often that you will see that member again. Geography is one of the difficulties of representing a constituency in Canada. That is a dilemma we all face. It has nothing to do with party affiliation. It has nothing to do with ideology. It has entirely to do with geography.

So, we are caught in that dilemma. We want to represent our people in Ottawa and yet we also want to be with our people in the constituency.

I want to say to members opposite that this formula was dear to my heart when I sat on opposition benches, because it is important for us to speak out for our constituencies in Ottawa and represent them well here. At the same time, it is also important for us to be back home to get an understanding and a feel for what our constituents are saying.

One of the truisms of life is that the longer you spend in Ottawa, the more unrealistic the world becomes to you. It is only as we go back to our constituencies and only as we spend time with people who elected us, that we maintain a realistic view of what Canada is all about, what life is all about. The longer we stay in this city consistently, without any break, the surer we are of getting an unrealistic perspective of issues here and in our constituencies, and of our responsibilities. It is only as we go back home that we become reconnected to reality and understand the issues.

When I was in opposition, I was already in favour of this kind of reform. Added to that, I could see that the ministers of the Crown sitting in the treasury benches had an additional responsibility. They had an administrative responsibility that I, as a backbencher did not have. Yet management is a very important facet of government business.

Here are the ministers of the Crown—and again it does not matter which party is in office. Here is a minister of the Crown who has to be at Question Period every day and has to spend time being briefed for Question Period. At the same time he is concerned about his department, how it is being managed. The more time he spends here for Question Period, the more he is turning over to bureaucrats the management of the department. He has less time to examine what the bureaucrats are doing.

I heard recently that one of the ministers of the Crown had the highest compliment given to him when his department said "he is the best deputy minister we have ever had". By that it meant that this person is involved with every concern in his department. That is not always possible if you are trying to divide your time between the House and, as the opposition rightly demands, accounting for the administration which, in fact, includes administering and managing the department.

The opposition says that if you reduce the time you spend in the chamber you reduce the amount of democracy. Now, I think that deserves a little bit of examination:

I would contend that this is certainly an important forum for democracy but it does not begin here. Democracy really begins on the campaign trail, on the election trail, when we are elected to office. During that time we espouse the platforms we would promote if we were elected to office. I have said this on a number of occasions here. This is an idea that comes from the parties of the mother of Parliaments over in the United Kingdom. The platform, what they call the party manifesto, is all important. When they are campaigning they have a very carefully structured party manifesto and a platform which they enunciate during the campaign, and when they are elected they are accountable for making

sure that the legislative program that they introduce as a government follows their party manifesto.

Now that is the first step of democracy.

Mr. Fisher: So when are you going to start using it?

Mr. Friesen: I will come to that.

Mr. Fisher: Never.

Mr. Friesen: If we allow campaigning, as we have in the past, to be nothing but sloganeering, like "the land is strong" or "zap, you are frozen", if slogans which have very little to do with your legislative program once you are elected dominate your campaign, you will diminish the level of democracy right at the threshold where it ought to begin. When we diminish it there, naturally when we get into the Chamber here we have a free rein. If there is no structure in the campaign it is no wonder then that when you get to the Chamber opposition parties will object to the program that the government is presenting; it has had no forerunner, it has had no foundation.

Democracy begins on the campaign trail, and then it is developed here in, as someone said, "the crucible of democracy".

Therefore, to reduce the number of sitting days but lengthen the hours so that you have an aggregate number of increased hours is not a reduction of democracy. That is making democracy work.

I remember in the campaign of 1984 our party very clearly talked about wanting to dismantle the national energy program, and yet as soon as we were elected and we started doing that we were opposed. I mean, this is something we promised to do and yet the opposition said "you don't have a right to do what you promised to do".

Then we proposed, during the election campaign, privatization of the government corporations and the opposition said "no, no, you can't do that", but we had promised to do it.

It seems to me that is what an election campaign is all about. I come back to the United Kingdom experience. There is a saying over there among the two or three opposing parties—whatever the year happens to be—that the government is entitled to its legislation. It does, it gets it as it ought to. The opposition is entitled to debate what it sees as the flaws of that concept, of that ideology. That is true. That is the opposition's right and it ought to be exercised.

• (1840)

In the United Kingdom—and my friend from Newfoundland walks out—they debate an issue like that for five, six or seven not weeks, not days, but hours for a bill of some magnitude. They have concluded that if the government has campaigned on a platform and it was elected to introduce its platform and to legislate it into being, it is entitled to do that.

I remember sitting here for hours at night debating a bill on which we had campaigned, and we were being told withdraw the bill after we had campaigned on it. Somehow that to me sounds like a contradiction to democracy.

In the 1984 campaign we had over 50 per cent of the vote. Presumably we had a right to do it. That did not stop the opposition. Now the leader of the government says 53 per cent voted against us in the 1988 campaign. Well I do not remember any time when the Liberals were elected when they had 50 per cent of the vote. That did not stop them from introducing their election campaign platform, their legislation. They did what they wanted even though they had less than 50 per cent of the vote.

I want to point out that the beginning of democracy having a clearly defined campaign, that the crucible of democracy is here and we are entitled to legislate the campaign promises that we introduced and we go on from there.

I would like to underline another concept and that is the myth that by reducing the number of days we are introducing a radical new reduction of democracy when, as the government House leader pointed out this morning, Australia with a geography somewhat problematic to them, like we have here, has 66 sitting days a year. It passes 89 per cent of the bills introduced. Canada sits 155 days, two and a half times as long, and passes 56 per cent of the bills introduced.

I am asking members opposite: is that an efficient use of parliamentary time? If we have campaigned on a platform and the legislation flows from it, are we not

entitled as an efficient democratic body to introduce and receive passage of that legislation?

West Germany sits on the average of 17 days a year. It passes 90 per cent of its legislation. Japan sits 43 days a year and passes 76 per cent of its bills. Even the United States, which has a little bit of a problem of geography and population, sits only 144 days a year and passes the majority of its legislation.

It is a little bit of a ruse to say that by reducing the number of days we sit so that we can spend time in our constituencies but increasing the number of hours in the days we sit so that we maintain the same amount of time in the chamber, is somehow a reduction in democracy.

I want to make one other point and that has to do with Question Period. If members opposite are interested in improving the efficiency of Question Period, I would simply point out to them that they have the same bothersome, meddlesome worries I had when I sat over there: The prima donnas who sit on the front benches hog all the camera time.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Friesen: I have their attention, Mr. Speaker. The man who is best at it is laughing. When you have members sitting in the front and asking questions that take two and three minutes, that inspire answers that are just as long, two or three minutes, give me a break, you cannot have many questions answered in a 45 minute question period. What each caucus needs to do is put the boots to those guys who hog the camera and the time, limit them and get rid of the speeches and ask short, pertinent questions that require short, pertinent answers. We will improve Question Period far more than adding a few days of Question Period to the calendar of the House of Commons.

I invite each caucus, including ours, to do that, then we will improve the procedure of the House of Commons.

Third, I want to talk about committees. Can I speak as long as the opposition House leader did? The third point I want to make is regarding committees. It is important that we start invoking the principle of approval in principle in the House and make committees do the work of technical improvement of the bills.

I remember when we were debating C-55 and C-84. We had an immigration lawyer before us who opposed the bill. He was not in favour of the bill. He came before the committee, not to say withdraw the bill. He said: "You have improved it in principle, now here are ways I think that you can improve it". That is what we need to do.

Mr. Heap: And you ignored him.

Mr. Friesen: We did not. My friend from Spadina said we ignored him. No, we did not. As a matter of fact, he gave us very good consultative advice that we used.

I am sorry I do not have as much time as the opposition House leader. I know the members of the opposition would love to hear me speak longer, but I heed your advice.

Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, speaking for this side of the House, the only ruse in this place is the one being regurgitated by the government here tonight and being roasted by us on this side.

The hon. member speaks well of reality if the reality was that this was the year 1969, because today, in 1991, we have had advancements in communications and the tools of communication, the likes of which this member has not seen in 15 to 20 years. We have the parliamentary reports which we can put out quarterly. Every three months you can send one out. We have access to distribute information in lots of 4,000 pieces, as many times a week as you care to. We have free mailing privileges that go out to all your constituents in your riding.

Mr. Gagliano: Community television.

Mr. Friesen: Community television, the Whip for the opposition party states. Community television where you can go and take a member of the government if you want to, if he or she is obliging, and go across the street to a cable organization, sit down with that person, spend 28 minutes discussing the issues of the day and mail it to your riding. Free mailing privileges and telephone privileges. If someone calls or someone expresses a problem to your constituency, you can get on that phone immediately from your constituency office and call that constituent back immediately.

I am available to my constituents. All they have to do is call the office and make it a point to tell my office that they want to see me. I say terrific. I am in the House Monday through Friday doing the job in the highest court of the land, the privilege that we have to be here on behalf of our constituents. This is the place of work. If we could move it to Hamilton West we would be more than happy to, but unfortunately there are 295 members with the same opinion. We cannot even convince the government to get an airport there, never mind the House of Commons. They can make it a point to request that they would like to see me on Saturday.

• (1850)

The constituency office is open Saturdays for that express purpose. If we really love this job, if we are really here because we believe in our country and we want to do the right thing for our constituents, if we want to stand up for our home town no matter where it is in this country, we are going to make ourselves available to the people who put us here.

That is what we are being paid for, and that is the job that we are here for.

Some hon. members: Right on.

Mr. Keyes: I do not want to test the hon. member for Surrey—White Rock—South Langley but I want to ask him: "When did the sun rise—"

I will come to my question.

Mr. Friesen: Oh, you've got a question?

Mr. Keyes: This is question and comments. I will give my comment, and I will ask the member a question.

This member has been in the House for how many years?

An hon. member: Too long.

Mr. Friesen: Sixteen: it does not matter.

Mr. Keyes: The member has been in the House for 16 years. When did the sun finally rise—

Mr. Laporte: Order, let someone else ask a question.

Mr. Keyes: I am asking a question. When did the sun finally rise on this member that after 16 years, he finds it important that he must be back to his constituency for one week out of four.

It seems that for the last 16 years he has managed to do that quite capably. Did he rise in this House ever in the past 16 years and say: "By golly, Mr. Speaker, I have to get back to my riding association at least one week in four because I cannot seem to get the job done otherwise." No. Sixteen years he sat in this House, and there was no problem.

Now the government comes through with this new edict, this new magic for parliamentary reform which is complete nonsense. It is an appendage like an arm that should be cut off.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, here is a man from Hamilton who leaves his office at nine o'clock and can be here at 10.30 a.m. He has no time zone changes.

I will tell you that it is speeches like his that make western Canadians despise central Canada. They hate it with a vengeance.

He can vote here on a Wednesday and be at a meeting Wednesday night in his riding.

I will tell you: I get up and leave Vancouver at 9 a.m. and land here at 4.30 p.m. The day is gone. He can leave his office at 9 a.m. and get here at 10.30 a.m.

Smart aleck, that will never sell. He talks about all the brochures and what have you that he sends to his riding. Fine. So do I. That is why I have been here for 16 years. I do not think he will be here next time with that kind of an attitude.

For all the letters, parliamentary reviews and householders that we send out, the reality is that the people still want to talk to us personally. They want to meet with us personally. It is not easy to do when we have a six-hour flight on a Thursday or Friday. It is not easy to do six hours after a days' work and then meet constituents.

Wake up, smell the coffee and see how big Canada is. I want this member to know, Sir, it is one thing to send out householders and it is another thing to see them in flesh and blood. Maybe his wife is satisfied with a phone call, but I think she would rather see him in person. That is the way constituents feel, too.

It is not enough to get a letter. It is not enough to get a householder that your staff printed. They want to see us. They want to meet with us. For once, I would like to find a central Canadian from that party who would travel to the west often enough to see what it is like to represent a

constituency out there and still meet the needs, aspirations and the feelings of those people out there.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona): The question of the proposal with respect to three weeks on, one week off, has been around for a long time. It was looked at by the McGrath committee. It was not rejected at that time on its merits. It seems to me there are good arguments on both sides, and that is not the debate I am here to enter at this point.

I want to speak to what the member actually had to say and some of the things he did not say. He talked about governments having the right to implement their mandates. I agree with him. There is often irony in the questions that opposition members pose, but there are also examples of when governments bring forward things that they did not promise. All governments are guilty of this, and your government has been guilty of this as well, with respect. In my judgement, the GST and the free trade agreement, at least after 1984, are examples. There are times when the opposition feels that the government did not make point of saying it was going to do that, and I think it is legitimate at that point for people to make that part of the debate.

The member mentioned Question Period, which I think has deteriorated seriously in the time that I have been here. I remember when I first came here. Speaker Jerome was in the Chair. People were cut off if they had long preambles or were not permitted supplementaries. I think part of the deterioration of Question Period owes itself to the lack of discipline, with respect, that the Chair is unwilling to impose on the House, and also to the discipline of television, which looks for those 15 or 30-second sound bites which the old Question Period did not provide as easily. We have conformed ourselves to that medium and perhaps we need to take a second look at that.

The member made a point with respect to committees. He knows that when we considered these kinds of things during the McGrath committee, we also considered a process whereby the principle and the substance of bills would be considered beforehand in a way that this particular reform that he is now defending, does not introduce. That is one of the reasons why we are critical of it.

Finally, with respect to the whole question of efficiency, I think you could stand to introduce new efficiencies into this system if you at the same time introduced new meaning into those more efficient processes. This reform has failed to do that. You have not given real meaning and power to the participation of opposition members at the same time as you have introduced new efficiencies. That is where you fall down.

I wonder if the member could tell me why, in his defence, he did not mention the four areas where this reform—or deform, as we have called it—specifically goes back on recommendations made by the McGrath committee of which he was a part. The re-introduction of parliamentary secretaries into the standing committees is a case in point.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The time for questions and comments is over. Does the House give its unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Blaikie: Then there is the question of limited rooms for committees meeting within these envelopes, which will, as sure as I am standing here, have the effect of not permitting all committees to work when they want to work. That will take away the self-initiating power which the McGrath committee recommended. There is the question of legislative versus standing committees and the power which this reform would give to the government to decide whether or not a matter went to a legislative committee or a standing committee. Again, eroding the McGrath reforms. Finally, putting the whole matter of substitution even more under the Whips than it is now, when the spirit of the McGrath committee was to take power away from the Whips and invest it in the private members. The Whips have too much power over this place already. They are a scourge on this place. The essence of the McGrath report was to give more power to the private member, more power to committees, and that is exactly what this reform is not doing. In fact, the reform is going in the opposite direction.

I know I am not being fair in the sense that I have not given him the time to do so, but the member was a member of the McGrath committee and it would have been interesting to hear how he can justify these changes, knowing as I do, the position he held collective-

ly with me and other members in 1985 on these same matters.

Mr. Friesen: First of all, the member has given me a very lengthy list and I would like to deal with them with the thoroughness that I think they deserve, because he is a serious member on this subject. This is no gadfly, he is not a fly-by-nighter on this. He has been in on this subject for many, many years, and I would propose to deal with only two of them and then if the members will give me permission, pick it up at 11 a.m. tomorrow and then I can look at this list.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

• (1900)

[*Translation*]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 is deemed to have been moved.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, on March 25, the Commissioner of Official Languages submitted his annual report to the House of Commons. Given the social and political, or rather linguistic, climate, this report showed very encouraging signs of the rise of bilingualism in the country. It thus counterbalanced a more negative interim report, in my humble opinion, Mr. Speaker, made public five days earlier by the Spicer Commission on March 20.

In his report, the Commissioner of Official Languages says that four out of five Canadipans accept official bilingualism. Another encouraging fact: three out of four parents want their children to learn the second official language in immersion courses. Mr. Speaker, although this report mentions rising support for bilingualism in Canada, it also denounces the inertia of Treasury Board. The Commissioner says on page 36 and I quote:

> The list of what the Treasury Board Secretariat did in 1990 is not half as interesting as the catalogue of what it did not do.

The Commissioner says on page 83:

> The Treasury Board should be the engine of the renewal decreed by Parliament. We do not ask that it display zealousness; in future, we would merely ask that it discharge more effectively all its language policy responsibilities.

Mr. Speaker, that is why on March 25 I asked the President of the Treasury Board in this House how he could explain the 22 per cent reduction in staff at the Official Languages Division of Treasury Board, his own department. I asked him how he could reduce staff from 64 to 50 in this division which, as we know, is responsible for applying in his department and federal departments a law that is sometimes misunderstood, sometimes mismanaged and often misapplied.

The President of the Treasury Board replied—obviously evading the issue—that this division's budget had increased rather than decreased. Treasury Board is to check on what is being done in the departments and to take corrective action where required. How can the President of the Treasury Board dismiss 14 employees when the workload is going up rather than down? In so doing, he is shirking his responsibilities for fully and effectively applying the Official Languages Act.

Mr. Speaker, the Official Languages Act was adopted, as we know, in July 1988. However, nearly three years later, we are still without regulations on language of work—I stress language of work—and also without regulations on the need to have criteria for equitable participation. So we still lack two parts to go with the Official Languages Act.

Mr. Speaker, I asked the President of the Treasury Board to tell me when we could expect to receive regulations on the language of work from his department. He answered me, and I again quote his answer of March 25:

> With respect to the language of work, outside if you will, I believe the official language is already precise enough. As far as I know, there has been no major problem. Should one ever arise, we would be glad to deal with it at the appropriate time and place.

Mr. Speaker, either the President of the Treasury Board does not know what language of work means, which would surprise me, because he is an intelligent man, or his mind was on something other than the House of Commons or he has amnesia. A few days before, in a press release from a public service union, we learned that public servants had difficulty obtaining documentation and the right to communicate with their supervisor in their own language.

By language of work, Mr. Speaker, I mean the ability of public servants to work in either official language. I mean their ability to speak to their supervisor and receive personal services in their own language. I mean their ability to obtain ordinary, everyday material like forms and manuals in the language of their choice. Now,

the Commissioner of Official Languages reports on page 135, and I quote:

> A large number of supervisors, 25.6 per cent, are still unable to carry out this function in both official languages. As well, there are many others who, having passed a language test and qualified for the bilingualism bonus, make no effort to give their employees freedom of choice in language of work.

So there are no standards, Mr. Speaker. Nearly three years after the passage of the Act, the Commissioner still concludes, on page 132, and I quote:

> —that progress towards the language of work objective in federal institutions has stagnated both as a result of the vagueness of current policies and because many senior managers attached no priority to meeting the objective.

And further on, page 136:

> It seems clear that the language of work provisions of the 1988 Act will remain a dead letter unless the Governor in Council adopts regulations clarifying the rights of federal employees.

Furthermore, the Professional Institute of the Public Service, a rather well known union, said in a research report that 32.9 per cent of francophones cannot communicate in their language with their supervisor. The Official Languages Commissioner had to report, page 132, that his "words fell on deaf ears" in 1988 and 1989, for his recommendations regarding the establishment of a master plan to ensure implementation of the new Act were not retained.

The President of the Treasury Board answered that question last March 25 when he told me in this House that there was no problem. But there are problems, Mr. Speaker, and the government has to solve them. I feel it is high time for them, the Minister and his government, to remove their blinkers, to realize that regulations are needed. The need is urgent and imperative to ensure respect of both official languages in the workplace. I therefore ask this to the parliamentary secretary: When can we expect regulations about language of work? When can we expect regulations about fair representation?

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Kempling (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to reply to the question posed by the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier regarding official language regulations and the regulations on the language of work.

As hon. members are aware, the first priority of this government was to propose regulations on service to the public in English and in French. The President of the Treasury Board tabled such regulations in the House of Commons on November 8, 1990. These proposed regulations have been prepublished in *The Canada Gazette*, Part I, March 23, 1991.

The Parliamentary Committee on Official Languages is currently studying these proposals. I understand they will shortly be making their recommendations to the President of the Treasury Board.

As the President has already indicated on a number of occasions in this House, these regulatory proposals on serving the public were necessary to complete some key aspects of the Official Languages Act of 1988.

With regard to language of work matters, the Official Languages Act is already quite specific regarding the obligations of federal institutions. The act sets out a number of concrete requirements based on long-standing government policies that remain in place.

Let me just cite a few examples such as the provision of personal and job-related services to employees and work instruments in bilingual districts.

I understand that there were more detailed instructions as required. Treasury Board may issue policies or directives according to its mandate under the Official Languages Act.

It is indeed not necessary to regulate all matters. For instance, initiatives to create environments conducive to the effective use of both official languages may be taken without actually issuing regulations. These initiatives could range from federal institutions making special efforts to assist employees returning from language training to use their newly acquired skills in meetings and supervision to develop the bilingual lexicons in special areas. It goes without saying that Treasury Board will continue to carefully examine all matters related to language of work and will strive to ensure that all obligations under the Official Languages Act are met.

• (1910)

As for regulations on equitable participation, the Official Languages Act already sets out the government's long standing commitment in this area. I can tell hon. members that we are committed to ensure that English speaking and French speaking Canadians have equal opportunities to obtain employment and advancement in federal institutions. Current government policies are clear and explicit on this matter. In fact, participation levels in the Public Service broadly reflect those found in the appropriate sectors of the national labour force.

Any specific imbalances, such as anglophone participation in federal institutions in Quebec for example, are being dealt with by Treasury Board and the institutions concerned. Issuing regulations on language of work and equitable participation do not appear to be necessary at this time.

Moreover, I can assure hon. members that this government will continue to actively meet its obligations and commitments to the Canadian public and to its employees in accordance with the Official Languages Act.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Ross Harvey (Edmonton East): Mr. Speaker, do you remember the green plan? Do you remember the government's promise of significant and real progress in tackling environmental problems? The minister and the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources seem to have forgotten. At least that is the message in the latest budget.

For the seventh year in a row the department's funding of energy efficiency, conservation and alternatives was cut. Last year's already pathetic $40 million was cut another 12 per cent down to $35 million. That is a whopping cut of $375 million, 91 per cent in this budget item since 1984 when the budget was $410 million, the first year of the Conservative government's reign.

By contrast, in 1991–92 the government will be spending $154.8 million as a loan for the Husky Oil upgrader at Lloydminster and $180.6 million in the Hibernia project. That is more than $335 million in two oil megaprojects in 1991–92 alone. That is almost 10 times the entire budget for all energy efficiency, conservation and alternatives.

In the case of Hibernia, the government will be giving over $1 billion of taxpayers' money—that's right, a $1 billion gift—to a consortium that is planning to ship virtually all Hibernia oil straight to the United States. It will not even be refined in Canada. That $1 billion give to Hibernia, a straight subsidy to American consumers, would have paid for this government's measly annual funding commitment to all energy efficiency, conservation and alternatives—remember, Mr. Speaker, $35 million—for over 28 years.

Again, by contrast, this year the government will funnel $215 million into nuclear power development through Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd. and the Atomic Energy Control Board and there is more. According to a speech the minister gave June 5, 1990, to the Canadian Nuclear Association, Canada has invested a staggering $30 billion in nuclear facilities. Presumably this includes the $40 million per year that AECL spent over the last 10 years just to investigate sweeping its radioactive waste into a hole in the Canadian Shield.

One final contrast, even after just six months in power the New Democratic Government of Ontario has already left the Mulroney Conservatives far behind on environmentally responsible energy policy. As just one example, the Ontario government has ordered Ontario Hydro to divert $240 million—that is $60 million a year for four years—from nuclear energy development into reducing electricity demand through energy conservation and efficiency.

That diversion alone is worth more than one and a half times the total annual energy department spending on all federal programs for efficiency, conservation and alternate energy. Indeed that total federal budget of $35 million is only a little over twice what Ontario Hydro will spend each year merely on advertising its conservation and efficiency programs.

I should point out as well that Ontario Hydro is subsidizing the federal government in a pilot project to save energy in about 60 federal government buildings. That project, to install new lighting, motors and insulation, which reportedly will save the federal government $860,000 a year in energy costs, is being extended to all federal buildings in Ontario. I do hope that this program will demonstrate to the Mulroney Conservatives just what a little leadership can do.

Less than two weeks ago, on March 25, the all party House of Commons Standing Committee on the Environment tabled its report on global warming. This unanimous report entitled *Out of Balance—the Risks of Irreversible Climate Change* warns that the phenomenon of global warming is a fact and it poses a severe threat to Canada and to the planet as a whole.

The report obviously supports what the minister stated in a speech he gave in Toronto on September 13, 1989, and I quote:

> The greatest reductions in carbon dioxide can be obtained through energy efficiency and conservation.

Having made these remarks, the minister then cut the budget for energy efficiency and conservation by a two-year total of 28 per cent.

The minister still talks a good line. He was quoted in a *Globe and Mail* article of March 30, 1991 apparently qualifying remarks—laughable in a morbid sort of way when you consider this government's massive bias against energy efficiency and alternatives in favour of fossil fuel and nuclear megaprojects—that the Mulroney Conservatives have a "market based" approach to energy policy. Said Mr. Epp:

> I think it is the role of an energy minister to get us into areas where the present infrastructure will not take us. If people argue that I am moving away from the marketplace, I will accept that charge.

Mr. Speaker, I pray for the day when I will be able honestly to level that charge.

Perhaps, just maybe, the minister is beginning to believe some of the good advice he has been receiving. For example, in March 1989, his department received a report entitled *Energy Demand in Canada, 1973–1987*, which included a series of proposals for future policies and programs. It says, and I quote:

> To achieve the major economic and environmental benefits that energy efficiency still has to offer, government policies and programs for the future will need to emphasize a strategic combination of, energy efficient standards; improved information programs; financial incentives, and Research Development and Demonstration assistance.
>
> To rely solely on energy prices and existing market mechanisms is a formula for failure. Active and constructive intervention in the marketplace is absolutely essential.

In Halifax last June 18, just 11 days after his bill to authorize the bill dollar gift to Hibernia passed second reading, the minister told members of the Solar Energy Society of Canada that, and again I quote:

> It is clear that a safe, environmentally sound and economically viable energy path is imperative for this country. For this reason, we are firmly committed to the expansion of the efficiency and alternative energy sector. Like you, we want it to play a much larger role in Canada's energy economy.

The words and the evidence are clearly at odds. So my question to the parliamentary secretary is this. In view of this government's repeated funding cuts to energy conservation, efficiency and alternatives, what conclusion can Canadians draw other than that this government's actions, contrasted with its claim to be truly committed to energy conservation, efficiency and alternatives, merely demonstrates its stunning hypocrisy?

Mr. John A. MacDougall (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is committed to the goal of maintaining and enhancing the environmental quality and in the green plan as set out by a comprehensive framework for the achievement of this goal.

The green plan contains strategies for improving the quality of air, land and water. The green plan promises that as a part of the strategy for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the government will take several specific actions. It will implement the National Action Strategy on global warming that will be a comprehensive approach, cast in the international context, emphasize flexibility to take account of new information and developments and recognize regional differences.

It will table a National Energy Efficiency Alternative Energy Act dealing with the regulation of energy efficiency levels in energy-using equipment, labelling of products to convey information on energy use, and collection of statistics on energy use.

It will set minimum energy efficiency standards for appliances and equipment.

It will improve and expand the present Energuide program for energy labelling of home appliances.

It will update and regionalize the federal Measures for Energy Conservation in new buildings, and encourage their incorporation in building codes.

It will improve the energy efficiency of transportation by setting new fuel efficiency standards, helping to inform fleet managers and drivers and working with the

provinces and municipalities on improvements in the transportation system.

The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources will establish a National Advisory Council to promote government industry co-operation and to establish energy efficiency targets for each of Canada's industrial sectors. Alternative energy sources will be encouraged through accelerated development of market penetration of alternative transportation fuels, including expansion of natural gas markets, increased availability of alternative fuel vehicles and support for research and development.

• (1920)

This hon. member is incorrect in his statement that EMR has reduced funding for efficiency and alternative energy in the fiscal year 1991-92. The government's estimates tabled recently projected expenditures of $34.7 million, slightly higher than the level of expenditures for the fiscal year 1990-91.

While the hon. member chooses to criticize the government for its current spending levels on efficiency and alternative energy programs, he does so most selectively. What he fails to acknowledge is that for all intents and purposes, spending reductions on these programs were due to the government's commitment to erase the last vestiges of the National Energy Program. Moreover, spending on efficiency and alternative energy under the NEP provided for a cumbersome and ineffective manner.

Four years and millions of dollars later, taxpayers were shown little return on their investment.

This government and our department is committed to the green plan and committed, Sir, to ensure that all Canadians have an equal opportunity to work and also being able to ensure that we have an environment for the future.

[*Translation*]

MONTREAL'S ECONOMY

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard): Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to speak on a subject of the utmost importance for the people of the Montreal area. I am referring to the disastrous job situation and economic conditions in Montreal.

Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time I raise this question. I raised it over six times since February 25 and I have not yet received a satisfactory answer.

The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that this government has forgotten Montreal. On December 10, 1990, I asked a question to the Minister of Employment and Immigration regarding the deplorable job situation in the province of Quebec. At that time, 87,000 jobs had been lost in Quebec just over a six month period.

The minister told me, at the time, that employment programs were available in Quebec and that I would be happy with the results they would produce.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I must admit that I am still not satisfied with the efforts made by this government to create jobs in the Montreal area. That is why I raised the question again on March 18. So, Mr. Speaker, let us look at what results the employment initiatives of this government have produced.

In Montreal, today, one person out of four is living below the threshold of poverty. The unemployment rate for the region encompassing the Montreal area reached 15.1 per cent in February according to Statistics Canada.

These are the results of the employment policies of this government and the reason why I raise the subject again tonight.

Economic conditions in Montreal are so bad that the unemployment rate is higher there than in any other city in Canada. The situation is getting worse and we have no economic recovery programs in place.

Based on the report the SECOR counsulting group presented to the Quebec government, an estimated 615,000 people are living in poverty in the Montreal area. Nowadays, that is unacceptable!

On March 18, the Minister of Labour told me that his government had invested millions of dollars over the past two years to help stimulate the economy in Montreal.

Where has that money gone? The economic situation in Montreal only got worse. In the *La Presse* issue of March 28, we can read that 60 per cent of the welfare recipients in Montreal have been on welfare rolls for more than two years.

We must conclude, that this government's action does not improve in any way Montrealers' standard of living. Indeed, one would be wrong to say that because the

initiatives of this government have had one result: to throw Canada's economy and Montreal's in particular into a slump. They have destroyed families by depriving them of their income, of their jobs and of their salaries.

On March 18, the minister of Labour has stressed that in order to create jobs it was necessary to teach people new technologies. But, I told him that a new knowledge is useless if one is unable to put it into practice. A person will be able to put his newly acquired knowledge to good use only if we create new jobs and if Canadians have a renewed faith in their economy. Unfortunately, this government has managed to achieve exactly the opposite, since jobs are more difficult to find and Canadians in general have less confidence in the economy.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the situation today, we see that in Quebec the bankruptcy rate has increased by 40 per cent in the first few months in 1991. According to Statistics Canada, 1,618 individuals have asked for the protection of the Bankruptcy Act. If the minister wants to increase confidence in the economy, these figures won't help. As for the government's effort to create jobs, I would say their record leaves much to be desired.

I have just mentioned to the minister that people need jobs in which they can use their new knowledge. However, by reducing funds for research and development, the government is not encouraging job creation. Between 1987 and 1990, government spending in that area decreased from 1.4 per cent to 1.28 per cent of the GNP. Mr. Speaker, again, I ask the government: How will they resolve the unemployment problem in greater Montreal and throughout the vast Montreal region? What will they do to help save the 1,800 jobs being threatened at General Motors, in Boisbriand, in the Sainte-Thérèse area? What measures will they introduce to put Montreal's economy back on track? What help will they provide to the 225,000 unemployed in the Montreal region to finally revitalize this economy the government seems to have forgotten?

Mr. Speaker, I know my time is almost up. I just wanted to explain how it feels to read articles such as there: Poverty gaining ground in the Montreal region; 615,000 people living in poor households, 50 per cent in Montreal. Montreal, once the biggest city in Canada, has become the unemployment capital of Canada, the welfare capital of our country. The time has come for this government to assume its responsibilities and stop the dramatic loss of our country's very valuable human resources.

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Kempling (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Employment and Immigration, I wish to respond in greater detail to the questions of March 13 by the member for Saint-Léonard.

Let me first say something about jobs. Between 1980 and 1984 when the Liberal government was in power, 4,000 jobs were lost in Montreal. Between March 1985 and March 1991, 96,000 net jobs were created in Montreal. We know that more needs to be done, but the hon. member belittles that great city if he paints a picture of unrelieved gloom.

We know assistance is necessary. The statistics make that clear. This government is taking a number of measures beneficial to the economy of Quebec, and Montreal in particular. Agreement has been signed with the province of Quebec to spend $440 million in federal funding over five years, between 1988 and 1993, on economic development in all regions of Quebec.

The government is very concerned about the challenges faced by certain neighbourhoods in Montreal, especially the southwest. In April 1989 the federal government responded to the Creesom report and announced that it would provide the following assistance in southwest Montreal:

> Employment and Immigration Canada will allocate $32.5 million over the next five years on various labour market initiatives. The government intends to work with the local community to develop sustainable jobs and more qualified labour. For the last two years it has been working with RESO, an economic development corporation, to establish training priorities. For example, EIC is presently developing with RESO a special school where local residents can receive training assistance.
>
> Industry, science and technology will provide $15 million to establish an industrial recovery program for southwest Montreal.
>
> The federal government will also provide housing and financial assistance to southwest Montreal. Forty-eight million dollars in Federal Business Development Bank loans has been allocated over the next five years to promote economic activity in this area.

There are many more assistance projects that have been announced by this government:

In November 1990 the Department of Employment and Immigration allocated $2 million to establish in east Montreal a petrochemical training centre. This will respond to that industry's need for skilled workers.

The Canadian Jobs Strategy also helps. In 1990-91, $32 million in Canadian Jobs Strategy funding has enabled 7,925 Montrealers to participate in training programs. Furthermore, a total of 46 industrial adjustment committees are active in the Montreal region.

Finally, I understand the member's concern with the Montreal economy and the job market. This government was concerned with this particular issue long before the members opposite chose to focus on the unemployment statistics.

For example, the government fought for Bill C-22, the pharmaceuticals bill, which brought investment and jobs to this city. The members opposite did not want this legislation and delayed it for 17 months.

The government knew that a more innovative approach to labour market programs was needed in early 1989, and yet Bill C-21 came into force only in late 1990. Had we had Bill C-21 in place in January 1990, $800 million in UI training expenditures would have been spent last year in this country. Montreal would have benefited, but had to wait until the opposition made up its mind.

In conclusion, the government is helping the Montreal petrochemical industry, an industry which was all but completely abandoned by the former government.

This government is helping the Montreal and Quebec economy, and it did so long before the opposition woke up in March and chose to focus its attention for the first time on the state of the Montreal economy.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

The House adjourned at 7.33 p.m.

APPENDIX

ADDRESS
of
THE PRESIDENT OF MEXICO, MR. CARLOS SALINAS DE GORTARI
to
Both Houses of Parliament
in the
HOUSE OF COMMONS CHAMBER, OTTAWA
on
Monday, April 8, 1991

APPENDIX

ADDRESS

of

THE PRESIDENT OF MEXICO,
MR. CARLOS SALINAS DE GORTARI

to

Both Houses of Parliament

in the

HOUSE OF COMMONS CHAMBER, OTTAWA

on

Monday, April 8, 1991

President and Mrs. Salinas were welcomed by the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney, Prime Minister of Canada, by the Honourable Guy Charbonneau, Speaker of the Senate and Honourable John A. Fraser, Speaker of the House of Commons

[*English*]

Hon. John A. Fraser (Speaker of the House of Commons): The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. President, Madam Salinas, Mr. Speaker, *cher collègues, mesdames et messieurs*:

During my visit to Mexico last year, Mr. President, we laid the foundation of a new beginning in relations between Mexico and Canada. Today with your visit here all of us build on that foundation, and on behalf of the people of Canada I extend to you, Mr. President, to Mrs. Salinas, your family, and all members of the Mexican delegation the warmest of welcomes to our country, Canada.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Mulroney: Formal diplomatic relations between Canada and Mexico go back many decades. First contacts date to the days of Captain George Vancouver who gave Canada's largest Pacific island its original name, "Vancouver Y Quadra", after himself and the commander of the Spanish vessels, *Mexicana* and *Sutil* with whom he sailed.

[*Translation*]

If Canada and Mexico grew on the same continent, each tended to look elsewhere, however, for like-minded partners. But the world around us is changing dramatically and economic competition and opportunity are the hallmarks of our age. And so it is no coincidence that both of us have re-calibrated our global orientations and re-formulated our foreign policy priorities, at about the same time.

• (1110)

[*English*]

Since you came to office, Mexico has been focusing more northward to the United States, our common neighbour, and to Canada, to build new partnerships to improve the lives of your people. And Canada has begun to focus more southward, to consolidate our base in the hemisphere and to pursue new opportunities in the global economy.

Our first step in implementing this new policy direction was to conclude a free trade relationship with the United States. As you know, the decision to secure that free trade relationship was supported 100 per cent by all Canadians and all members of this House of Commons.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Mulroney: Well, give or take a few.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Mulroney: The next step was to develop a comprehensive strategy for relations with Latin America. By the year 2000, 600 million people with a purchasing power of $1 trillion will live in Latin America. It will constitute a continent of enormous economic power and great political influence on the world stage.

As part of our strategy for relations with Latin America we have joined the Organization of American States, both to demonstrate our commitment to progress in this hemisphere and also to play our part in making it happen. A lynch pin of our strategy is our renewed relationship with Mexico.

During my visit to Mexico last year we concluded 10 agreements covering a wide range of public policy issues from law enforcement to environmental protection. Today, four more agreements are being signed; on film co-production, double taxation, and on commerce, including a $500 million line of credit between EDC and Pemex.

These agreements are further building blocks in the construction of our new relationship.

A North American free trade agreement is a logical next step. That is why, Mr. President, we have endorsed your proposal for such an agreement. We know that the road will be long and difficult. We know it is a courageous decision by you, Mr. President, and all parliamentarians wish you well.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Mulroney: A North American free trade agreement would create a market of over 350 million people with a gross product of over $7 trillion, bigger than the European Community whose economic relationships will intensify greatly in 1992.

[*Translation*]

Trade in goods and service would exceed $300 billion per year. Canadian consumers would benefit from the lower prices that competition and comparative advantage can deliver. And Canadian producers would benefit competitively from the restructuring and modernization that access to a larger market makes possible.

We have no intention, however, of renegotiating the Canada-U.S.A., FTA. We want to build on the FTA and to expand trade liberalization to encompass all of North America.

The objective of all three governments is to negotiate an agreement that allows them to strengthen their economies through free trade, for the benefit of their people.

[*English*]

The advantages for Mexico are clear. If there is one lesson that globalization and interdependence have taught, it is that increased trade brings higher living standards and greater opportunities. Trade, not aid, has opened up the most effective avenues to prosperity and to social justice. Aid, while extremely helpful has not itself been able to deliver prosperity. But trade, by transforming developing nations into advanced economies, has done so.

Not so long ago Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan were considered to be underdeveloped centres of low-cost labour. But as a result of sound economic policies at home and increased trade abroad, the standard of living in these countries on a per capita basis, is on a track to parity with the western industrialized countries during this decade. This is an extraordinary achievement and I think it is one that Mexico is going to emulate.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Mulroney: Countries with strong economies can afford to provide their citizens with social benefits that others cannot. These same countries are also those that can afford to impose the most stringent environmental standards on their industries and on their citizens. They are also the countries that dominate international trade.

Mr. President, 87 per cent of Canadian imports now come from the United States, Europe and Japan, and not from, for example, countries with extremely low wage rates such as China or India or the Soviet Union. The argument that wage structures in less developed nations somehow fundamentally distort a free trade area, or provide substantially unfair advantages, does not stand up to serious scrutiny.

The reality is that in the knowledge age we live in, competitiveness depends not on one, but on many factors, including education, training, productivity, communications and transportation networks, proximity to markets, and the costs of capital as well as the costs of labour.

[*Translation*]

The Government of Canada believes that a Canada-U.S.-Mexico free trade agreement can prove to be in the best interests of all concerned—if it can be achieved on terms that are acceptable to all three sovereign nations.

But important as the trade issue is, there is much more on the agenda of our two countries. Cooperation is underway on environmental protection. Business links are growing between private enterprise on both sides. And 350,000 Canadian tourists and business people visited Mexico last year.

Talks between President Salinas and I will address the evolving situation in this hemisphere to which he, as President of Mexico, brings a unique perspective. And our talks will go beyond respective domestic and regional concerns to the ongoing challenges in the Persian Gulf, the evolving situation in the Soviet Union, the prospects for successful conclusion of multilateral trade negotiations and the urgent need to limit the spread of weapons of mass destruction and to control the sale of arms.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker, simply put, there would be no discussion today of a resurgent Mexico, much less of a North American free trade agreement, were it not for President Salinas. His confidence in Mexicans and their confidence in themselves, have made it possible to transform attitudes, to accomplish changes and to chart a course that even five years ago seemed unthinkable.

Canadians respect Mexico's dynamism, and all Canadians admire Mexico's culture. We welcome you today, Mr. President, as the visionary leader of a great people with an exciting future. Here in the House of Commons, this crucible of Canadian democracy, I invite you now, on behalf of all parliamentarians of all political parties, who value our association with Mexico—and all of us do—I invite you today to address the Parliament and the people of Canada.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

• (1120)

His Excellency Carlos Salinas de Gortari (President of Mexico):

[*His Excellency spoke in Spanish.*]

[*Translation*]

The Hon. John A. Fraser, Speaker of the House of Commons of Canada; the Hon. Guy Charbonneau, Speaker of the Senate of Canada; the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney, Prime Minister of Canada; hon. members of the House of Commons and Senate of Canada; Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen: I come here in respectful response to the invitation extended to me by this sovereign body, which so worthily represents the people of Canada. In this house of democracy resides the will of the great Canadian nation to find its own answers to its needs and to forge its own path in the world. I bring to this rostrum the friendship of the Mexican people and speak with their voice in expressing our desire for Mexico and Canada to become better acquainted with their many coinciding aspects, as well as with the wealth of their differences, so that together we may embark on new relations of exchanges and co-operation for our mutual benefit.

Canada and Mexico are both the outcome of singular experiences, but both are genuine nations, soundly rooted in their history and solidly backing their national project. Here in this Parliament speaks the voice of a sensitive and vigorous country that jealously guards its linguistic and cultural traditions and cherishes peace and co-operation among nations. Mexico draws its identity from a synthesis of civilizations and cultures; the strength of our blending of races gradually built up a national character that is proud of its past, aware that it is the heir and custodian not only of universal values but also of its own way of life and profound communal solidarity.

Mexico has a robust identity and sufficient vitality to build its own sovereign future. We therefore do not fear an encounter with the world, rather we actively seek it. To be bent on autarky would not only be Utopian, but would mean condemning ourselves to backwardness and marginalization. Our homeland is able to look out at the world and open itself up to contact with other peoples, without thereby failing to be faithful to itself, to its traditions and culture, to its values and historical *raison d'être*. We Mexicans today look towards the future and are determined to play a significant role in the coming century.

That is why I have come to Canada, an industrialized nation with a high export volume, a wealth of natural resources and a wide rate of freedoms, which will undoubtedly contribute to shaping the world of the third millennium. The Mexican people want to establish new continental relations that are more dynamic, more productive and more just. By doing so, our governments will be in a better position to carry out their tasks in a manner befitting the men and women of our countries and our times, who are doing their best to make our hemisphere an area of convergence and freedoms. We can take advantage of the goodwill and hard work of our peoples to guide our agreements and encounters to our mutual

benefit and ensure that this new world will once again astonish humanity, just as it did 500 years ago.

Members of Parliament: Today, as we are just beginning to witness the end of the world's post-war structure, we recognize the crafty barriers and outworn dogmas that are designed to hinder the exchange of ideas, goods and people. The new co-operation between the great powers, the autumn revolution in central and eastern Europe, the new democracies here in the Americas, evinced, to our fascination, the global nature of the human condition, the flexibility of politics and the economic interdependence of nations. The Persian Gulf conflict was a painful reminder of the same global reality. Today, it is no longer possible to dream of an isolated social experience, impenetrable to coexistence or to alien conflicts. The hope and the challenge of building a world governed by international law are growing at a parallel rate. The true challenge of our times is to recognize the constructive force of the globalization of history, to face with responsibility and respect the variety of social experience and to avert the risk of new attempts at protagonism and new myths aimed at ignoring the sovereignty rights of states.

The world economy is the stage of a harsh and intense competition for markets. The revolution in knowledge and technology is transforming work habits and making social relations more fluid. New centres of innovation, resources and trade are at the forefront of economic activity and are forming into blocs to profit from their comparative advantages. To have staying power in this new international arena demands changes in economic structures, openness to competition and innovation, and new forms of association both within and outside the borders of individual nations.

In view of those circumstances, Mexico has set out to make the changes needed to secure a new placement in the world economy and to play an active role in the political configuration of the future. Within our borders, Mexican society has undergone a significant transformation over the past 25 years. Our current population of 82 million will increase by a further 10 million during my administration. Every year, one million young people seek to join administration. Every year, one million young people seek to join the labour force. Their demands are clear-cut. They want opportunities, services, and to participate in the decisions that concern them as well as in national affairs. They now reflect the demands of a better-informed and therefore politically more active, mature society. That is why in Mexico development, democracy and, above all, solidarity with those who have the least are essential needs and not merely options for defining government policies. Our response has had to be commensurate with these legitimate demands and in keeping with the new global reality.

We have strengthened our democratic institutions by changing the customs and practices that hampered the indispensable modernization of our structures. Thus, we now have a more vigorous system of parties in which increased electoral competition is the distinctive characteristic of political contention. The progress of democracy in Mexico has been reflected in the establishment of a new juridical framework for electoral matters, the result of an agreement reached between the different and even opposing political forces in the country. This new electoral legislation ensures a framework agreed upon with a view to establishing mutual responsibilities and acceptance of electoral results. We Mexicans know that our greatest political challenge lies in renovating our democratic practices, organization and structures in unison, so as to respond to an increasingly demanding society.

Mexico has never lost its course on the road to democracy. However, if politics are to be constructive, favourable economic conditions need to be established—as many fledgling democracies are beginning to discover—to ensure that the aspirations and ideals of liberty are solidly founded in actual reality in order to be long-lasting. The democratic exercise of power therefore also involved building economic foundations that will give our people more and better opportunities to realize their hopes for a decent life.

In Mexico, it is through our modernization strategy that we have sought to regain the path to gradual, sustained growth. After two years of persevering joint efforts in that direction made by society and the government, we have succeeded in achieving a growth rate of 4 per cent of GNP in real terms, and in reducing the public deficit to just half a percentage point of our national product, the lowest level in a quarter of a century. Strict fiscal discipline and a successful, timely renegotiation of the foreign debt have provided the necessary stability. Moreover, the pact signed by all sectors of society to

reduce inflation remains in force, and this year we aim to cut it back to half the rate recorded in 1990.

During the past two years, Mexicans have seen inflation reduced more than it had been over the past 20 years. Our objective is to lower it to single-digit levels comparable to those of our main trading partners and to provide the greatest possible certainty regarding the development of our economy.

Economic stability has therefore been our highest priority. From the outset we viewed it as an essential condition for ensuring the continuity and viability of the structural measures that we have implemented in order to modernize our productive plant. The main objective is to make Mexico a major exporting country: hence the urgent need to ensure greater efficiency in productive processes and over-all quality of the end product. That is why we opened up our economy to international and domestic competition. In a brief period of time, we moved from being one of the most closed developing economies to being one of the most open. We have dismantled non-tariff barriers, removing them from over 85 per cent of imports; tariffs now average 10 per cent and the highest stands at 20 per cent. We needed to encourage innovation and competition, and to take advantage of the arbitrage of foreign prices on domestic prices.

• (1130)

That, in turn, meant broadening and stepping up the process of deregulating large sectors of our economy and establishing more attractive conditions to encourage greater flows of foreign direct investment, on which access to new technology largely depends. The fields of transportation, telecommunications and secondary petrochemicals are now more efficient and competitive; new regulations afford security and certainty to foreign investors who now have 100 per cent access to investment in activities that account for nearly two-thirds of our GNP. The Mexican Congress is currently studying bills to define clear, competitive rules for the protection of intellectual property rights. The climate for investment is attractive and dependable. This year Mexico has witnessed the arrival of nearly $4 billion in foreign investment and we expect more in the future.

Another important structural change has lain in the sale of public companies that are not of a strategic or priority nature. Our State has grown not only in terms of bureaucracy but also of property. The economic crisis of the past decade revealed the seriousness of the problem. More state-owned property and greater trade protectionism in Mexico simply did not lead to greater justice or greater economic strength that would allow us to deal with international contingencies and grow. The government has therefore privatized mining industries and companies, our airlines, and the telephone company, and soon to come are the commercial banks. The funds obtained from such sales have aided financial stability and have been invested in tackling extreme poverty. The Mexican people realize that government responsibility does not lie in owning a new fleet of aeroplanes or new bank offices, but in meeting demands for water and schools, and in providing opportunities for Indian, rural and urban communities. That is why Mexicans support the government's programs for change and thereby guarantee the continuity of such programs.

This shows the magnitude of the efforts made by the Mexican people. The strength of the nation and its increased capability to meet domestic needs and the demands resulting from globalization of the economy rest on a firm foundation. Consequently, we now intend to step up the process of diversifying our ties and bolstering trade relations with the various regional integration areas. We are aware of the potential of our geographic location, which makes us, like Canada, neighbours of the world's strongest economy and a link between the Orient and the Occident. We are also aware that Mexico is a bridge connecting the northern and southern parts of the hemisphere, which implies greater two-way trade with the countries of Latin America and therefore a secure link in shaping a continent-wide, free trade area.

Consequently, we have begun talks with Canada and the United States of America that will, in the near future, enable us to embark on negotiations leading to the signing of a trilateral free trade treaty. I am convinced that such a treaty is unquestionably the best option for the parties involved. It is an opportunity for our three nations to create a major economic zone that while respecting our cultural differences, will have the

vitality to compete successfully with the European market and the Asian Pacific Rim.

Within the framework of an agreement between sovereign nations that will do away with tariff and non-tariff barriers, increase the expand trade patterns and objectively and justly resolve differences, we can expect investment and the creation of jobs to benefit all three countries. We will also be able to find economies of scale that will not only increase the competitiveness of Canada and restore that of the United States, but also bring Mexico's competitiveness up to world levels. A new array of technological options may well open up as a result of greater specialization and diversification in production and exports. We have what is needed to translate efforts into well-being for the inhabitants of North America.

Particularly for a country such as Canada, where the export of goods and services accounts for one-fourth of the gross domestic product, Mexico's market, in full expansion with 82 million consumers, is a potential destination for Canadian products and investment. Correspondingly, Mexico is seeking free and reciprocal access for its products to Canada and the United States. Furthermore, we are convinced that such conditions will generate greater investment and more sources of well-paid jobs, which will dissuade our fellow countrymen from leaving Mexico in search of job opportunities in the north. Economic relations with the United States are already strong, but we now wish to ensure that they grow in an organized and equitable manner, taking into account differences in the levels of development achieved by the two economies.

Very broad opportunities truly exist, since the economies of Canada and Mexico are complementary. Mexico is seeking to gain from Canadian experience in the fields where Canada has consolidated advanced infrastructure and has leading-edge technology. Such fields include, for example, telecommunications and public transportation, advanced irrigation projects, and water and environmental sanitation. Efforts to modernize Mexico urgently call for access to different technological options that will give producers greater flexibility in meeting the expectations of modern consumers.

Freer trade between our nations is expected to enhance the well-being of our peoples. We must not blame free trade for the conditions imposed on the productive situation by other factors. We have nothing to fear but barriers and obstacles that are intended to protect some parties from competition and, in doing so, end up destroying creativity and well-being. We must not forget that, sooner or later, such barriers have been demolished by the freedom-seeking vitality of peoples and by their demands for justice.

Distinguished members of Parliament, a free trade agreement between Canada and the United States of America is already in force. Arduous and intense negotiations preceded the signing of this agreement and now serve as valuable experience of which Mexico hopes to take advantage. Although the debate was undoubtedly intense, it was finally shown that the economic prosperity of Canada, one of the world's most important exporting countries, is closely linked to access to new markets and consequently to plans for developing a free trade in goods and services. An economy that closes itself off loses competitiveness. An economy that is skilfully opened up gains new competitive vitality.

In Mexico we share this vocation. It is with the support of our culture and our history that we are opening up to the world and to the competition for markets. We know that the path that each nation pursues cannot be other than the result of its own historic experience, of the specific circumstances of its geography and even of the resources with which nature has endowed it. In the world of today, however, comparative advantages are not inflexible—they can be built up. The circumstances of today's world oblige us to make use of all the energy, imagination and determination of Canadians and Mexicans alike in working toward the convergence of our goals, so as to take full advantage of the complementary aspects of our economies. We can share a vision of the future, based on the long term, that will heed the needs of coming generations, who deserve to live in a better world.

We have embarked upon a new and vigorous stage in bilateral relations between Canada and Mexico. We are counting upon the spirit of our societies and the interest of our governments to strengthen our ties in the different areas of our agenda, both as regards our economies and in the fields of politics and culture. In particular, we in Mexico want to intensify the co-operation between our countries in two areas that the Mexican government and people regard as especially sensitive. These are: the

fight to definitively eradicate the scourge of drug trafficking, and the mutually respectful and concerted effort to improve the environment.

• (1150)

The international struggle against illegal traffic in narcotics is Mexico's struggle as well. Over the past two years, we have seized thousands of tons of cocaine and destroyed hundreds of hectares of marijuana and poppies; we have broken up over 100 criminal organizations and confiscated their goods and properties; we have substantially increased budgetary resources for combating drugs and raised penalties and sanctions against those proven to have a connection to this chain of terror; we have ratified the Vienna Convention and are playing an active role in international forums. We have carried out these and other actions because in Mexico we consider drug trafficking to be a basic threat to the security of our country and to the health of our young people. We know that this chain of criminal activity transcends the frontiers of any country—which means that co-operation among nations is essential. Nonetheless, for it to be truly effective, such co-operation must be respectful of the sovereignty of all the states involved.

In the protection of the environment, Mexico assumes its commitment along with the entire world, because it sees this as a humanitarian cause of universal scope. Mexico has gladly accepted its responsibility in this crusade that is incumbent upon us all, since all of us stand to benefit from its advances and its successes. We Mexicans are convinced that our growth need not lead to the ravaging and pollution of the environment; quite the contrary. Growth that damages the environment is not growth. Resources and technologies for cleaning it up are still needed, but with government and society working together we have made progress.

A few days ago the Mexican Government took the decision to definitively close down one of our country's five refineries, precisely the one that supplied Mexico City. This was done at great economic cost, but this action will prevent the release of 80 thousand tons of pollutants per year into the atmosphere. We are also going to make other heavy investments in improving the environment of Mexico City, but we realize that a great deal still remains to be done, not only in our capital city but also in other areas of our country, some of which have been declared part of the patrimony of humanity. The initial and long-term efforts must be made by the Mexicans themselves, but we also propose to obtain more far-reaching international co-operation in this endeavour. I must acknowledge that our efforts have been supported by the invaluable technological and financial assistance of friendly countries, among them Canada, for which I hereby extend the sincere and fraternal gratitude of the people of Mexico.

Honourable Members of Parliament, Mexico has always based its foreign policy on strict observance of the principles that define harmonious coexistence among nations. By tradition and conviction, Mexico has displayed a clear vocation for peace and conduct consistent with respect for the self-determination of peoples, the peaceful settlement of controversies and co-operation for development. For that reason, and because of the strength of its history, Mexico has confidence in its future, in the deep-seated nationalism of its people, and in the vigour of an ancient culture, which is experiencing a renewal and renaissance, and which proudly offers to the world's surprised eyes the contributions stemming from the spirit of its men and its women to the vast cultural wealth of the west.

Today Mexico, proud of its past, looks to the future. In doing so, we have found in Canada a friendly and respectful nation, interested in becoming acquainted with our way of life. We Mexicans also want to gain a better knowledge of this country's way of life, to explore in depth the traditions and customs of the people of Canada, and to enrich ourselves with the value that they themselves place on their pluralistic society and the diversity of their ethnic groups and their languages.

In the spirit of a Canadian who so staunchly demonstrated the strength of his determination, Terry Fox, as in the impressive talent of men of science like Frederick Banting and the humanism of Stephen Leacock, we Mexicans have come to know of the greatness of your people. That is why we are certain that this new era of friendship can be positive and enduring. The people of Mexico make very good friends. They want to be, in the true sense of the word, friends of the people of Canada.

Hon. Guy Charbonneau (Speaker of the Senate): Your Excellency, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Prime Minister, honorables collègues du Sénat et de la Chambre des Communes, distinguished guests:

[*Editor's Note: Speaker spoke in Spanish.*]

[*Translation*]

Mr. President, we are honoured by your visit. Your stature as an economist and a humanist inspires us with trust borne of reason. The validity of your democratic convictions is testimony of mutually beneficial co-operation.

[*Translation*]

You embody our countries' hope to create organic ties on this North American continent which we share with a powerful neighbour.

A worthy representative of contemporary Mexico, in your writings and your political life, you have already shown that technology and human values are not opposed but, on the contrary, that they combine to enrich humanity.

[*English*]

It is entirely appropriate, Your Excellency, that you should visit our assembly at this historic juncture in Canadian-Mexican relations. Mexico is of immense importance to Canada.

Before today, we knew you as a forward-looking leader determined to reshape your nation to meet the challenges of the future, while preserving the diversity of your cultural traditions and a deep sense of national pride in the achievements of previous civilizations.

Today, we have had the privilege of hearing you speak eloquently of your vision of the Mexico of today and tomorrow, and we feel that under your leadership the aspirations of your people are in good hands.

Your bold vision for the future of North America opens the door to new avenues of co-operation which promise to carry us well into the next century. Time strengthens friendship, and we look forward to expanding our ties in the months and years ahead.

In listening to you, Mr. President, we realized once again how the firmness of your ideological convictions is yet allied to a wise pragmatism, and your courage to a political wisdom which commands respect.

Mr. President, your mother is an economist and your father a senator; your inheritance was obviously the presidency.

We are proud to share our coming prospects with a neighbour who so profoundly grasps the interdependence of the modern world.

Your country is indebted to you for a new deal for its people. Your knowledge and experience fit you perfectly to play a prime role in the new deal that the three neighbouring countries in North America are contemplating. And we have the greatest confidence in the man who started the process, the President of Mexico, whom we have the honour to welcome here today.

On behalf of my colleagues in the Senate of Canada, your Excellency, allow me to thank you very warmly for your inspiring address to us today and for your moving expressions of friendship for the Canadian people.

We would ask you to carry back to Mexico a message of the deep friendship which all Canadians feel for the Mexican people.

[*Translation*]

I thank you, Mr. President, and wish you good luck.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: Your Excellency, Madam, Mr. Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker of the Senate, Members of the House of Commons and Senate, honoured and distingued guests, ladies and gentlemen:

Today, I have the duty but also the immense pleasure to express on behalf of all members of the House of Commons and of all political parties represented here our great joy in having you among us in this historic Chamber.

• (1200)

[*English*]

Canada and Mexico have enjoyed an enduring friendship over many years. Since diplomatic relations were established in 1942, we have maintained positive and constructive contacts for our mutual benefit in numerous spheres of activity.

I should mention, Mr. President, the continual exchanges that have taken place between members of your Parliament and members of our Parliament over many years which have had a great effect in understanding both among your own people and among our colleagues that you meet with today.

I might say from a personal point of view that before I was elected to this House, I visited your country as part of a bidding delegation for the 1976 Winter Olympics,

when you were holding the Olympics in 1968. We were very well received by your representatives and they got us the Olympics. They got us the Summer Olympics though, not the Winter Olympics.

I have also had the privilege of being on a parliamentary delegation visiting your country. I want you to take back to your colleagues the very great importance that we place on these exchanges.

Today, we are facing new challenges arising from vast changes in our hemisphere and the world community, and you have spoken of them. In your address to us today, you have not ignored the difficult questions but rather with statements of courage and vision you have drawn attention to them.

As a true leader, you have reminded us that a challenge is also an opportunity. Since assuming office you have achieved great progress in moving Mexican society forward to realize its true potential.

Those of us who have had the opportunity to visit your country are impressed with the vast storehouse of resources, both material and human, with which your country is blessed. Culturally rich, economically dynamic, historically resplendent, politically self-assured, Mexico cannot help but succeed. These values and attitudes are reflected in the views you have expressed to us today.

The comments that you made, Sir, with respect to the drug problem and with respect to environment are timely and are of great importance to us. We know, because we are not naive, that the terrible scourge of the drug problem is not just as a consequence of where the drugs are produced, but also as a consequence of those who use them. So your comments are timely and helpful.

Your comments with respect to the environment come at a time when at a global level and all around the earth people are more and more realizing that this may well be the great issue that we have to resolve. Your comments bring encouragement and help to your friends here.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker Fraser: It means a great deal to us, who share the continent with you, to hear your comments because leadership is something that in this day and age must go beyond national boundaries and that when you make these statements, which are the statements of a true leader, they are an inspiration for all of us. We are deeply grateful for the message that you have brought to us from your country.

In closing, Mr. President and Madam, let me say on behalf of all who are here today, and many who are not able to be here, we value immensely our friendship with your country. We want to continue the relationship in a more and more effective way. We welcome you here today. We wish you could stay longer. We wish both you and Madam and your colleagues the very warmest best wishes from all Canadians. Thank you.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, April 9, 1991

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

FORESTRY

TABLING OF FIRST ANNUAL REPORT

Hon. Frank Oberle (Minister of Forestry): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour today to table, in both official languages, the first annual report to Parliament on the state of forestry in Canada.

In keeping with the commitment inherent in the new Forestry Act to monitor and to protect our environment, of which our forests are such an essential component, this report establishes a new era of national accountability for forest management and resources.

In receiving this document, Mr. Speaker, you will notice that the current economic status of the health of the forests are presented in a form which is easy to understand and which will provide the general public a basis on which to form an opinion so they can participate in the decision-making process regarding our forests in the future.

* * *

PETITIONS

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 28 petitions.

[*Editor's Note: See today's Votes and Proceedings.*]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and a privilege to present a petition on behalf of a large number of constituents from Kamloops and surrounding communities in British Columbia.

The petitioners state that whereas the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and private broadcasting stations are required by the Canadian Broadcasting Act to provide access to their broadcasting facilities to all Canadian citizens on an equitable and non-discriminatory basis, and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation has failed to act in good faith on behalf of three separate requests made by a Canadian citizen to have his views directed and presented over its provincial and national broadcasting facilities in direct context, the petitioners then are calling upon the Government of Canada to demand that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and all private broadcasting stations in Canada provide access to their broadcasting facilities to all Canadian citizens, said access to be in direct context.

GASOLINE ADDITIVES

Mr. Rex Crawford (Kent): Mr. Speaker, once again I have the honour to rise in the House and present a petition on behalf of the young farmers of Lambton County who state that our Canadian citizens are being polluted by the ever-increasing automotive emissions and whereas ethanol can be produced from corn, wheat, and barley and is a renewable resource, plants remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

They state that a minimum 3.2 per cent oxygen content in gasoline fuels should be mandatory and MMT should be banned.

VIA RAIL

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour and the privilege to present a petition signed by approximately 43 residents of Edmonton, Kingston, Calgary, Surrey, Stoney Plain, and Victoria. They have all petitioned Parliament to put Canada back on track and indicate their support for the NDP's plan to restore VIA Rail.

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Ross Harvey (Edmonton East): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour and privilege today to present two petitions, both of which have been cleared through the clerk of petitions pursuant to Standing Order 36.

The first petition is signed by 32 residents, principally from British Columbia but from other points as well. It calls on Parliament to reject the goods and services tax and to ensure that if and when there is broad public consensus on a sales tax measure to replace the manufacturers' sales tax, this reform not be an opportunity for the government to impose a massive tax grab. The point of course is that the opposition of the Canadian people to the goods and services tax has in no way diminished.

PETRO-CANADA

Mr. Ross Harvey (Edmonton East): Mr. Speaker, my second petition which is signed by 120 residents, principally of Edmonton, calls on the House and I quote from the petition: "We need Petro-Canada to remain 100 per cent Canadian thereby keeping the money it makes in Canada". The petitioners call on the House to defeat or repeal, which would be the more appropriate choice at this point, Bill C-84, an act respecting the privatization of the National Petroleum Company of Canada, and keep Petro-Canada as a Crown corporation acting in the best interests of all Canadians.

THE SENATE

Mr. René Soetens (Ontario): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, it is my pleasure to present this petition from a number of constituents in my riding. In the petition, they comment that they know the Senate was established in 1867 to represent the regions of Canada and to provide a medium for sober second thought and, whereas the Senate now performs no useful function, is completely partisan and has proven, after many efforts, to be impossible to reform, the petitioners, humbly pray and call upon Parliament to abolish the Senate outright.

• (1110)

[*Translation*]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS

The House resumed from Monday, April 8, consideration of the motion of Mr. Andre (p. 19129) and the amendment of Mr. Dingwall (p. 19156).

Mr. Benno Friesen (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada)): Mr. Speaker, you will recall at the close of debate yesterday, there was an exchange between myself and the member for Winnipeg Transcona. I had agreed that I would take his questions and do my best to answer them today. I think there was unanimous consent yesterday for me to do that. If there is unanimous consent, I would be prepared to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Do hon. members give unanimous consent to extend questions and comments period?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by prefacing my remarks with something I had intended to say yesterday. I had intended to mention of the good work done by a committee of the House in 1982-83, a committee headed by Tom Lefebvre who is now a senator in the other place. It was a committee on parliamentary reform and did some very good work. Among other things, it established a firm calendar to operate under and it got rid of evening sittings of the

House. Both of those were very important to us. There was resistance to that change, but he did it. The committee persevered, the House accepted it and it has been good.

I want to make a point to my friend from Winnipeg Transcona. Not all of the recommendations of that particular committee were accepted, nor were all of the recommendations of the McGrath Commission accepted. Every time committees like this meet and bring proposals forward, some of them get accepted and there is a general trend line of improvement of the way the House operates.

I pay tribute to the Tom Lefebvre committee as well as the McGrath commission. I point out that we resisted change. Allan MacEachen, who was House Leader at the time, certainly resisted it, not because he was opposed to change, but because he would have to learn the rules all over again. He is like some lawyers; they are all in favour of legal reform until they realize they have to learn new statute law and build new case law. They then lose their zest for legal reform.

I want to make that point, sir. The member for Winnipeg Transcona was asking about when the government does things that are not part of the campaign promises. That is a legitimate question. He could have used better examples. He mentioned GST and free trade. Those were both prominent in the campaigns. The 1987 white paper on taxation, which was tabled in June of 1987, was debated for 15 months before we went into the campaign and debated during the campaign. Those people who were opposed to the GST are now helping the public to believe that the government had no mandate to bring it in. For that they have to answer to themselves because they are not being honest with the public on this.

There was plenty of debate and, believe me, I was on the griddle many a time on the campaign trail concerning it. Mike Cassidy, the former member from Ottawa Centre, spoke on that. For people who are opposed to the GST, to help perpetuate the notion that there was no mandate, are being a little bit politically dishonest. I need to say nothing about the free trade debate. However, there are cases that the member for Winnipeg could have mentioned. For example, issues come forward after the campaign is over, after the government is in office, which could not have been anticipated during the campaign. I think there is only one thing for the opposition to do and that is to make sure that the government, when it attacks and tackles those issues, does it within the confines of its own philosophy.

For a government like ours to promote decentralization and privatization and then bring in a bill that would create new Crown corporations would be a little bit contradictory. I think we would be rightfully taken to task for that. So they need to keep us consistent with our philosophy. That is fair.

There is another issue that is more difficult to handle, and that is when a political party allows its real agenda to be hidden during a campaign. That is a problem. The public needs to protect the whole democratic process of an election campaign by grilling each of the parties on what its real agenda is. That is the purpose of an election campaign. We have to get away from allowing the party hacks of all parties determining the campaign by way of slogans rather than substance. That is where democracy begins. We must not be bamboozled in any campaign by the superficial sloganeering.

The second question the member for Winnipeg asked was about the whole committee process. He said: "Would it not be better when the McGrath commission asked that committees deal with a process that would allow us to deal in principle and substance debated beforehand". He is right. He is absolutely right.

An hon. member: This is a speech.

Mr. Friesen: Well, I am simply trying to deal with his questions and I have done it. When we dealt with the Canada Pension Plan bill, the minister of health at that time submitted the bill in principle. It was debated outside the House. It was dealt with in committee and brought back to House and dealt with in one day. We need to do more of that. We did it with the gun control legislation and it works. We need to do more of that.

Third, the member asked about efficiency. I would agree with him that efficiency is bad if it deteriorates the role and the importance of the private member. It is good if efficiency enhances the role of the private member.

He asked about the staffing of committees and the role of parliamentary secretaries and the whips in bringing about substitutions. Both of those, I would submit to my friend, are problems within a caucus and the membership of the House itself. We make the system work or we do not. The whips have a job to do to make sure that their party is properly represented in committee. If we as members do not fulfil our obligations to sit in committees when we are challenged to do so, when we have signed up for it, then that system falls apart and the whip

gets powers we do not want him to have. It is up to us to make the system work.

Finally, I would simply say that those committees that are aggressive get the resources they need to do the work and the rooms they need to do the work. Those that are passive and take direction lose that. Those that give direction get the resources and the committee rooms they want.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to participate in this debate today. I suggest in some ways it is a very important debate in this House, because it deals with the changes the government has proposed to our rules.

I want to say at the outset that I find the government's method of proceeding in this way to be contrary to the traditions of this House. My experience is that in most cases where substantial changes to the rules have been proposed, the government has dealt through a committee of the House and got a report from the committee.

I can go back to the last major rule changes, first of all rising out of the McGrath committee report, which are the most recent, but they go back to 1969 when the changes were made that provided for the time allocation rules of this House.

• (1120)

The government acted first through a committee of the House which considered the proposed changes, made a report, and the government then acted on the report. If you check the historical precedent in 1969, you will see the government in fact moved a motion, but that was simply to the same effect as the committee's report, and that motion was moved and proposed in the House after the committee had completed a detailed study of the rules.

This time we have had the government say in House leaders' meetings that it had changes it would like to propose to the rules; here they are; tell us what you think. I submit that it is contrary to the past practice of this House. It has denied the opportunity for public input on the changes that are being proposed which fundamentally affect the way this House operates. This House is, after all, the public forum of this country where citizens have the right to express their views through their representatives and, on occasion directly, in the committees.

The government is changing the rules of the game to suit its own political purposes. We in the opposition object to that change. The hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond, the House leader for the Official Opposition, detailed our objections to those rules very carefully yesterday.

I am not going to review the same ground, but I do want to make a comment on the general approach of the government and suggest that it has been wrong-headed from the start on this issue.

Having said that, I want to congratulate the hon. member for Peace River for the active role he played in the negotiation process that led to the resolution that was tabled in the House. I was happy to work with him in the course of those negotiations. I acknowledge that some of the very sensible suggestions that were put forward from this side were accepted by him and included in the rules. He amended some of the government's original proposals to make them better in my view for all Canadians, and also more palatable for the members of the opposition parties in this House.

I submit that in the end, he was unable or unwilling to go far enough in making changes to the proposals. We have therefore moved an amendment to those rules to delete the particularly odious provisions that are included in the package that was tabled before the House. I recognize the efforts he made and I am sorry that we are unable to achieve more agreement. Had there been an opportunity for committee discussion on these rule changes, I believe that greater agreement would have been obtained on all sides. I am sorry that has not taken place. I am sorry it was not agreeable to him and to his superior, the government House leader, that in fact a reference on this motion be made to a committee so that detailed study could proceed in that body.

The essential thrust of these rule changes is to limit debate in this House. The rules seek to do it in two ways, first, by making the House sit less, and second, by streamlining—and I use the word advisedly—the closure rules.

I am not going to run through all of the rule changes in detail, but the amendment we have moved, that deletes a series of the proposed changes, deletes the new scheduling arrangements. It deletes the provision in the rules proposed that limits to 15 minutes the opportunity to present petitions from the people of Canada in this House. We deleted the changes in the closure rule that restrict the hours of debate by a further three hours after closure has been imposed. It is one of the most Draconian closure rules in the British Commonwealth, and yet the government is seeking to cut off another three hours of debate.

We have objected to the further change in the time allocation rules which will save the government another day of debate and will enable it to force through legislation in something like five days in this House, not counting first reading. We have objected to the reductions and limitations on budget and throne speech debates and on borrowing bills. That is the thrust of the amendment that we have moved. We have suggested that all of those rather odious provisions be stricken from the package that the government has put before this House.

In some ways I suppose it is not surprising that the opposition has taken this view, but I must say I was shocked to hear the government House leader, or read of the government House leader's comments in respect of the rule changes the other day. In his speech yesterday afternoon, he was protesting the outrageous comments of the hon. member for Kamloops. Well, I think everyone in this House knows that the hon. member for Kamloops has a tendency to exaggerate, a tendency to hyperbole, and tends to blow things out of proportion. In other words, I think making a mountain out of a molehill is a commonplace for the hon. member for Kamloops, and I think everybody here knows that. Having said that, the government House leader I thought protested too much yesterday, especially having regard to what he said in the *Globe and Mail* on March 23. I would like to quote the government House leader. I quote the article by Susan Delacourt:

> Mr. Andre says the opposition's planned fight against the rule changes is just for the sake of appearances, since the three party leaders have been actively negotiating the changes since December.

I presume he meant by that that just because you have been negotiating means you somehow agree. I think the hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond in his very able speech yesterday made it very clear that we did not agree. This is pure pie in the sky rubbish coming from the government House leader. He ought to know better. He went on to say:

> "They will battle for show, but they're glad we're going ahead with it," he said. The government hopes to have the changes approved by the time the Commons adjourns on Wednesday,—

That was of course several weeks ago:

> —but is prepared to have MPs come back on April 8 if more time is needed to get approval."

Since we only started the debate yesterday, it is obvious that more time is in fact needed.

For the government House leader, having accused the member for Kamloops of being unfair in labelling these changes as Fascist or dictatorial, to suggest that somehow we are opposing these for the purpose of show is a bit far-fetched. In fact, I suggest that it was a most improper suggestion. He ought not to have made it. We are not opposing these for show. We are opposing these because we believe in practice and in theory that the changes are bad.

We believe that this country functions best when it has a strong and effective opposition. In fact, that was the view of the Conservative Party until very recently when its ideas of Parliament and its role and its importance changed dramatically. I am going to deal with what I think are the reasons for those changes a little later in my speech, but I want to talk first about their attitude to the importance of opposition, which they have done so well for so many years in Canada, particularly throughout this century.

After all, it is only since 1984 that we have had any Conservative government hold office for any length of time in the course of this century, since Borden's government collapsed in 1921. Nevertheless, their role as an effective opposition is well known. Now, having found that government is less comfortable, they have decided that perhaps oppositions should be muzzled and controlled. That is the purpose of the rule changes that are before us today.

I would like to read a quotation from the book, the leading work I suggest, on the Parliament of Canada by Charles Edward Selwyn Franks, one of my distinguished constituents, and a good friend of mine, and a former professor of mine, who wrote in his book, *The Parliament of Canada*, on page 5 the following about the functions of Parliament. I will not detail the first four, which I believe the hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond in

his very able speech yesterday mentioned. I will simply read the other two. He said this:

> There are two further functions of parliament which are so important that they deserve to be identified in their own right, though they might also be subsumed under the general rubric of making a government work. The first of these is the function of parliament as a recruiting and training ground for political leaders; the second is the function of political communication, where the processes of Parliamentary discussion, in Bagehot's terms, express the mind of the people, teach society, and inform both government and citizen of grievances and problems.

That exposition of the importance of an opposition in Parliament to inform the people and to express their grievances in Parliament is a deep rooted one in the British parliamentary tradition. Over the years governments have sought to curtail the rights of oppositions to present grievances and to argue their case. Governments resent oppositions that look like a government in waiting because it is perceived that all the weaknesses of the government are shown up by a skilful and competent opposition.

What this government is facing in this House is exactly that, a skilful and competent opposition. It is suffering in the polls as a result of that fact and so it is seeking to close down Parliament, shut the opposition up so it cannot present itself as a reasonable, sensible and viable alternative.

If any greater authority on the role of an opposition is needed, I do not think I could find one, other than looking beyond perhaps the most famous of all opposition leaders in this century, Mr. Diefenbaker.

• (1130)

He used to lead hon. members opposite when he was Prime Minister, but he was better known as Leader of the Opposition. He was a disastrous Prime Minister, but as Leader of the Opposition, everyone acknowledged his effectiveness.

I am sure that Mr. Stanfield would acknowledge his effectiveness because throughout the years that that gentleman had the honour of leading the Conservative Party of Canada, he was constantly overshadowed by the former leader, Mr. Diefenbaker.

I would like to quote from a little work called "John G. Diefenbaker: Those Things We Treasure". It is a little book of his speeches. The unfortunate thing about the book is that it does not give the source. It is just a selection of speeches on freedom and in defence of our parliamentary heritage published by MacMillan of Canada.

I am sorry that it does not give the source because I am sure that the speeches were delivered in important places and would add weight to the veracity of the statements contained in them.

Mr. Dick: Are you filling in time?

Mr. Milliken: I see the hon. member for Lanark—Carleton is waking up. I am glad he is enjoying my speech.

Mr. Dick: Are you filling in time?

Mr. Milliken: I am filling in a good deal of time. If the hon. member would pay attention to it, I think he would find that he might change this resolution and realize what a mistake the government is making in proceeding this way.

I will read from page 5 of the little work: "On the Role of an Opposition". I quote:

> Only a strong and alert opposition can hope to check and control the excessive powers contrary to the Constitution that may be assumed or conferred upon governmental administration, the so-called bureaucracy.
>
> Only an alert opposition can prevent the short-cuts through democratic procedures that cabinet ministers and bureaucrats frequently find attractive. It is only the opposition, functioning as a recognized part of parliamentary proceedings, that stands opposed to the degeneration of the governmental system into a form of arbitrary direction of public affairs by the executive and the bureaucracy.
>
> Without it, minorities woul stand unprotected. Freedom would wither. Individual liberty would be in jeopardy. Unwarranted and oppressive invasion of private rights would grow unchecked.
>
> Without an effective opposition, the administration in office could and would carry on the task of running the country under circumstances identical with the totalitarian one-party state. To some, this may seem an efficient way of running the country, but the first victim under such a regime as Hitler, Stalin and Mussolini demonstrated is freedom itself.
>
> Without an opposition, it is not too much to say the parliamentary system of government would fail in its primary task of protecting the rights of individuals and minorities, and of ensuring freedom and democracy. In the parliamentary system, an opposition is as necessary as the cabinet itself. One without the other would mean tyranny or chaos.

> It is commonplace that governments view an effective opposition as an obstruction. That is a view that is too often and too lightly taken up by unthinking critics of Parliament. An opposition that discharges its parliamentary responsibilities may appear in the superficial view to be obstructionist.
>
> Extended opposition means lengthy debate. It was the British Labour Party chairman, Professor Harold Laski, who wrote that the alternative to the talking shop is the concentration camp.

I suggest that these words of the former Leader of the Conservative Party, the former Prime Minister of Canada and a distinguished Leader of the Opposition, are words that the government should be paying attention to.

It should follow the advice contained in Mr. Diefenbaker's words and heed them. I quote again from his works, on page 36 of this book:

> Professor Ivor Jennings, the great English authority on Parliament said, and rightly, that the function of Parliament is not to govern but to criticize, to modify government policy and to educate public opinion.
>
> To those who say that Parliament should be turning out legislation in quantity, my answer is that its mission is freedom and the assurance that all the people shall receive justice. It is not a slot machine into which one drops a slug to see the legislation come out.

I suggest that this government takes the attitude that Parliament is a sausage machine or a slot machine into which one drops a slug and watches legislation come out. The evidence of that is manifold throughout the list of changes that it has proposed to the Standing Orders.

I could quote further from the book, but like many of Mr. Diefenbaker's speeches, it is very repetitious.

I do commend hon. members, though, to read the work. I think they will find that instead of sitting there supporting this resolution they will stand up and admit that they are wrong, make changes in it and agree to the amendment that we have proposed in this House.

I would like to go back in time to 1969, because one of the changes this government is proposing to the Standing Orders is a change to the time allocation rules. Time allocation rules were brought in in this House in 1969 by the then Liberal government over the profound objections of the opposition. The hon. member for Peace River can correct me if I am wrong, but in 1969 there was no member in this House sitting on the Conservative benches who is currently sitting here. I believe all have moved on to greater things. Sorry, the hon. member for Annapolis Valley—Hants was here. He is now an independent member. I can see he recanted from his views and has moved on to greater things. The government finally used closure to get these rules through, after 12 days of debate. After 12 days of debate. I want to point that out to the parliamentary secretary. I can assure him that if closure is applied on this debate, he will hear about the 12 days of debate that went on in 1969. We are quite prepared to debate these for 12 days, I can assure the hon. member.

Pardon? The hon. member asks how many hours a day. I will get the information and check, but I assure him that it was very similar to the hours of sitting that we now have. Because, of course, there were night sittings in those days and they sat late and worked at night. Oh, this is a phoney point of order.

Mr. Hawkes: Point of order. Just on behalf of the government, we accept his offer to extend the sitting this evening so that more debate can occur, and I hope the unanimous feeling exists in the House.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Milliken: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's kind intervention. He knows it wasn't a point of order; it was just an attempt to disrupt my speech.

I wanted to read from Mr. Diefenbaker's speech on the occasion of the debate on these rule changes. What happened was that Mr. Diefenbaker and the members of his party—and at another time I may quote some of the other members—but the changes that were brought in by the time allocation motion were said to be a total disaster for Parliament. The Conservative Party at that time took the view that this was going to destroy the institution. We all know that somehow Parliament survived those changes and the rule has been used from time to time, although not extensively.

What Mr. Diefenbaker said on that occasion was this: "I ask this of the ministers—and I am faced by a galaxy of two, two ministers sitting across the corridor when Parliament is discussing a matter that, if carried into effect, will be the death sentence of this institution." I see I have one so he doubled that.

He went on to say: "They sit and they smirk." This is what Mr. Diefenbaker said about the attitude of the government to the rule changes that the government was proposing and that, in fact, have been used and adopted in this country for many years. This government, which used to say this was such a disaster, is now proposing to reduce the time available to members to discuss rule changes, even under the present time allocation rules. It is cutting by one day the time available for debate at

report and third reading stage as a result of these changes.

The hon. member looks surprised. Read the rules. It cuts it by 24 hours. I say that it is a shocking abuse of the government's authority in this House.

Why is the government flying in the face of these historical principles that give the opposition an opportunity to oppose?

I see that my time has run out, Mr. Speaker, so I am going to have to answer that question myself, either in questions and comments or in my next speech on the subamendment that I expect will be moved later.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Ten minutes, questions and comments period. The hon. member for Surrey—White Rock—South Langley.

Mr. Benno Friesen (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada): I would just like to ask the member, who understands rules and procedure very well, why he chose to give us a history lesson instead of dealing with the technical difficulties he sees in the rule changes. Why would he do that when we are debating rule changes, and he does not deal with that?

Mr. Milliken: The hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond gave an extremely lucid and very clear exposition on the technical difficulties with the rule changes. Perhaps the hon. member for Surrey—White Rock—South Langley did not understand when I said in my speech that I was not going to traverse the same territory he had. I have tried to explain the thrust of the the very technical rules. I did give a list that we are objecting to in our amendment. They are all being objected to because they cut the time available to members of the opposition to speak in this House and for this House to work through three methods: By shortening the times of sittings; by reducing the number of sitting days by about 41; and by reducing the number of days available to the opposition to debate the matters it chooses. There are five days taken away from us as supply days. There are two days taken away from the debate in reply to the speech from the throne, and there are two days taken off the budget debate. In addition to that there is a two-day limitation on second reading of the borrowing bill.

• (1140)

All those are effectively opposition days. They are days when the opposition can choose to move amendments and debate subjects of its choosing, not subjects dictated by government order and decree.

What I am saying to the hon. member—he may have missed this in the early part of my remarks—is that I was not going to go through the technical aspects of it. I am dealing with the question of general fairness.

While I am on my feet I will tell him why I think the government has changed its mind on this. In 1984 throughout the campaign the government kept saying how it was going to change the rules of Parliament, reform Parliament, and make it a better institution. It did make some changes. Now it is going back on all that. As the hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond pointed out yesterday these changes are not along the lines of the McGrath reforms. They are retrograde steps in most cases and the government has found that its members must stay in Ottawa now. When they were in opposition for 50 years before 1984, with the odd break, they found they could run back and forth to their ridings all the time. Now they have to be here to maintain their majority otherwise they would get defeated in this House and there would be an election in which they would all lose.

When you are at 12 per cent in the polls you do not keep many seats. Even the hon. member for Peace River knows—and he must be quaking in his boots—that he would lose his riding if there were an election tomorrow. So they all stay in Ottawa.

They are down in the polls and they say: "Boy, if we could only get to our ridings we could get up in the polls". They will not because the policies they are pursuing are so bad they cause them to be down in the polls. It is not their presence in Ottawa. It is because their policies are so terrible.

They say: "Well, if we could go out and sell the policies across the country, if we could get out around Canada and tell Canadians what a great job we are doing, they

might believe us and maybe we would go up in the polls". They will not. They are going down, and they are staying down, because their policies are so rotten.

We are here exposing those policies day after day and it makes them nervous. So they say: "We do not want our bad policies exposed. We want to spend the time in our ridings instead where at least we can commiserate with the misery we have inflicted on Canadians with our disastrous policies of free trade, GST, high interest rates and all that sort of stuff. Let us shut Parliament down; let us curtail debate; let us limit the right of the opposition to raise subjects of interest. Then we will be all right. Then we will go up in the polls". That is the purpose of these rule changes. That is why they are being done now. Instead of in 1984 or in 1989, they are being brought in in 1991 because they know an election is around the corner. They see how far down they are in the polls and they say: " We have to salvage something from the wreckage of six years of disastrous government."

Mr. Pat Nowlan (Annapolis Valley—Hants): Mr. Speaker, I certainly listened with interest to the remarks of the hon. member from Kingston and the Islands, and I also watched on television the interesting exchange by the member for Winnipeg—Bird's Hill and the member for Surrey—White Rock. I must say that did get more into the atmosphere of debate on something that is pretty important. Those are the rules of this House.

I did subtly remind the former speaker—I have to confess I was here—when we had the last major rules changes in 1969. I think that is when Thumper Macdonald, our present high commissioner in London, got the nickname Thumper. We did have that long debate; it went into the summertime. There were many hours of debate; morning, noon, and night. Then finally the government invoked closure to amend the rules in a more fundamental way than I perceive in these changes.

I have other things I would like to say at some time but I was very interested in the references made by the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands. I was here in the House during his leader's speech which was certainly lengthy and did cover points in an arresting way. Frankly I think the opposition is really off base on a lot of its concerns. The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands blessed in a government role, would say the same thing the Parliamentary Secretary to the House leader and the member for Peace River would say. I shudder and shake to think what a fellow called Erik Nielsen would do if he were in this House regarding these rules in view of some of the debates we have had on minor rules changes.

You get it both ways, but frankly it depends where you sit.

I am very interested as an independent member, and frankly there are going to be more, regardless of the whole thrust of the Elections Act which does not allow independent members to collect money in the same way that members of registered parties collect money. That is going to involve an interesting law suit in the federal court to in effect have an injunction against any collections unless there is a change. I hope to question the Government House Leader in Question Period today on that. There are so many things.

These rules are for the recognized parties and the role of an independent is very remote to say the least. We have heard a lot about the tentative agreements or all the preliminary discussions. In the motion that the loyal opposition filed, I noticed that it does not refer to paragraph 20.

My direct question to the member for Kingston and the Islands, who was involved in these discussions is: Was his party in agreement with clause 20? The very fundamental change in the question of unanimous consent goes out the window unless there are 25 members who will stand up and say: "Hey, you cannot go ahead". I heard and understood the House Leader yesterday talk about someone mentioning that this was only done in Routine Proceedings. This is the greatest charade in the world. Routine Proceedings can start in this House on Monday under the new parliamentary calendar which started today. You can hardly have 25 people in the House.

You can have a Government House Leader stand in this House and do this under the new suggested change in unanimous consent. I say with all respect to everything that has been said. I know my time is up, but I would like to ask a specific question: Since the loyal opposition did not refer to paragraph 20, can I assume that the Liberal opposition is in favour of paragraph 20 which fundamentally changes the whole concept of unanimous consent?

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, to answer the hon. member's question about the elections procedures governing donations to his party, I have a Private Member's bill before this House to amend substantially the Canada Elections Act. If he could convince his former colleagues on the other side of the House to allow that bill to proceed, I would be happy

to deal with the issue in committee, if it is not already in the bill, that would cover the problem he has raised.

Mr. Nowlan: It is a good charter case.

Mr. Milliken: Well, I hope we do not have to do it by charter. I hope we can do it right here in this House.

With respect to paragraph 20 of the Standing Orders, the proposal was discussed and was more or less agreed. As I said, there was agreement on very very few things. Most of the items were discussed and as the hon. Parliamentary Secretary will say there was part of a package and, therefore, there was not specific agreement on any one item. The proposal we found favourable in respect to unanimous consent was this proposal. Instead of 25 members, it was, I believe, 15. We preferred that.

I want to make it clear that this does change the unanimous consent rule. The minister must rise, ask for unanimous consent to put his motion and it must be refused. During Routine Proceedings at a subsequent time he may then put his motion. The notice is there. Members should realize that the motion will then come up in Routine Proceedings. Generally, we assumed there would be more than 15 members, which was what we thought, or 25 members present to object and therefore it would be stopped. It is a change in the rules, but we think it is a worth-while one. We feel there are many routine motions that are dealt with in this House on the basis of unanimous consent which are denied for frivolous reasons. The House ought to have some mechanism of allowing those motions to go through without the necessity of 48 hours' notice.

• (1150)

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to participate in this debate. I do want to say, at the very outset, that the tone of the debate for the last couple of days has been good and has really reflected the kind of attitude the House needs to take to its rule changes.

There are, however, a couple of exceptions. The first day was entirely wasted by having the Speaker read the motion before this House. Members could have better used that time to discuss the issues that are so important to us.

I am a little disappointed that the member for Kingston and the Islands chose not to discuss at length and in detail some of the changes. Having worked with him at great length over the last few months on these rule changes, I know he has a very clear understanding of not only of the rules as proposed, but of the implications of those rules and an understanding of the tradition which has been part of the process that has brought us to where we are today in the House of Commons.

It has been a fascinating process to go through these negotiations in the last few months, to look at a number of Standing Orders and to come up with a package which I think is a significant package, a package which is good for the whole House. It is not a package designed, as the hon. members opposite would have you believe, to protect a government on the run. It is anything but that. It is is consistent with the McGrath reforms. It builds on those reforms and brings some of them up to date to face the reality that we live with today.

It is consistent with some of the work begun by Tom Lefebvre as chairman of another committee on rule changes back in 1980–81. That was my first experience with rule changes. I was privileged as a new member of this house to be a member of that committee and found it a very enlightening experience and a great opportunity to get a bit of an understanding of the traditions of this House.

I think the rule changes we are dealing with here in the House today are consistent with those traditions.

There are about four particular elements that I want to address in my remarks today. I want to begin by looking at the changes to the committee process. I begin there because, for me, that is one of the most interesting and exciting elements of the House of Commons procedures and processes. I begin there because one of my favourite times as a member was the time that I spent on committees.

I was a member of the McGrath task force when I thought that committees, for the first time, were given powers and opportunities which they never had before. When I was a member of a committee in opposition, the only things we could work on were those items referred

to us by a minister of the Crown. We, as a committee, never had the opportunity to discuss anything that was controversial or anything that would have in any way pushed the government.

This government changed that significantly with the McGrath task force by allowing committees to become self-starting, by allow committees freedom and latitude to work within their subject areas to develop policy ideas and to develop a process that could have an influence on the government process in this country.

Out of that flowed two very significant elements. One was that standing committees would be self-starting; with the ability to move, to act and to explore. The other was to put in place legislative committees. Those legislative committees were to, at that point, deal strictly with legislation, to deal with it in a technical way and to accept the fact that the House had already adopted, in principle, the legislation that was referred to the legislative committee.

That is where McGrath started. It is where McGrath put forward a proposal which was accepted by this House.

Unfortunately, since that time a couple of things have happened. The legislative committees, not in all cases but in some cases, began to view themselves, not as legislative committees, but as standing committees.

They began to fuzz the two lines that were to exist between these committees and try to get them both to function in the same way. It undermined a very fundamental part of what I thought the McGrath task force was trying to establish.

The McGrath task force had recommended that the number of standing committees be reduced and that the membership of those committees be small, preferably around eight members. Since then we have gone from the 17 or 18 committees that the McGrath task force recommended, to some 21 to 23 today.

We have also gone from the majority of committees being eight or nine members to 14 members. As a result, we have once again undermined some of the fundamental elements of the McGrath task force.

That brings me to the changes we have here. We asked that the committees be developed into five envelopes. The committees remain. We do not change them. However, they are gathered into five envelopes. Each of those envelopes has a consistency which flows through it—a thread of common interest. Whether it is an economic interest, a human resources interest or a natural resources interest dealing with things like oil, gas and forestry, there is a common thread there.

The reason for that is to pick up on what the McGrath task force tried to accomplish: To develop an expertise in our standing committees that would serve as a resource for both this House and for the government in the development of policy or legislation that would affect this country.

I think that by bringing us back to this envelope process, we encourage the concentration and the development of that expertise. We do not in any way change the membership rights which members enjoy under the McGrath task force. In fact, it is the member who, under these proposals, continues to have the say over his or her substitutes on a particular committee. Within an envelope dealing with that substitution list submitted by a member, it is very easy to make an exchange.

Consistent with McGrath, we have tried to bring the legislative committees it back to what was originally suggested: Legislative committees will be legislative committees. They will not try to act as standing committees. They will not try to be something they were not designed to be. They will look at technical witnesses and they will meet with them. Technical witnesses may include members of a department, people who work for a department, lawyers who are familiar with the subject area, or interest groups that have a technical response to a bill. The fundamental goal of the McGrath task force was to see that those legislative committees would accept that the House had already dealt with that bill in principle. There is a thread there.

There is another important aspect in this rule change package. Right now, if the House were to decide to send a specific issue to a standing committee, for example, but there was not consent to do so, the House would have no choice but to refer the bill, or the subject matter of it, to a legislative committee even though there may be widespread support on all sides of the House to send it to the specific standing committee, or a special committee. One of the rule changes we provided for in this particular package, is that now by vote the House can decide to

send a bill or an issue to a special committee, to a standing committee, or to a legislative committee. This is very consistent with the kind of goals the McGrath task force was trying to accomplish.

There is one exception in the area of committees which caused me some concern, and I know will have caused some concern to other members familiar with the work of McGrath. One of the things we had recommended during the McGrath work was that parliamentary secretaries not be part of standing committees. Mr. Speaker, we did that based on the experience that all of us had come through in that period. From 1980 to 1984, it was the government which directed what issues any particular committee would or could discuss. When an issue was before a standing committee, the parliamentary secretary started acting like a policeman or a director. He or she had tremendous control over that committee. As a result, members reacted by saying they did not want parliamentary secretaries on committees.

• (1200)

Since the McGrath reforms, what has happened is that opposition critics who are expert in a given subject area are members and active participants in the committees. But on the government side the one individual who is not a member of cabinet, yet has the most experience with a particular subject area, bill, or issue, the parliamentary secretary, is excluded from the process.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have come full circle. We have now said that we saw where McGrath was going; we understood what McGrath was trying to accomplish at the time; but it was not working. It was not working because the committee was being robbed of an individual who was a tremendous resource to the committee in terms of information, in terms of access to the department, and all that is going on within that particular department.

We have now come to the point where we feel it is time to put the parliamentary secretaries back into the committee, to give them an opportunity to build bridges between the committee and the department, and the department and the committee. I hope this will fulfil the very goals the McGrath task force set out to accomplish, which was to give backbenchers in the House of Commons an opportunity through the committee process to develop policies, legislation, and direction on any issue that this country may be faced with.

I referred very briefly to the requests of McGrath to reduce the size of our committees from 14 members to 8. We have renewed that request in this package. We have not done it by changing the rules and by restricting in our Standing Orders the sizes of committees. We did not do that for a reason which is very simple. It is something we want negotiated and discussed by the members of this House. My own experience was that when I have been a member of a small committee, that committee worked well. It built a relationship within itself that often ended up with a unanimous report which then was reflected in the legislation of the day.

Therefore, we have once again put the request to members on all sides of this House that they seriously consider reducing those committees that now have memberships of 14 members, and reducing them to eight. It is an option of the House. It is not something the government has any intention to direct, or wants to direct. It is a process we hope the members themselves will develop and see the opportunity that we think exists.

The last matter I want to mention about committees is the question of televising committee hearings. That has been an issue of controversy in the House and for good reason. There are some very strongly held feelings on both sides of this House. For example, I am concerned that when the television cameras came into the Chamber—I was not here before—one of the things that began to happen and is part of our everyday experience here now is that many of us play to the cameras when participating in debate. We do not play to the audience, or talk to the people here in the Chamber, or to the Chair. We play to the cameras. As a result it changes our behaviour.

What happens if we go into a committee environment and the same thing happens there? The one area in our parliamentary process that has been very active, very influential, what if it too becomes another stage? Then we have a problem.

Nevertheless, we must recognize that we are in a new world today. It is unfair to allow print media to have full access to committees and yet not allow electronic media

the same access. We shut out radio and television. We have to recognize that reality.

That is why in these rules there is now a change to develop experimental guidelines for the televising and radio linkage of committee hearings. We use the word "experimental" because it is very fundamental. It is very important. We have to build an experience together and we have to decide on a type of system that will allow the committees to function to their maximum ability, yet provide, as much as possible, equal access to all media, electronic or print.

The second thing that I want to touch on, briefly, is the calendar. That has been one of the areas which has received significant media attention. We have heard all sorts of arguments about it. The proposal in this particular package is that we move to the three and one formula, where the House would sit approximately three weeks and then it would not sit for one week. That time could be used for one of two things: first, members could return to their ridings to meet with their constituents, to hold public meetings, private meetings, whatever they choose to do; or, second, that time could be used for committee work.

I heard yesterday the member from Hamilton going on and on about how this was running away from responsibility. He had no problem being here in the House of Commons. He could be here Friday. He could be here Monday. Therefore this was a gross example of a government trying to duck and run.

Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you as a member that was sitting in this House listening to that speech, I was very much offended by it. Why was I offended? Because I cannot travel to my riding in two or three or even six hours. To get to my constituency takes me 12 hours. If I want to be back in my riding to hold meetings on Saturday morning, I have to leave here Thursday night. If I am going to be here Monday, I have to leave Sunday night.

So, Mr. Speaker, you can see very quickly for someone like myself, who lives in a northern and a western riding, why this kind of formula has a great deal of appeal. I can then stay here through that three-week period. I can focus and dedicate my time to the work of the House, committees or whatever particular role I may have at that moment, but then I can take a week—and in fact, if you take in the weekends, which gives you a little bit more time—I can go home and do some concentrated constituency work, listening to my people, gathering their concerns and bringing them back with me and hopefully have those reflected in the debates and the issues before this House.

I was offended when I heard a member, who can be on a plane and probably in his riding in two or three hours, or even jump in a car and be there in five hours, tell me that I am neglecting my duties and my responsibilities and I am somehow ducking the issue by asking that instead of giving me a weekend, that I get from time to time a week to work in my riding.

Mr. Speaker, you are signalling that my time is about to expire. It is unfortunate because I am just beginning my remarks.

There are a number of things that flow from those changes. There is the reduction in the budget days from six debating days to four. There is the reduction in the throne speech from eight to six days. There is the reduction in the allotted days from 25 to 20. All of those flow from the calendar, not because we are trying to limit debate. If I were to buy the logic of the opposition, then to have the perfect democracy we would sit 365 days. Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, their whole argument is that democracy is based on the number of days that we sit. So we are going to go for perfection in Canada. We will sit 365 days.

The problem is, Mr. Speaker, that if you look at what happens in the opposition benches, they are on a roster system. One-third of their members at any one time are back in their ridings. They are not here working in the House of Commons.

Mr. Speaker, my time has expired. I wish I had more time to continue with my arguments. I believe very strongly this package is consistent with the work began by Tom Lefebvre and is consistent with the reforms brought in by the McGrath task force. This is a package that is designed to help all members of the House, whether they are on the opposition benches or the government benches.

It is not a Draconian package. It is not fascist as we heard it described. It is a fair package and it is one that I am very comfortable defending in any forum, including the one where it is going to have the most impact, here in the House of Commons.

• (1210)

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed the parliamentary secretary's speech, as I thought I would. As the hon. member for Surrey—White Rock—Langley indicated, it was not a history lesson. I am sorry that he did not enjoy my history lesson. I thought he might have found it helpful to fit these rule changes into the context, particularly when I was quoting most extensively in my speech from his former leader, Mr. Diefenbaker. I am surprised he was disappointed in that.

The hon. member for Peace River in his speech talked about the wonders of the rule changes and particularly the change that allows the one week off for the member to go to his riding. I think he misconstrued the remarks of the hon. member for Hamilton West, and I admit it was open to this misconstruction yesterday. But the point the hon. member for Hamilton West was making so effectively was that he did not object to members having a week off, his objection was to the cutback in the number of days of sitting.

Surely the parliamentary secretary, who was after all instrumental in discussing these matters, I presume, with his boss the government House leader, could have said: "Look, the opposition has trouble cutting the number of days from 174 or 175 to 134. Maybe another way to do this is to sit an additional three-week period. Give another 15 sitting days in the summer, at some other time of year." But what the government did was say, keep the holidays we now have, let us add to them.

I use the word "holiday" advisedly, because like the hon. member for Peace River, when I go to my riding I work quite hard. I spend time there and I spend many hours working there. I think most hon. members do exactly that. So I do not call it a holiday but it is a time away from working in this place. The public, naturally, regards members as working only when they are in Ottawa, it seems, but that is not always the case, and I acknowledge that as well as anyone else.

If the government was serious in its suggestion that it really wanted to give members time to be in their ridings, why did it simply deduct sitting days from the calendar and take an extra week off here and there? Why did it not add another three weeks of sitting, in September or August or July, or January which now is free of sittings, and continue at least something close to the number of sitting days? Why did it reduce the sitting days so much in order to achieve its end? Because we could have had three weeks of sitting in January and another week or two before the scheduled resumption date in February. All that could have been done quite easily, but the government chose not to. They simply reduced. Could the parliamentary secretary answer that?

Mr. Cooper: Yes. I am very pleased to answer the concerns of my hon. friend from Kingston and the Islands.

He will know from several of the meetings that he and I had with Mark Houlton from our office, who worked so hard on this package.

As a government, we put forward two proposals; one was to sit Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, and the House not to sit on Fridays and keep roughly the same parliamentary calendar as exists today; or the second proposal which was to go with the three and one option.

What the hon. member should recall is that it was the request and the feedback from the opposition members which indicated they preferred the three and one.

There is a difference between what is said in private and what is said in public. I want to be very specific and I do not want to accuse anyone. I am not saying that the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands supported the three and one proposal. I want to be very clear about that. What I am saying is that the feedback from the opposition benches indicated the one that had the best consensus on both sides of the House—

Mr. Milliken: Most palatable.

Mr. Cooper: Most palatable—that is the word I will accept—was the three and one proposal. That is why we chose to go with it. It was not an arbitrary decision of the government; it was part of the discussions and negotiations that had been going on for months.

I am glad the hon. member asked the question as it gives me an opportunity to put on record the facts of what really happened in terms of the calendar changes.

Mr. Milliken: I appreciate the hon. member's response, Mr. Speaker. I think he stated it correctly. He asked which of the two we preferred and we said that we did not like either, but if we had to chose we would take

this one. That is what we said. It was the more palatable of the two.

What I have indicated, and what we have indicated throughout, is that we were not in favour of reducing the number of sitting days of this House. I hope he has got that message.

To put the negotiations in context, I think it is fair for the hon. member to know, and he may want to comment on this, that when the government makes a proposal to change rules without going through the usual committee routine of coming up with changes, as happened with the Private Members' Business changes which the government has included in this package and which were the result of an all-party committee meeting and which were unanimously recommended to this House by the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections. Even the New Democratic member sitting on that committee agreed with the changes that were proposed. We have made no amendments to all those changes that have been proposed. We agree with those changes. They were the result of all-party work in that committee.

Had the parliamentary secretary gone to a committee, I suggest, as I said in my remarks, we might have achieved more consensus. But what the government does when it says: "We are going to change the rules", is say to the opposition: "You can negotiate with us to the extent that we are willing to bend but, in the end, with our majority, we are going to do what we like."

What happens, as an opposition, is that we are put in a position of trying to get the best deal we possibly can, but knowing that if we do not try to do that the government will go and do exactly what it wants anyway and then we will really get kicked in the teeth.

What we did, in the course of these talks, is try to soften the blow that the government was delivering in the form of these rule changes, to get the best package that we could live with by indicating our areas of strongest disagreement, of strongest dissent so the government would know where it is going to find itself in difficulty.

Our amendment indicates those areas where we feel the government is wrong. We have some reservations in other places, as the hon. member for Cape Breton—East Richmond pointed out yesterday, but, by and large, we can agree with the package.

Does the hon. member for Peace River not realize that when a government starts negotiating on rule changes, something that is fundamental in this House, is negotiating from a position of tremendous strength and that the opposition has very few levers with which to play? Does he not realize that those negotiations would result in answers and in responses that perhaps would lead the government to think it has agreement when it does not?

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, my friend was obviously a successful lawyer in his private life before coming to this institution. He makes a bad argument sound pretty convincing and pretty good.

The truth is what has happened in this case. We start out, as a government, putting forward a proposal. We put that proposal on the table and we discuss it with the opposition parties. We change that package and that proposal to the point where it is hardly recognizable. We take that package and bring it into the House. But what happens then? The opposition takes the things that it was not successful in changing and chooses to highlight them and oppose the final result.

Members do not mention the fact that we, as the government, have made significant changes. I am sorry, in fairness you are right, the hon. member did say that. What they do, and I think the House leader for the government put it very well yesterday, is they want to have their cake and eat it too. They want to go through all of the discussions, all of the negotiations, get all of the changes they can and then, in the end, oppose the package. They call it things like fascist, Draconian and all sorts of negative terms when, in fact, it was a very, very effective and good negotiation process which I think resulted in some very positive changes. I am not trying to take credit for those. I am quite prepared to give the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands a great deal of credit because he did make a number of suggestions. He and Mr. Yanover put forward a number of really positive suggestions which we have incorporated into the rule changes and, I think, have strengthened the package.

It is unfortunate that once again the opposition mentality, rather than support the package, is trying to manipulate us as a government into a position where we

are forced to use closure to put what I think is a very good package through this House of Commons.

• (1220)

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise and add my perspective to the particular changes that are being proposed by the government, some of which are certainly of interest and some of which were long overdue. I personally would love to see much more free voting on the part of members so that they do not have to be following the Whip's line all the time.

That is something that I have found very hard to accept. In fact, I found it very galling at certain moments in the course of my last two mandates in this House.

In speaking to the rules of order of change in the House, I think that if they were passed as they have been presented by the government, they would permanently alter Parliament as Canadians have come to know it. I think that Canadians have come to be much more aware and sensitized to the House through what Mr. Warren has explained to them as he puts on our television tube the procedures of the House.

I think that has been very important in helping people to understand what is fairly complex as a procedure.

I see one of my colleagues from Alberta across the floor. I recall our coming in here together and doing a bill on chips and costs. We all had difficulty learning how the House operated. We in this House had difficulty learning and adapting. We did not know we were supposed to be partisan in this House. A colleague from the Conservative bench helped me as I was trying to address a bill that I knew very little about at that given moment.

I think I came out with some enlightened observations, both from my own side, that of the opposition, and the government side. I think that that is what it would allow us if there were more free votes in this House: To have and to be able to express joint and common views which we share that do not necessarily require the kind of party line vote in areas that are quite diverse in what we address in this House.

[*Translation*]

So, the changes this government is proposing to the Standing Orders are a further proof that the Prime Minister is trying to dismantle our national institutions, as he just did with the CBC. It makes absolutely no sense! The new rules undermine the legitimate role of Parliament, that is to confront the government with its responsibilities. The proposed changes are intended to stifle the Parliament of Canada.

The government proposal relinquishes altogether the notion of consensus between parties in this House. The McGrath reforms, and the earlier Lefebvre reforms, as well as the 1969 amendments, were all based upon full ranging debates with a view to reaching a consensus in a spirit of co-operation. Parliament is the latest victim of a dictatorial decision-making process that is what my colleague from Kingston and the Islands was discussing with the member opposite.

[*English*]

While some say that the Conservative government lacks direction, purpose and a clear vision of Canada, I do not say that I particularly share that point of view in this Parliament. I would argue quite the opposite.

I would say that while it appears to be bungling its way through almost every issue that faces this country, the Conservatives in my view have a very clear agenda that seeks to fundamentally change the structures and the institutions of this country and not in the best interests of the unity or well-being of this country, or in the forward agenda of Canada for Canadians: men, women and children to be distinct on the global map.

That has been the hidden agenda. That is the forward agenda, and that is what it does when it dismantles the institutions like the institutions of this House. The proposed changes to the rules are just that other step of closing down Canada.

I would call this the dismantling of the strongest national institutions, Parliament and the House of Commons. Parliament to me is a sacred trust. If it is to be altered, it must not be done in a way that is in the best interest of the government of the day, but what is in the best interest of the people of Canada, Parliament's shareholders.

I speak knowing that we are going to be the government of today tomorrow, and I say that it is not good for us as Liberals as it is not good for the Conservatives.

It is bad decision making on the part of this Parliament to allow this kind of dictatorial decision making.

[*Translation*]

Under the proposed changes, the House would sit eight weeks less every year and there would be fewer days to debate the budget and the throne speech. The number of opposition days where motions on sensitive political issues can be debated would also be reduced.

[*English*]

The government may argue that it has a majority mandate from the people to govern, but I would argue that the government did not put its full agenda before Canadians during the last election. I heard my hon. colleague—who is about the walk out of the House—say that the government's agenda has always been frustrated. I would suggest that the government's agenda was not always forward in the course of a political election.

For example, did the Prime Minister say that if elected—come on there, Don Blenkarn, I ask you—did the government say that if elected it would eliminate 50 per cent of our national railway? Did it say that?

An hon. member: No, no.

Mrs. Finestone: Did the Conservatives say they would close CBC stations from coast to coast, from one end of this country to the other, and dismantle that institution?

Did they say that their government would introduce a new major sales tax on everything from reading, intellectual property, the right to knowledge, to taxi cabs and to one yoghurt that they had to go and—

Mr. Blenkarn: Yes, they did.

Mrs. Finestone: No, they did not. Did he say his government would introduce—

An hon. member: And unanimously too.

Mrs. Finestone: Never mind. That is not so, I do not believe. The answer is no, no and no. Let us remember that the role of the Official Opposition is today in a working democracy, something perhaps they have forgotten about. A democracy only works when there is opposition. It does not work with the tyranny of the majority.

I quote a man of great stature and influence in the business world, as a deputy minister within the structure of the government that makes it work, and as a minister of this House, the former Mitchell Sharp, who said that the role of the opposition is to play the role of the defence lawyer, to be sure that the government proves to the public every point and every policy beyond a shadow of a doubt.

I would say the government under its new rules will not allow the opposition to play that role and to hold the government to account, for with less sitting time, shorter debates, restraints and restrictions of powers of legislative committees, the government will become even more tyrannical. Perhaps it did not realize that. However, that is the end result, the bottom line.

The government, since 1988, has known the depth and breadth of the unpopularity of its economic agenda. Its political agenda has not been popular. Look at the polls and then tell me I am wrong. As a result, it has short-circuited parliamentary debate on important issues, in large measure through the use of closure, the cutting off of parliamentary debate, both in the House and in the Senate.

One former Conservative minister, and I think he was quite well respected in this House at that point, Erik Nielsen, said and I quote: "The procedure of closure had been repugnant to the Canadian people. My own personal view is that never in parliamentary debate should there be a muzzling of free debate." That is a citation from him. Yet the government has used closure on an unprecedented scale, especially since 1988.

On the second day this House sat after the 1988 election, the government introduced closure to ram through the free trade agreement, even though a majority of Canadians, 57 per cent, had voted for parties opposed to the trade deal.

Then closure was used at three different stages on Bill C-21 under which the government will eliminate the federal contribution to unemployment insurance, thus abandoning its responsibility to job reduction—

An hon. member: Oh, oh.

Mrs. Finestone: You know, you are such a nice guy. Why don't you just button the lip and listen to what I have to say, and then you can argue afterward.

Closure was used twice on the notorious clawback bill which taxed back our senior's pensions, twice on the GST and twice on the bill to privatize Petro-Canada. In total, the Conservatives have invoked closure or time

allocation no fewer than 21 times in 29 months since the 1988 election.

The Conservatives invented closure under Sir Robert Borden in 1913 to get passage of their naval aid bill. It was strongly opposed by Liberal opposition leader Sir Wilfred Laurier, who, during the 1913 debate on the closure proposal said that he was going to feel much more comfortable in a defeat at the polls, rather than using closure, because he felt it was so Draconian, so anti-democratic, so far from any of the principles that he supported, that he went the whole way. I quote what he said: "Heaven is my witnesses that I would rather stand here today defeated and in opposition by that appeal to the people than stand over there in office by the power of the gag".

• (1230)

I will admit that there may be times when the use of closure or time allocation is justified. From 1913 to 1984 closure was used fewer times in those 71 years than the Conservative use in the last 29 months.

Finding that closure was not sufficient for the government to get its way, we now have more Draconian measures being imposed. The proposal will cut the sitting days of the House of Commons by almost 25 per cent. At a time when this country is facing a constitutional crisis, when there are rising tensions among our aboriginal peoples and international military actions are increasing and there is destabilization in the international world, increasing levels of unemployment, this government is now proposing what they call "holidays". Well, ladies and gentlemen, I would suggest that it is not a holiday to go back to one's riding. It is a responsibility. I see a particular pleasure to go back to your roots, to the people who elected you to hear what they have to say so that you can, in essence, come back here and report.

I would suggest that if you have Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday, certainly in most cases that would be adequate. I understand my colleagues from the far west, the far north and the far east would prefer the one week every three weeks. I would say that neither of these proposals is what we have in front of us. We have some other kind of a scheme that lengthens periods that were already on the calendar to even longer periods. It does not see us come back to this House during enormously long periods of holiday during the summer season.

I would say that the proposals that were made, the options that were given to us were not very palatable, so we picked the lesser of the evils. There certainly was a way in which we did not have to cut from 175 to 134 sitting days. All this is at at time, as I have said, when Canadians are searching for leadership on these issues, when Canadians are listening to hear what their members have to say on these issues of burning concern.

I do not believe that MPs are going to be comfortable with this kind of change. It is a recipe for the rebirth of Canadian values that will not be found in the choking of debate in this House.

As well, it would appear that the government thought longer sitting days would equal the loss of one week a month in sitting time. But tell me, when will the committees meet? When will we meet in legislative committees? Is the government's plan to make them completely inactive or meaningless too, or to hide the issues from public scrutiny to avoid the test of proof beyond a shadow of a doubt?

Checking the government is an obvious task of the opposition party and one I believe the committees of the House have undertaken constructively in areas of legislation, spending and administration. The government always believes its legislation to be good, but that opinion is not always shared by those who are affected by it.

For example, and I can only use the things I have been intimately involved with in this House, the legislation on broadcasting and on copyright, both considered good by the government, had in excess of 50 amendments each. Obviously, these two bills have benefited from committee study and from the amendments which were brought by both sides of the House.

I personally felt that we, the government members and the opposition members, worked constructively together, along with the minister and the parliamentary secretary to improve both of those bills. In scrutinizing the legislation and in prodding the government to take action, we effectively made changes that were very constructive.

Other examples of strong committee work involve the review of political appointments to boards, commissions and agencies. I just have to talk about the John Crispo appointment—

An hon. member: Shocking appointment.

Mrs. Finestone: —as opposed to the Bill Neville appointment, just to name two, or David Colville to the CRTC. As far as I am concerned, Mr. Speaker, I do not care what your party party partisanship is. You can be a good strong Conservative, a good strong Liberal, a good strong NDP. As long as you are a considered and thoughtful Canadian, I do not care what your party policy is, but have some knowledge of the dossier which you are considering, the committee on which you are going to sit and have some constructive sense of the role in society. Do not do some of the silly things that this government has done in bad partisan politics. In good partisan politics, I have no objections.

That is why the power of committees to review and to arouse public interest is very important. They do not have that power, as I have said, to rescind or overrule, but they certainly can have a degree of moral suasion when bad appointments have been made and we would hope would make the government more prudent in their nominations.

I would suggest that we try to make committees examine the issue, raise public awareness and, as well, examine every dollar of government expenditure. That is a very important role that opposition must play. It is not easy to find the errors and it is not easy to find the misjudgements, but it is important. We work hard on an opposition bench, with very small staff, to find those errors. That is why we have to be in this House as well to carry out that responsibility. We do spot checking, as you know Mr. Speaker when you were on committee, and you did it very effectively as well.

I believe it could be said that we do have a salutary effect on government when it knows we are on the outlook for waste, for inappropriate and unbalanced regional spending or non-spending. For those kind of extravagances, I could allude to the Department of Communications and its minister, but I will not bother the House at this particular moment. I have done it at other stages.

After all, it is the people's money. I think we have to be more frugal and more prudent with that money than we are with our own money and our own pocket-book. That is a commitment that every member takes and should observe when they come to this House, and it is their responsibility.

I think that we have to look at government administration of its departments and its agencies. By the very nature of things, we are the receivers of complaints from public servants, public people and taxpayers. I hear from the film makers, the broadcasters, the artists, the performers, and the business people. As well, I hear from people about the ordinary problems in my riding: employment, pensions, all kinds of serious concerns from people who are dissatisfied, from refugees and immigration, et cetera. It is our job to be in the riding, hear about these issues related to our portfolio and related to our ordinary people and bring them back and ask questions in this House.

Recent investigations by the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture involving the National Arts Centre, Telefilm Canada, the National Gallery and the CBC have been very important. How committees undertake their work I think is equally important.

Mr. Speaker, you have advised me that I have very little time left. I want to talk about just two other things. One is the importance of opposition days, that we are able on opposition days to take initiatives, to discuss issues that go beyond partisan politics and look at societal issues of concern. We had a marvellous debate in this House on violence against women. Even though it was brought before this House by the Liberal Party, that was not the point. Every member on all sides who participated added to the understanding and awareness of the community out there through an opposition day of this nature.

The development of human resources, education, job training, research and development, agriculture and fishing were very important. That is why opposition days must be maintained, because they are vital. Losing those 40 sitting days will also require us to reduce those opposition days, the number of question periods, our debates on the budget and on the throne speech and certainly on other aspects of our daily work.

In summation, I would just like to make the following points. There is no protection in the simple title of democracy. Even the best intentioned rulers in any kind of a democratic society, if they are left unchecked, they become very autocratic. I would remind hon. members

that Lord Acton said that "power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely".

I finish with a quote from Benjamin Disraeli who says that "the function of the opposition is essentially one of criticism". It is critical that we allow for the kinds of sitting days—just find other opportunities and other ways—which allow the House to expose the issues, which allow constant probing, and which allow us to play the role that we were elected to play in this House.

• (1240)

I thank you very much Mr. Speaker and I hope that the public will be aroused enough that it will let the government know that this is not acceptable; we must have consultation and it must go to a committee, it cannot be done arbitrarily as we plan to do it today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Calgary West.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to move the following:

> That the House continue to sit during the lunch hour for the purpose of continuing consideration of government motion No. 30 regarding amendments to the Standing Orders of the House of Commons.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Would those members who object to the motion please rise in their places.

And fewer than 15 members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Pursuant to Standing Order 26(2), the motion is deemed to have been adopted.

Motion agreed to.

[*English*]

Mr. Hawkes: I guess another example of government brutality is the need to move that motion so we can have freedom of speech.

Going back two weeks ago, we made the offer to sit for extended hours to debate these rules. I myself tried to get the House to agree to that yesterday on more than one occasion. I have tried already once today. We need a rule to force the House to sit so that debate can continue.

Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

I just wondered if it is appropriate within the present rules for the member to move a motion to extend hours at the beginning of his speech, and then continue to speak afterwards.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I will remind the hon. member that, when the member for Calgary West rose to move his motion, I had just recognized him as the next Speaker in this debate. Once the motion had been agreed to, he continued his speech, having been recognized by the Chair. He did not lose his right to speak as a result of moving his motion.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): I would point out to my hon. friend across the way that just for extra protection I indicated that I would stay on my feet so I would not lose my place. There could be a technical glitch if you do indeed give up the floor to move a motion.

I would like to get back to the importance of rules.

In 12 years of observation, of coming to this place with high hopes and a lot of concern and of caring, it is with some sense of sadness that I can go back to most ridings in this country, certainly to my riding, and find that the work we do in this chamber is held in low regard. The opposition would have us believe from time to time that it is government members who are held in low regard, but I say we are all held in low regard. We are seen out there in our communities as self-serving.

The whole notion that this is perhaps the best place in the country to be in the sense of offering service to our communities and to our country may exist in our hearts, and I would hope in the hearts of all of us in this Chamber, but it does not exist in the heads of the voters of this country.

What exists in their heads is the notion that we are greedy, that we do not work, that the decisions we reach are bad ones and that we do harm to this country. Who tells Canadians that? I suggest the House leader for the

New Democratic Party is rather consistent at telling Canadians that that is the level of concern that goes on in this Chamber.

When we try to change the Parliament of Canada Act to make it function just a little more sensibly, when we try to change the rules of the House, it is as if we have no positive motivation. It is as if we do not care for the people of this country.

Canadians are a pretty sensible bunch. If they were not busy in their work places today and they had the opportunity to watch the House of Commons debates from start to finish and not through the filter of national media, they would come to some different conclusions about this place.

If they had a camera that panned all these empty benches at this point, they would realize how few people are sitting in this Chamber at this very moment. If they were able to watch that day after day, they would see that there is seldom a day when three quarters of the New Democratic Party are in attendance in the Chamber.

The NDP has a system inside its party—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Prud'homme: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The hon. member for Saint-Denis on a point of order.

Mr. Prud'homme: Mr. Speaker, I think that my hon. colleague who is promoting new Standing Orders should at least recognize and accept the present Standing Orders that strictly forbid—it is contrary to all parliamentary traditions—

[*English*]

—all British parliamentary traditions to comment on the presence or absence of a member or a group of members. It is not really helpful to conduct a very pleasant debate on a very important issue.

He knows he cannot do it. Why does he insist on doing it? Perhaps he wants to provoke a political party and show that since there is no agreement I might as well apply *la guillotine*.

I am not on duty today. I am here to listen to certain points of view on these rules. If the hon. member wants to make this a partisan issue, he knows he will get a reply. We will lose a lot of time. He is already asking for an hour more during lunch time. We did not object.

Why does he not apply the spirit of the rule? I am worried, if he starts this way, about these new rules. If he is awakening us, we may participate much more vigorously with regards to these new rules.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the very experienced hon. member who has, I believe, served in this Chamber for 27 years.

[*English*]

—because he underlines the fact that we have some conventions. There is nothing in the rules which says we cannot talk about attendance in the Chamber.

There is something in our practices. Speakers have ruled it that is not a good idea to talk about motivation or attendance. The rules are here and the practices are there.

The only point—I will make it quickly—is that Canadians have a right to be upset when we say one thing and do another. When the New Democrats stand in this Chamber, each one of them knowing that they have a basic pattern of being here three weeks and gone one week, and when we say that should be the rule of the Chamber, they say that it is awful, it is nefarious and it is a plot.

• (1250)

That is what they do, and they have been doing it for two years. That is what brings us all into disrepute.

Mr. Fisher: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. I do not know whether reference to a member's presence in the house is in the rules of order. I have certainly heard Speakers—every one who has sat in that chair since I came to this House—upbraid members for making those kinds of references. Maybe it was only because they were specific.

I guess the member can ramble on as long as he wants about whether or not New Democrats are in the House. I think the people who voted for us certainly know that we serve them well.

Mr. Speaker, there is a—

An hon. member: That's not a point of order.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Order! Just a clarification. I think it is correct, as several members pointed out, that the practice under our Standing Orders is not to indicate the absence of any member. You understand the nature of the present debate, where we are considering changing the Standing Orders, in a way calls this practice into question, because this debate obviously involves whether members are present in the House or not. The Chair does not wish to take a stand on

the substance of the debate but he recognizes that it is not unlikely that during the debate, members feel the need to mention the presence of members in the House or in their riding. In this regard, the Chair intends to be understanding and hopes that on both sides of the House, members will try not to get personal. I understand that it is hard to draw a line between what the Standing Orders say and what is at issue in the debate.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands has a point of order?

Mr. Milliken: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. I want to clarify a point. When the hon. member for Calgary West moved that we sit during lunch hour, we did not object to that motion. Now the hon. member made a speech. And as the hon. member for Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing said, the fact that the hon. member moved the motion and started to speak after it was adopted causes a problem. I hope that the only reason he is speaking now is that he kept his right to speak after the motion, and we did not object to that motion. That is surely why he has the floor now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Order, please. I greatly appreciate the request for clarification from the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands. Generally the practice is that moving a motion includes the right to speak. But according to parliamentary practice, when the member in question took the trouble to indicate that he wanted to continue his speech and there was no opposition to that—I took it for granted that the House agreed to give the floor back to the hon. member for Calgary West. But again, you understand that I would not want to create a precedent and for that, I appreciate the comments from the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands and the hon. member for Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing.

So the hon. member for Calgary West again has the floor.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the difficulty the Clerks at the Table have in judging my 20 minutes because so much of it has been taken up by the opposition.

My own timetable tells me that at least five and a half have disappeared with points of order and I am sure that the Clerks at the Table will adjust that time accordingly.

The point I was making is that what the rule changes do in terms of the parliamentary calendar is essentially capture what the opposition has been doing for two years. There is a certain loss of credibility for all us when members of the opposition stand up and complain about it because Canadians like the actions to correspond with the words. When you say one thing and you do another, you hurt the credibility not only of yourself, but of the institution, of the democratic process and of the country as a whole.

The person who spoke before me complained about the use of the rules in this House in December of 1988. That was the most vicious election campaign in my life in terms of the misinformation that was spread in places like senior citizens' homes and caused sleeplessness and illness throughout this country. The voters decided that the opposition was wrong and the policies should be adopted.

The people who stand in this Chamber and say: "We believe in democracy", completely ignored the most important element of the democratic process: An election. They would not simply come to this Chamber and approve the voters' choice when it came to free trade; it should have been done in an hour. It had been done by the Chamber before. We had a complete national election in which millions of dollars were spent. They had used every nefarious, incorrect argument in the book and been rejected by the voters. Then we had to come to this Chamber and use the rules to make the passage.

If you think that does not do harm, you are wrong.

My training, before coming to this place, was as a psychologist and I know that the human mind is very, very important. When you say one thing and you do another you cheapen this place.

I want to get to committees because we have said a lot about committees this fall. At our caucus last May we said that the committee system was not working. It was asked why the committee system was not working. They say to me and to each other that the opposition, in part, is responsible because you do not get the same members coming, you do not get the willingness on the part of the opposition to meet on Mondays or on Thursdays or Fridays. They want you always to meet on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. That is the opposition. There are arguments like that of the Deputy House Leader of the Liberal Party: "Well that is the government."

I just happened to put my staff to work on some attendance records. I thought that might enlighten the Chamber. Let me just start with the New Democratic Party. It is concerned about health and welfare. Its attendance at health and welfare is 38 per cent. That is out of their entire caucus of 44, and not just the member on the committee.

Let us look at the solicitor general. We have got a lot of concern about justice and solicitor general. The NDP's attendance at justice and solicitor general is 29 per cent.

Some hon. members: Oh, shame.

Mr. Hawkes: Oh, shame. Well the Liberals are better, it has 55 per cent attendance. The bad old government has only at 80 per cent attendance.

Mr. Milliken: These books have been cooked.

Mr. Hawkes: These books have come right from the table. That is another way in which they impugn this institution. It is as if they were saying the clerks at the table bias the information for the government. Well that is not true. Those clerks serve us all well and impartially and these figures come from them. They care about the economy and they care about jobs in this country. They just ache and they bleed every day in Question Period. We have a committee on industry, science, technology, regional concerns. The poor people in Atlantic Canada and in northern Quebec *et dans tout le pays*.

• (1300)

An hon. member: And western Canada too.

Mr. Hawkes: They do get better. The New Democrats are up to 47.5 per cent attendance. Almost half the time they have somebody out of their 44 people. Almost half the time. And the Liberals have 50 per cent. Half the time they come to this committee that is concerned about science, technology and jobs and the poor, old, terrible government is only at 88.75 per cent.

Some hon. members: Shame.

Mr. Hawkes: The poor chairman is missing government members almost 10 per cent of the time. Of course, we only have to send eight. The New Democrats have to send two and the Liberals have to send four. But they cannot even get one person there a portion of the time. Not one out of 80 some odd. But they will stand in this Chamber and say: "The government is cutting off democracy. It is making the committees smaller when we need them".

Canadians lose faith in this institution when you say one thing and you do another. That is not helping us in the national unity crisis.

Mr. Crawford: Go to the environment.

Mr. Hawkes: Do you want to know what the environment is, Mr. Speaker? The Liberals have a 67.5 per cent attendance. The government is worse. It has 66.2 per cent.

Mr. Crawford: I do not even believe that.

Mr. Hawkes: Well then you do not believe the Table. It met 20 times. We had an average of 5.3 members at environment. The Liberals had 2.7 and the NDP was 1.8. Those are the facts.

What we are dealing with here today is a package of changes that I think will get changed again. I am not sure that we have the exact right system for committees. I am not sure that we have the exact right timetable. But when my record over 12 years for any single year in 12 years has never fallen below 90 per cent in terms of my being here for votes—for 12 consecutive solid years, both opposition and government, never.

There is nobody in the New Democratic Party who has a voting record in this Chamber in the last two and a half years that exceeds 75 per cent. I can make that statement without even looking at it, because we keep attendance records of all parties in my whip's office. There may be one or two Liberals actually, who represent Ottawa area ridings. But I will take the oldest person in this Chamber, who has been here since 1972 and drives five or six hours back to his riding and his voting record will be in the neighbourhood of 95.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): On a point of order, the hon. member for Lambton—Middlesex.

Mr. Ferguson: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is talking about voting records of members of Parliament. I would like to take him up on that challenge. He said one or two members from the Ottawa area—I do not live near the Ottawa area. I would like to suggest to him that my voting record is well above 75 per cent.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The hon. member for Calgary West, one and a half minutes left.

Mr. Hawkes: I say to the members of this Chamber, on this Parliament of Canada debate, there are some debates that affect our lives more than they do the voter's lives. Those debates should not be long because we have been sent here to deal with the interests of the voters. But these are important debates to the future of our country. We should watch what we say because through our words in this Chamber and with the media out there to define the public perception of this institution and this democracy and ultimately, and perhaps very quickly, the continuation of this country.

If we stand in this Chamber and say to each other that we are bad people with bad motivation and bad consequences, and we are doing it to score cheap political points, we may succeed, but ultimately we do damage to the entire system, to our nation, and I think it is inappropriate.

Mr. Speaker, I would say that the powers we have for taxation, criminal law, the Constitution, are awesome. The voters of Canada would like us to behave better and the rules can help but they are not the answer. The way we conduct ourselves will have more to do with our acceptability as an institution and a Parliament than any change in the rules will ever do.

Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the government whip how he thinks both opposition members and his own backbench members can better serve their constituents in this House when presenting the concerns of their constituents. These Standing Order changes, among other things, will reduce the number of days of debate on the throne speech, will reduce the number of days for debate on the budget, will reduce opposition days, and will reduce to a large extent the time available to any particular member to speak.

Perhaps he could explain to us how, by reducing the time available for debating issues, we can better serve our constituents and better deal with the issues here in the House.

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, it is my real hope that with a 27-week calendar that almost all members would be here for 27 weeks so that we can listen to each other, so that we can dialogue, so we can spend 25 weeks where we come from in our home community, and that we get this interchange. That would be a significant improvement.

If we better understood each other in this Chamber and in the committees, it would be better.

But when we insist on a calendar that requires members to fly all night long, to arrive tired, to have pressure to leave to catch an airplane, we miss each other and we miss each other far too often.

The silent group in House of Commons terms is government members. Neither the rules nor the practices allow us to participate with any sense of equality in Question Period, which is obvious, or in debates. There is always the pressure of time.

When you meet with the opposition House leaders they always want five speakers, seven speakers. They state: "If you let me have my five then we will stop and you can pass it. Of course if you put government members into the mix and they talk about their view, not the government's view, on behalf of their constituents, that will delay it. Then you will have to use closure; then we will stand up and we will pound you".

What we have said in these rule changes is that we will get to 10-minute speeches more quickly. Instead of taking 30 minutes per speaker, which is a 20-minute speech and a 10-minute question and comment period, each of us on each of the public issues must be able to have 30 minutes in this Chamber which means opposition and not government, we are simply saying that after the first five hours of debate in this Chamber instead of eight we will move to 10-minute speeches. Then in 30 minutes, three members representing their ridings can make a presentation to the House in an attempt to be persuasive.

• (1310)

If there is something wrong with allowing more of our 295 members to participate in a debate instead of allowing fewer people to speak longer, then I do not understand how this violates democracy.

Surely it is better to give more members an opportunity to speak more often on behalf of their constituents in this Chamber. Surely it is better to have smaller committees where the role is meaningful and where one does not sit and warm a chair but can actually participate.

Surely those two things operate in the public interest better than the system we now have.

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I was in my office and watched the speech on the tube that my hon. friend from Calgary made just recently.

I must tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I was very disappointed in the tone that he set and the so-called factual information that he gave the House. It was coming from a person for whom I have a lot of respect. I have worked with him in a friendly and what I thought was a constructive manner over the years.

I did not hear from that member any substantive argument that Canadians would understand why this government wants to change those rules, except that he took his 20 minutes to do something which the government could have done in committee if it had those facts and those kind of statistics. I could quote all kinds of other statistics because I was there for seven years as Whip also, showing him how his members were lax in their duties in committees.

It does not accomplish much in creating the kind of atmosphere of parliamentarians' decency. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that we had to plead with the government to get a committee going here on consumer and corporate affairs not very long ago, because it refused to call it. He has his reasons, and we have ours.

Parliament was paralysed in terms of committee work. The transport committee was also. A lot of things could be said that are negative of the government Whip. I must tell him sincerely that I appreciated the work he did on trying to get this so-called reform going.

I do not think he succeeded in convincing any of the members of this House or of the public that this was the right move. I think he played partisan politics all through his speech. He tried to denigrate the NDP and the Liberals, knowing very well that what he said could be termed—I cannot use the word because the book says I cannot use it.

The government is now saying that members have to go back to their homes, their ridings and meet with their constituents. If I recall yesterday, the House leader, his boss, said on page 19133 of *Hansard*:

> People are demanding more contact with members of Parliament and more involvement.

I agree. In 1988 when the majority kept the minority Official Opposition of 40 members or less going all through the summer of 1988, it did not give a damn about the people in our ridings. It did not care because it was platooned.

It had 70 members away and 140 members doing something else. That is why I cannot use the word. Understandably, the government knows what I am talking about. Let us have a constructive debate. I will talk on this thing this afternoon and I will not use that kind of crap.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Hawkes: Anybody watching will have trouble believing how we respect each other in this Chamber.

This is not a time in Canadian history and simply not the moment when partisanship should dominate. What should dominate at this point in our history in this Chamber is an attempt to come together to resolve problems.

When we were in opposition we used the rules to delay the government. We hoped and felt we did it judiciously. We delayed government where it should be delayed and we approved where it should be approved. We did not, I do not think, stand in the House and berate the government for going on longer because we blocked it.

It is so difficult for someone watching television to believe that we get speeches on the need for more debate and more freedom of speech and when we stand up—and I will do it again in closing—and ask for the unanimous consent of the House to continue this debate this evening beyond the normal hour of adjournment for another five, six or eight hours, from six o'clock until midnight? Would you, Mr. Speaker, simply ask the members of this Chamber whether their conviction about the importance of freedom of speech extends to

the notion that tonight on this very important issue, we can debate between six o'clock and midnight. Six extra hours of freedom of speech is all the government is asking for. Mr. Speaker, would you please ask the House if there is unanimous consent for that motion?

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, my friend from Calgary West knows the rules very well. Standing Order 26(1) and (2) says that a member must have the floor and be in his seat. The member for Calgary West did not have the floor. We are on comments and questions so the member does not have the floor when we have that kind of a situation. The member for Calgary West is not seeking anything. He is just trying to play politics again.

If he comes in here at 5.55 p.m. or from four to five this afternoon and puts that motion to the House, we will deal with it then.

Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Mr. Speaker, I will try to be a little more constructive than the last speaker and deal with the motion that is before the House in both some general introductory terms and in some specifics.

As a relatively new member to the House of Commons, I came, as most new members, expecting the debate to be meaningful, the government to listen, to respond to constructive suggestions and criticisms, and not only to listen to us but to listen to the Canadian people.

That does not happen. There is no sign of it happening. These rule changes will make it even more difficult for those of us who are bringing forward these arguments to have the opportunity to put pressure on the government and to hopefully get it to change its mind.

Since 1988 the government has disregarded accumulated parliamentary practice and has unilaterally changed the way the House of Commons operates. It has made routine the use of closure and time allocation by which debate is curtailed and bills are forced through the House. Closure was used as we all know only 21 times between 1913 and 1988 and yet it has been used 13 times in the last three years by this government.

In addition, by stacking the Senate, by using closure illegally in committee, the Conservative government has changed Parliament from a forum for debating and amending government proposals to a legislative rubber stamp. That is why the Canadian public finds Parliament difficult to understand, because the government is not responding to arguments which are presented, arguments which the Canadian public support.

On March 25, as we all know, the government House leader presented a new Conservative vision of Parliament contained in the 64 amendments to the Standing Orders that we are discussing today. Individually, these sweeping changes range from the relatively trivial to the totalitarian. Collectively, they will shut down Parliament and shut out its members from any meaningful legislative role.

Canadians want changes to Parliament. There is no doubt about that. They want parliamentary reform. They are fed up with the Parliament which fails to respond to their needs or reflect their concerns. Sometimes they are embarrassed by some of the behaviour such as that we just heard from members and senators. They are angered by the indifference of governments and the inability of their elected representatives to effect change.

But these changes, the changes proposed by the government House leader, will not deal with the real concerns that Canadians have about the operation of Parliament. These proposals are designed to preserve the quickly eroding authority of the government which is within 11 votes, as we know, of losing its parliamentary majority.

• (1320)

Many of the proposed changes have the goal of keeping the House closed whenever possible. After all, when Parliament does not sit, government cannot be defeated. By reducing the number of sitting days to 135 from 175, the government is cutting two further months from the parliamentary calendar. For 24 weeks a year there will be no opportunity for Question Period, no opportunity for regular press activities and questioning of MPs and leaders, no committee hearings and no ability to debate or question government policies. In short, there will be no accountability. The government will escape the scrutiny of the House for almost half of the year.

The shortened calendar though will not impede the government from enacting its agenda because a government which has invoked closure after only seven hours of debate on an issue as sensitive as the GST will find 135 days sufficient to ram through the legislation it wants to pass.

The argument appears to be that for reasons of efficiency, we need to restrict the opportunities of members to bring forward the considerations and concerns of their constituents.

We are going to increase by 25 per cent the time spent each day passing government motions and bills, but we are going to reduce the number of days spent debating the budget, the throne speech and opposition motions. We are going to reduce the number of committee meetings by requiring several committees to share two committee rooms. We are going to restrict the testimony before legislative committees to purely technical matters. The government is going to facilitate the use of closure and time allocation limits on debate, cut the length of most speeches to 10 minutes and remove the right to vote on certain stages of bills.

In the name of efficiency, these are the sorts of measures that the government is tabling and proposing to restrict the activities of members in the legitimate pursuit of bringing forward the concerns of their constituents.

In fact, the government will be able to avoid sitting for all but a few days. Currently, the House must sit for 25 days a year before the government can get approval for money for operations, in others words, for supply. In order for the supply to be triggered, these 25 House sitting days must be scheduled. But under the Conservative government's proposal, the government will be able to reduce the number of supply days when it shuts the House down and passes an appropriation act with only a few days sitting.

If the government does not get its own way through all of these restrictions on the activities of the members, the government has invented or presented us with an ultimate escape clause, a rule that lets it invent new rules.

Last year, we will all remember, whatever our position might have been on the constitutional question, that Elijah Harper, a member of the legislature in Manitoba, showed Canadians how powerful a single elected member can be on certain occasions when unanimous consent is required. Mr. Harper could not block or defeat the Meech Lake Accord, which he and which most Canadians were so opposed to, because our system ensures that the will of the majority prevails, but he could refuse to let the Manitoba legislature suspend the rules agreed upon by all of them and he denied unanimous consent to waive notice before the debate began.

Unanimous consent, both given and withheld, as we all know, is a crucial check in the balance of power between a government and its legislature. Yet, almost daily, the House of Commons agrees, by unanimous consent, to set aside regulatory procedures, to speed Routine Proceedings or to reach an agreed decision. This flexibility ensures that limits on which there is a consensus are treated differently than truly opposed issues.

No individual member can stop the will of the majority, but our parliamentary procedures guarantee that any one member can prevent abuse of the process. The government wants to change this. It wants to redefine unanimous consent. Unanimous consent now will mean at least 25 people. In other words, 25 members of Parliament must be present to block government proposals to change the rules and arrange government business in a way it sees fit. If fewer than 25 members get to their feet to oppose, these motions will be adopted without debate and no member could even utter a word of opposition.

With such a rule in place, the government, at appropriate times, could pass certain bills or even constitutional procedures, establish or abolish committees or get parliamentary approval to controversial government appointments. In other words, it would be able to short-circuit the entire legislative process. I think there are reasons why it is appropriate for the opposition to delay the process of government business. Although the government dislikes that and finds it frustrating, nevertheless it is appropriate in certain circumstances for the opposition to give the public the opportunity to consider the government's measures fully, to fully understand the issues and give them an opportunity to mobilize their opposition if that seems appropriate.

It is appropriate that the opposition have the opportunity to from time to time use whatever procedural measures are there to delay the government's business, not just to be a nuisance, but in order that the public can

fully understand and appreciate the issues and respond to them.

I think in the context of the present political climate, there is another point which is worth making in regard to these changes. That is, they are irresponsible in a very real way. It is irresponsible to change the rules which will work well in a two party system when, as we can all see, it is almost certain that there are going to be five parties in the next Parliament. To try to work these rules with a Parliament comprising of five parties is going to make it very difficult to facilitate the operations of Parliament. In addition, with those five parties, it will make it very difficult to change the rules to effectively respond to those five parties.

I think the government in a very real way is closing its eyes to the realities of the country, the realities of what is going to take place in the next Parliament, and in that sense will harm future parliamentary action.

The most pressing issue for us and for our constituents I think is that these changes will make it very much more difficult for MPs in opposition, as well as on the backbenches of the government, to represent the views of their constituents. I have mentioned a number of those situations in which less time will be available for members, reducing the time for speeches, reducing the scope of investigation on committees and of course this particularly undesirable resolution regarding unanimous consent.

I have concentrated on the parts which we have difficulty with, assuming that the government will spend its time on the parts it sees as desirable. I have spent time on the problems. I think what it does is take parliamentary reform in a direction away from what will be meaningful to this House. It is rather like the government's tax reform which makes the tax system less fair.

In closing, I would like to make reference to a point I raised yesterday with regard to dividing this complex motion. Mr. Speaker, you will remember that I made a suggestion or I called upon the Speaker to use his discretion to divide this complex motion, discussed reasons why we find it difficult to offer a clear position on a motion which contains so many elements, some of which are desirable, some, as I have indicated, of which are quite undesirable.

The Liberals have offered their amendment and the House will be able to decide whether or not it agrees with their concerns. I would like to offer a further amendment to the motion. We have a situation in which this matter is still under some consideration, but I trust that the Chair will reserve on whether or not these amendments and any other amendments which might come forward are in order, pending the Speaker's ruling on the various points of order which have been raised concerning this motion.

If I may, I would like to move an amendment, seconded by my colleague from Saskatoon—Dundurn:

> That the motion be amended by deleting paragraphs 8, 15, 20, 22, 23, 24 and 55 and amending paragraph 13 by deleting the words "the member speaking in reply" and substituting with "the two members speaking in reply".

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The Chair therefore receives the subamendment, takes it under advisement and hopes to make a decision as soon as possible.

• (1330)

[*English*]

Mr. Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I would hope that you would reserve the classification of what I have just presented.

My intention is for the proposal that I put forward to be another amendment to the motion, pending any recognition that you might have, of the desirability to split the motion into parts.

There might be some problems with regard to it being a subamendment as a result of the rules with regard to amending other amendments. My intention was to put that forward as an amendment, pending your consideration of the point of order that I raised yesterday, Mr. Speaker.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The Chair has heard your additional information and will surely take it into account in the decision he will render.

[*English*]

Mr. Howard Crosby (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, the member from Saskatoon in addressing the House raised once

again the issue of the reduction in the number of sitting days proposed in the new Standing Orders.

I would like to make a comment on the matter of sitting days as they relate to the House of Commons.

The Parliament of Canada Act makes it very clear that there is an obligation on every member of Parliament to attend each and every day that the House of Commons sits. In fact, there is a financial penalty for missing a sitting day, even though if it is on public business and so on there is an exemption.

That exemption is resorted to universally by members of Parliament. In fact, I do not think there have been any reductions in sessional indemnities by way of penalty for not being in attendance in the House of Commons.

This is something the public should know. Every member of the House of Commons is required to be in his or her seat when the House of Commons is in session. We know that that is simply not the case. We do not attend every time that the House of Commons is in session.

We do pursue other interests, be they constituency or party interests or other forms of public interest. The point is that we should take a more realistic approach to sitting days. We should recognize that members of Parliament, members of the House of Commons, are required to do things other than be present in Ottawa at their seat in the House of Commons.

They are required to attend at various functions around the country and in that way serve the parliamentary, public and constituency interests. I do not see anything wrong at all, morally or otherwise, with being realistic about the number of days in which the House of Commons should sit because it is not necessary in the public interest to have the House of Commons open 365 days a year.

If that was the case, why would members not be arguing for a 12 month session of the House of Commons, a five day week and for them to be present at all times except through statutory holidays the same way that government offices are open? If that was in the public interest and if the public had an interest in Parliament being open on all those days, why would members of the opposition not be seeking that as a resolution of the problem?

Why would they be objecting for a reduction from 175 days to 135 days? Why would they not be looking for an increase? Why would they not have the House of Commons open every day that government offices are open so that people could come, watch the proceedings in the House of Commons and see the government in action?

We all recognize that there has to be some kind of sensible limitation on the days in which Parliament sits. The only question is: Is the limitation to benefit members of Parliament, or to benefit the Canadian public?

I say very clearly that the Canadian public benefits from a reduction in the sitting days. I would like members to address that point. Do they really think the public really benefits from keeping the House of Commons open as long as possible? Does the public benefit in other ways?

Let me just briefly mention that point because I think the public benefits if they have an opportunity to see their members of Parliament in their constituencies at functions to that they can address their concerns directly to their member. I do not know why members want to hide themselves in Ottawa and turn aside the opportunity to go back to their constituencies one week in every four when everybody knows where we are.

They know that events and appointments can be scheduled to accommodate that. I ask this of the member from Saskatoon: Is that his idea? He does not want his constituents to know that he is available once a week in his constituency office? Does he want to take advantage of the Parliament of Canada Act and say: "I have to be in Ottawa. Parliament is open. You cannot see me."

I think if we are going to be fair with our constituents, we would set a situation where people know where we are. They would know when we are going to be in our constituencies and when we are going to be in Ottawa pursuing the national interest.

Mr. Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Mr. Speaker, in terms of the theme of the member's comments, we clearly have a good deal of agreement. What we both seem to be saying, what I am saying and what I took him to say, is that we need to ensure that the rules which apply to the operation of Parliament facilitate the

operations of our activities as members of Parliament representing our constituents and so on.

We represent our constituents in different ways and in different places through different activities. Some are here in Ottawa in this Chamber and some are here in Ottawa in other circumstances, in committees and so on, and some are back in the ridings meeting with constituents and dealing with their concerns. Then we have our other responsibilities to our parties and to the system as a whole to spend some time in other parts of the country also.

My point is that we need to spend as much time here in Ottawa as is necessary to effectively pursue our constituents' concerns and interests and to effectively represent those concerns and interests. By reducing our opportunity as members of Parliament to put forward those arguments, this government is making life more difficult for members of Parliament to do that part of their work which is done here in Ottawa.

I do not understand how anybody could argue that by having less time to debate issues in the House of Commons that our activities as an MP will be improved. How is it better for me to have only 10 minutes to speak rather than 20 minutes? How can that possibly enable me to represent my constituents effectively? Why is the government always interested in ramming legislation through? Why is it not interested in letting all members have an opportunity to speak?

There is one illustration arising from my province. When the New Democratic government in the late 1970s nationalized the Potash Corporation, that debate took 120 days. When the Conservative government in Saskatchewan privatized the Potash Corporation, it used closure for the first time in Saskatchewan and rammed it through in less than a couple of weeks. That is not the way to effectively deal with the issues and have the issues debated. We should be looking for ways to facilitate opportunities for MPs to fully contribute to the debates rather than narrow them, rather than to reduce the days of debate on the throne speech and the budget and the length of speeches. How many times have we heard members stand up and say: "I am not able to really say very much in 20 minutes", or "My time is up and I have so much more to say". We need to respond to those concerns too.

Mr. Ross Belsher (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to the hon. member for Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing. There is an extension of hours, in my understanding, in the sitting days so that the total number of hours are not decreased by very, very much.

An hon. member: They are increased. The total hours are increased.

Mr. Belsher: The total hours are increased, I am told. My friend beside me has some notes.

Is it not true that the party of which the member is a part has a sort of a semi-form of platooning so that members have three weeks here and one week off. They are almost following this sort of a format. We should like the rest of the members to be able to take advantage of such a format. Is this not a fact of what the New Democrats have actually practised for the last several months?

Mr. Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Mr. Speaker, I am sure that is the case and it has been the case with me, that on occasion I have been able to spend a week in my riding at one period of time. It is not very often I am able to do that, but I try to do it whenever I can. There is certainly no formal procedure within the party which provides each of us with an opportunity to be in the riding for one week a month. Some of us are able to do it. Most of us try to do it because we think it is appropriate for the reasons mentioned by the member for Halifax West to be in the riding and responding to those concerns.

• (1340)

If it happens, it happens. There is no formalized process for it. We do make every effort to be there in the riding so that our constituents can reach us. I presume that every member does the same thing.

Mr. Blaine A. Thacker (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): I feel privileged to be able to rise and present a few words in the House, particularly to my distinguished friends opposite, many of whom have sat in the House for as long as I have.

I am coming at this from 12 years' experience. I have now had some eight years on the government side in two separate Parliaments and I also spent a long time in opposition. If there was one constant throughout my

entire 12 years, felt by members on both sides of the House on a personal basis, it was that the Standing Orders of the House were not satisfactory. When I arrived, in 1979, some of the strongest critics of the rules were members of my party on the government side then and when we were in opposition, individual Liberal members were unhappy with the Standing Orders because the Standing Orders were outmoded. I therefore want to commend the members who participated in the process to change these Standing Orders. The House leaders from all three parties played a very valuable role for which they should individually be commended.

There is an outline set forth as to the discussions they had. They were very detailed discussions; proposal after proposal to change the rules. The package we are debating today reflects the negotiation that took place. One does not get everything one wants. The government certainly had to back down on many things and the opposition did not get everything it wanted either.

The point is that at some point the House has to decide. I can remember the grand experiment in 1980 tried to give individual members more authority, more say in what happens in this House by developing task forces. As a relatively new member then in opposition, I had the privilege of sitting on a federal—provincial finance task force. We crossed the country and heard evidence from all sorts of provinces and of witnesses. We made a unanimous report and many of the provisions of that report have now worked their way into the substantive law of the nation. I sat on one on Senate reform and we had some very creative ideas that came to us from Canadians and which we incorporated into our report. They are gradually being seen as more and more sensible as time goes by, and I think will become part of the next change of the Senate when that change occurs.

In 1984 the McGrath committee made substantial recommendations which were adopted by the House and which I think have benefitted the House in terms of the standing committees and the legislative committees.

Having had more experience with those, having identified more weaknesses and needs for change, we have this package before us today which represents a detailed negotiation flowing out of the practical, real-life experiences we have had as members.

I recognize the reality and I would not expect the opposition members to stand up and vote for this because when you are in opposition, and we used to do the very same thing, it often is in your best interest to negotiate changes behind closed doors. You make your recommendations, you get the government to change its proposal package, but when it comes time to vote in the House, as an opposition party you simply cannot be seen to be agreeing with the government. Indeed, there is a narrow, partisan political advantage to being opposed to the government because the government over time becomes unpopular because governments have to make decisions. Oppositions never have to make decisions, that is not their role. Their role is to obfuscate and to bring up minor points, and we used to do it admirably well.

I remember in opposition when we agreed to 90 per cent of a bill, we would stress in our debate only the 10 per cent—one or two items out of 10 items that we disagreed with. That is all we would talk about. We would vote against the bill because, when you are in opposition, you try to keep all of the people out in the country who are opposed to something—the special interest groups usually—on your side so they will vote for you in the next election.

I think Canadians need to understand that on this package the opposition parties played a very meaningful role in getting up to the final package, but of course they cannot be seen to stand in the House and vote for it because that would anger so many of their own narrow partisan supporters—and that is just the way it works, that is democracy.

I want to say to Canadians that they ought not to worry about the allegations being made just now about the lack of efficiency, and about how we will not be here and accountable, and about their rights being cut back. That just is not so.

When you look at the realities of the thing, even under the new proposals where the average sitting days will be reduced from 155 days to 134 days, what you really want to look at is how many hours Parliament will sit over the course of a year. Under the new rules Parliament will sit for more hours than under the existing rules. So in a sense what you are getting from the opposition parties

when they stand and vote against this package is opposition to working harder. Are they opposed to working harder? I would like them to answer that. That is what the new rules do, they provide more hours—albeit under a less number of days. Look at the number of days other Parliaments sit.

We have to put it in the context of the legislative jurisdiction of this Parliament. We are a federation, and the whole range of sovereign powers that Parliaments operate under in this country is split. The provinces have a huge number of jurisdiction items that only they pass laws on. We have a limited number that we pass laws on. Essentially, we have about half the constitutional jurisdiction, and yet we sit more hours than governments that have the whole package.

Look at the example of France. France is a unitary state and its Parliament has full constitutional jurisdiction and yet it only sits 149 days a year—substantially less than we do. Australia, which is a better example because it too has a federation and therefore a split constitutional authority, sits for 66 days.

I have no hesitation in telling Canadians that I am sure we will get as much work done as we do now and I want to put the argument to my friends that we can actually be superior under the new model if we, as members of Parliament, do our jobs the way I think we should. I will speak to that in a minute.

I believe these changes are important and necessary. I would be prepared to live with them as a member of the government, or as a member of the opposition.

Mr. Brewin: The opposition. I hope you have the opportunity to experience that again.

Mr. Thacker: Well, I think around the turn of the century we will have a session in opposition, but it will not last long I hope.

This Parliament, with only half the constitutional authority, actually sits many more days than other Parliaments with the full range of constitutional authority.

Let us look at it from another perspective. What about the number of bills passed by other Parliaments per sitting day? Canada passes, on average, one bill per sitting day. That might seem like a lot, but Australia with the same constitutional jurisdiction as ours, passes 14 bills per sitting day. In short, its committees meet, get all these bills ready to go and when the members hit the House they do not need the same amount of time because they have had input before. That is the major point I want to put forth.

Under these changes, these 20 standing committees, divided into these five envelopes, can spend the time on what I think we are elected to do by our constituents; to sit on those committees and develop policies, to review departments, to review areas of the law and to make recommendations as to how these bills can be changed and how the laws can be changed so that they are more effective.

It is having input up front, before a legislated bill, a proposal hits the House.

• (1350)

Once you get a specific proposal it is not easy to change the principles and the broad philosophy behind it. I have always enjoyed the work at the policy level to try and get this input when it is at the bureaucratic level before it is put in the form of a bill. That is what the new rules will permit us to do.

There is not much political gain from that because it is often difficult in a final bill to say: "I am responsible for this clause or that clause." I can assure you, having been here for 12 years, that most of us as individuals have had an impact on the bills and on the broad policy thrust that the government has been prepared to pick up and change. I am very proud of our accomplishments.

Look at some other countries in terms of their production. The United States, which has an awesome jurisdictional authority, and because it is a super power, has a million different things to deal with; more than we do in Canada. It passes an average of 10 bills per sitting day.

The Netherlands passes 14 bills per sitting day. New Zealand, with its socialist government, passes eight bills per sitting day. Sweden, another socialist government, passes seven bills per sitting day. We pass one.

I think the case is clear that under the new proposals we will be able to pass more bills per sitting day, but that is not unusual because we are still only one per day compared to 14 in Australia, 14 in the Netherlands, 9 in Japan and 10 in the United States. Let us not think we

are wasting our time or somehow abusing Parliament under the new proposals.

The final point I want to make is that the reason I think the new rules are important is that they will permit the laws of Canada to be changed at a rate which will keep the nation up to date, modern and in full competition with other countries that are changing their laws much more quickly.

The reality is we are behind because over the past few years we have wasted so much time in this country debating bills in this House and delaying change. I want to give some examples.

In the area of intellectual property a question arose when some drug companies started to charge too much around the world for drugs. Different countries responded in different ways. Every country except Canada responded with a price review board so they could force these drug companies to justify their increases. Canada took away their patent rights and so no research and development was ever done in this country. If a drug company wanted to develop a new drug, it would not be developed in Canada. It would be developed in Germany, the United States, Britain, or Switzerland because there would be patent protection.

We made that change. The opposition parties both opposed it.

Plant breeders rights legislation existed in every other country of the world.

Mr. Milliken: That's rubbish.

Mr. Thacker: Well, not every country, but the major ones. Not in this country. I remember when Mr. Whelan introduced that bill for the Liberals. A large number of us in the Conservative opposition were prepared to vote for it, but the NDP and the church groups in that case were so effective in their opposition that they were able to block that bill for 15 years. We finally got it through but our researchers are 15 years behind these other countries in developing new crop varieties. That means our money goes off-shore to get new varieties rather than our own scientists developing them here.

The point is that the rules permitted the opposition to block that bill for 15 years. I think that was unfortunate and a mistake.

I must concede that both opposition parties learned their lesson when we came to the Integrated Circuit Topography Act, which was under intellectual property. That bill went through with all parties agreeing to it because we finally got the point across that we had 25 companies in this country designing and building microchips, but they had no patent protection. Therefore they were going to close down and go off-shore. All three parties agreed to rectify that and so we are moving ahead.

We are behind on aboriginal rights, on constitutional change, on the issue of transportation, and on agriculture. It goes back to the rules of the House, and in my view it is not in the best interests of the country or even in the best interests of the opposition parties. I can remember being in opposition when the Liberal government proposed the National Energy Program and proposed all sorts of other bills. We opposed those bills with a passion. In the case of the National Energy Program, we delayed it for a year.

Mr. Milliken: You took away our right to oppose it.

Mr. Thacker: Yes, you are absolutely right. I do not think that was correct. I do not think that was proper and I did not agree with it at that time because my view was that if these bills are so bad for the Canadian public then what we should do in opposition is to want the government to pass them quickly, get them out and get those bills laws so that they are oppressing our people.

Mr. Brewin: That is a terrible argument.

Mr. Thacker: I think that is a very good argument. I would like to hear my friend from Victoria put the opposite. Mr. Speaker, I just want them to hear my point. If the bills are so bad, surely the role of the opposition is to stand up, to identify, "we think this is a mistake, that is a mistake". It goes to a legislative committee. "We think it could be changed here and here and here." In my experience, the government will accept many of those changes, but, if it does not, the bill becomes the law. If it is as bad as the opposition says, then it is going to be hurting Canadians. When we get to the next election, every one of those hurts will be brought to its attention. They will be able to judge the government and throw them out.

I think what would have happened is we delayed a lot of bills, whereas had they come in sooner or if the new rules were in place where committee members had input much earlier, the bills that come before the House would not be as defective as they are now where the bills come primarily out of the bureaucracy, out of the special interest groups who are proposing change without having

access to the elected members who are going back to their ridings one week out of the month.

So, I am hoping that the new process will just simply be superior. I am prepared to live under it even if I were in opposition. I think it will be good.

Mr. Brewin: What does it do to the committees?

Mr. Thacker: I think the standing committees will now spend their time on the policy issues trying to have input to the bills before they actually are proposed in the House. A Standing Committee on Agriculture will take up some of these controversial questions, will make proposals that a government would be foolish to reject because it reflects the good work of all three committees.

Mr. Brewin: Just like it was foolish to reject the CSIS report.

Mr. Thacker: Absolutely. My friend is absolutely correct. I think governments are foolish when they reject the committee reports, but my experience has been that those committee reports ultimately work their way into the public policy.

Then we have the legislative committees that will spend more of their time on the specific technical details of the bill. Whereas now what is happening is when a bill goes before a committee, the committee gets in witnesses who are speaking really to the principle of the bill and to other broad policy issues that are not related to that bill. I think that is a waste of our time. I think it is a waste of money and it does not really change the bill that is before the committee at that stage.

I have to say to you, all things considered, I believe this package is worthy of our support. I am happy to stand and support this bill. I know the members of the opposition will probably not be able to stand and support it, but I know, having spent many years in opposition, that I bet you if you could poll them privately, if you could search their minds so to speak, we would find that a lot of them are in agreement with the vast bulk of these changes.

I think, because I am prepared to live with it if I were in opposition, that it should be good reason for many other members to come to the same conclusion. The opposition should take a longer term view and support this package, although I realize they will not for narrow partisan reasons. I suppose, if I were sitting there, I would not either.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, I listened, with interest, to the hon. member's speech and particularly the comment that he made about the longer hours that the House is sitting. He suggested that members of the opposition somehow opposed these because they did not want to work harder. I could see his tongue sticking out the side of his cheek almost at that point. He knows that the opposition in this House is extremely hard working and very diligent in its duties. I am sure that he knows that the five additional hours a week that the government has thrown into the sittings of the House are really not designed to make the House work harder. What they are designed to do is make up additional time for government business because it is taking away so much of the time by cutting 40 days from the sittings of the House.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Order, please. It being two o'clock, the House will now hear Members' Statements pursuant to Standing Order 31.

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S.O. 31

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL SOIL CONSERVATION WEEK

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, the purpose of National Soil Conservation Week from April 8 to 14 is to make all Canadians aware of the importance of soil conservation.

This is a unique opportunity to encourage farmers to ensure sustained economic growth for their farm while they improve and safeguard the quality of the soil.

The federal-provincial national soil conservation program, with a $150-million budget, offers farmers financial and technical assistance to adopt soil conservation methods.

Mr. Speaker, farmers from all over the country have successfully adopted various practices: green-manure crops, field windbreaks, grassed waterways, extended

crop rotation, stripe cropping and conservation tillage. These are all essential for sustainable agriculture.

* * *

[*English*]

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, did you know it is the policy of the Conservative government to apply the goods and services tax to medals won by Canadian athletes competing outside of Canada?

A case in point: a constituent of mine from the Leander Boat Club in Hamilton coached his rowing crew to an impressive fourth place finish at the Head of the Charles regatta in Boston. The team members did not receive their medals at the regatta. They were subsequently shipped to Hamilton. Do you know what happened? Customs Canada sent an invoice for the GST due on the awards.

The constituent wrote to the Department of National Revenue asking for an explanation, but the department did not even have the courtesy to write him back a letter. The government spends millions of dollars telling Canadians how to pay the GST, but all this constituent of mine got was a scribbled note on the bottom of his own letter: "Awards duty free, but pay the GST.".

While it is the policy of the government to charge GST for bronze medals, it is not for the gold medal. The same constituent ran into Brian Boitano at a reception and asked whether he paid for his gold figure skating medal. Boitano, was amused and said: "Of course not".

The medal winning Minister of National Revenue knows well the spirit of competition. I say to him: Do a favour to our athletes and not tax them for their awards.

* * *

FRASER RIVER

Ms. Joy Langan (Mission—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, the mighty Fraser River in British Columbia is one of the busiest waterways in Canada. It is used for fishing, shipping, boating and by the forest industry for its mills and booming grounds.

There is multiple use and multiple responsibility. Those who live and work on the river depend on each other to assume that responsibility.

Because the Council of Forest Industries and the federal and provincial governments benefit from the forestry's use of the river, all three have committed funds to a debris control board.

The board clears 75,000 cubic metres of wood waste from the Fraser River and another 75,000 cubic metres from the Strait of Georgia every year. Without this work, fishing boats, pleasure craft, float planes, bridges, docks and houseboats would be at risk.

As of April 1, the federal forestry and fisheries departments have both eliminated their $45,000 share of the annual cost of debris control board.

No one seems to be able to explain why. No one seems to be prepared to tell the users of the Fraser, especially the fishing fleet, why these federal departments have abandoned their share of the responsibility for an inexpensive cost-effective program that potentially saves millions.

* * *

[*Translation*]

TRADE

Mr. Nic Leblanc (Longueuil): Mr. Speaker, those who have business experience know that trade today is international.

Quebec's business people know that very well.

That is why they massively supported the Free Trade Agreement with the United States.

These days, we have the honour to receive the President of Mexico and on behalf of the business people of Quebec, I wish to welcome him.

I also want to tell him that we Quebecers strongly desire developing our trade relations with Mexico in a harmonious way.

At the present time, the success of this initiative depends, for now, on the federal government.

That is why, as a member from Quebec, I intend to be vigilant.

Quebec's present and future interests are at stake and we must ensure that the federal government discharges its responsibilities to Quebecers.

S. O. 31

[*English*]

JUVENILE CRIME

Mr. Stan Wilbee (Delta): Mr. Speaker, last week in Burnaby, B.C., a jewellery store manager was gunned down in broad daylight in a shopping mall by two teenage thieves.

In March, four teenagers, one brandishing a 25 calibre semi-automatic pistol, walked into another Vancouver jewellery store and walked out with jewellery estimated at $400,000. One of them was only 13 years old.

Vancouver police say these are examples of a growing number of serious and violent crimes being committed by children. A report in *The Vancouver Province* says that more than two dozen similar crimes have been committed in lower mainland B.C. in the past few months, mostly by children. Many gangs are using children to commit crimes because under the Young Offenders Act the worst that can happen to a juvenile is three years in jail.

This government has proposed amendments to provide for increased penalties under the Young Offenders Act. Those changes, and perhaps even stronger ones, are needed to prevent and help deter our youth from choosing a life of crime.

I call upon the Minister of Justice to take a serious look into this growing problem and take decisive action before many more violent crimes are committed.

* * *

CANADA POST

Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso): Mr. Speaker, for many small towns and villages in Canada, the distinctive brick post office building is the one tangible presence of the federal government. But this presence is being systematically dismantled by Canada Post Corporation with the full support of this government.

In my riding the communities of Monastary, Orangedale, Margaree Harbour, and St. Joseph du Moine have recently lost their post office.

Last week the residents of Mabou were notified that their post office was next on the chopping block. The Mabou post office, serves 410 households in this proud community, in existence since the 1820s where the inscription "Mabou—House of Letters" in Gaelic is eloquent testimony to a rich Scottish tradition. This community is to lose a post office it has had since 1871. No consultations and no appeal.

This carnage has to stop. It is time this government reined in its Crown corporation run amok.

It is time Canada Post listened to the residents of Mabou, Orangedale, St. Joseph du Moine, Margaree Harbour and all those other communities which want to preserve their rural post offices, this fundamental badge of nationhood.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Alan Redway (Don Valley East): Mr. Speaker, according to the media, senior federal civil servants are meeting regularly to plan a new decentralized Canada.

If we ever do transfer federal responsibilities to the provinces they will certainly need additional taxing powers as well. That would clearly weaken the federal government's ability to manage our national economy. The Minister of Finance has often pointed out the problems we have now when provincial spending policies conflict with federal economic policy. Greater decentralization will mean even greater conflicts and ultimately could lead to economic chaos and the disintegration of Canada as a viable nation.

That is not what most Canadians want. Most Canadians, and I am one of them, want a strong national government.

* * *

SHIPBUILDING

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, it is no secret that Canada's shipbuilding and repair industry is in a severe crisis.

Successive Liberal and Conservative governments have failed to ensure that domestic requirements for vessels used for transport, coastal trade, defence, the fishery, our national resources, offshore petroleum development, and search and rescue patrol would be met by Canadian shipyards and Canadian workers.

The Liberal government of the early eighties, through their then finance minister, now the Leader of the Opposition, cancelled the last amount of shipbuilding

subsidy offered to Canadian shipyards for new vessel construction.

The Conservative government has totally reneged on its 1984 election promise to adopt a national shipbuilding policy as a top priority and has instead presided over the further erosion of the industry through a rationalization policy of delay, neglect and downsizing.

And now the final insult: the motor vessel *Arctic*, 51 per cent owned by the Government of Canada, is going to a Spanish shipyard for major repairs at a time when thousands of shipyard workers in Canada are out of work.

It is time that Canada matched shipbuilding support offered by our competitors' countries. It is time that shipyard work goes to Canadians.

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[*Translation*]

TAXI INDUSTRY

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to defend taxi licence holders at Montreal International Airport. The director of Dorval Airport raised the price of operating permits by 84 per cent plus GST. Many tax licence holders who did not pay these additional charges by April 5, 1991, lost their right to work at that airport. Most airport licence holders report that their income has dropped 46 per cent on average because of the GST and the recession created by this government. The higher licence costs mean that each licence holder must earn nearly $2,000 a year more on average.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the director of Montreal International Airport to reconsider this huge unjustified increase. Let us give taxi drivers at Dorval Airport a chance during this period of economic crisis.

* * *

• (1410)

AIR CADET LEAGUE OF CANADA

Mr. Jean-Guy Hudon (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, today marks a special event for an important group of young Canadians. On this date in 1941, the Air Cadet League of Canada received its charter authorizing it to set up a reserve of aviators who would be trained for service in the Royal Canadian Air Force, which was then participating in the war effort.

More recently, the League and the Canadian Armed Forces worked together to provide a series of aviation-related training programs for young men and women aged 12 to 19, with the aim of producing better citizens for Canada.

The Air Cadets now have some 27,000 young people in 440 squadrons from coast to coast, in communities such as Bishop's Falls, Acton, Abitibi, Peace River, Don Valley East, Yukon and Valleyfield, in my riding, to name only a few.

The Cadets provide our youth with very valuable civic training and in many cases are the most significant activity for young people in the outlying regions of Canada.

I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that all members of this House join me in offering the Air Cadet League of Canada our sincerest congratulations and best wishes for success in the future, on their 50th anniversary.

* * *

[*English*]

HOUSING

Mr. Garth Turner (Halton—Peel): Mr. Speaker, some politicians would have Canadians think the economy is in tatters and investor confidence is in shreds.

However, numbers released yesterday tell a different story. They tell a story of renewed hope for the future and the willingness of average Canadians to ignore the rhetoric here and go about their lives.

Those numbers came from the Toronto Real Estate Board, and show that the sales level of resale homes in that city was up 120 per cent in March over the same period a year earlier. Almost 5,800 homes changed hands in a single month and that is up 64 per cent from the month earlier, the fifth best month ever. Why? Because interest rates have come down, inflationary house prices have come down, and buyer confidence has gone up. Times may still be tough, but I find it hard to think of a more powerful symbol that there are better days ahead.

Oral Questions

CITIZENS' FORUM ON CANADA'S FUTURE

Mr. Bob Wood (Nipissing): When this government created the Spicer commission, it did so in an apparent attempt to elicit the opinions of Canadian citizens and to move away from the closed door, secretive approach that characterized previous constitutional discussions.

Just last week in my riding of Nipissing, we learned that commission moderators can ban the media if they so desire under the guise of making the participants feel more comfortable. The public is footing the bill for this forum, the most expensive in Canadian history, yet the media can be prohibited from covering and publicizing the proceedings. Wasn't the purpose of this forum to listen to what Canadians have to say and to engage in dialogue with one another?

Perhaps this is why the government suffers the image problem it has. If the people want to be heard, they will be, regardless of who is present. It is not by banning media from public hearings that encourages citizens to speak up. On the contrary, debate will be enhanced when other people see and hear what their fellow citizens have to say.

When this commission was created, it was termed the biggest exercise in democracy. They should have called it "demockery". What was supposed to be a country-wide public opinion search has become the government's $27 million and counting patronage fund.

* * *

CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

Mr. Stan Darling (Parry Sound—Muskoka): Mr. Speaker, as a Canadian, and as a member of the Standing Committee on National Defence, I was fortunate this past Sunday morning to have been in Halifax with many of my colleagues who, along with His Excellency the Governor General, the Right Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn, the Prime Minister, the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney, the Minister of National Defence, Bill McKnight, and the Associate Minister of National Defence, Mary Collins, welcomed home from the Persian Gulf 950 Canadian forces personnel who served on board HMCS *Athabaskan*, HMCS *Terra Nova* and HMCS *Protecteur*.

I felt equal pride later in the day when I joined a reception party at CFB Uplands to officially greet 90 of our Canadian forces personnel flown in from Germany en route from the Persian Gulf.

In both situations, for the loved ones of these courageous men and women, fear and uncertainty gave way Sunday to tears of joy. Beyond a doubt, we as Canadians are extremely proud and thankful for their contribution to peace.

Governor General Hnatyshyn summed up admirably the feelings of all Canadians toward all our returning personnel when he said Sunday to the waiting families in Halifax that their loved ones: "remind us that Canada is blessed with skilled and courageous service men and women who are prepared to defend peace whenever and wherever it is endangered".

* * *

FORESTRY

Mr. Brian L. Gardiner (Prince George—Bulkley Valley): Mr. Speaker, today the Government of Canada and the Canadian Institute of Forestry are sponsoring a parliamentary forum to discuss forestry and its issues across this country.

As well today, the Minister of Forestry tabled his first annual report on the state of our forests. Our forests need attention now from this government. The same government that talks about supporting our forest community is at the same time unwilling to stand up to the American administration and terminate the softwood lumber memorandum of understanding that is crippling our forest industry.

Hundreds of communities are dependent on the forests for their survival. We need some action now.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*English*]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Today the Conference Board of Canada released its most recent report which said: "The latest federal

budget is also contributing to the weak outlook for 1991" and will have a "dampening effect on the economy's return to health."

When will the Prime Minister admit that the February 26 budget was a mistake? More than 1.4 million Canadians are asking the Prime Minister for a new budget so that we will create the jobs that are needed, or a new Minister of Finance who will know that we need a new budget in Canada.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend refers to a report of the Conference Board. Immediately post-budget, the Conference Board predicted that recovery would occur in an April-May timeframe. In the budget itself the government had said that the economy will recover in the second half of this year and grow strongly in 1992.

Other economists support the government's view. What appears to be happening is that the Conference Board is now bringing its forecast into line with the forecasts that were set out very clearly by the government in the budget in 1991 where there is no doubt—I think this will dishearten my hon. friend—that there will be substantial economic recovery by mid-year 1991. There will be very strong growth in 1992 and the same in 1993.

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, that is not a very good answer for the 1.4 million Canadians who are looking for jobs.

Neither is it very good for the 73,000 children who depend on social assistance in Toronto alone. Food bank officials in Toronto say that the number of people using food banks today has increased 30 per cent to 120,000 people.

Will the Prime Minister do something about this problem? Will he make sure that his Minister of Finance stops talking about inflation and keeping a high Canadian dollar? Will he make sure that there will be jobs for the parents of these children who are the innocent victims of his made-in-Canada recession?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, this is a remarkable statement by someone who was a former Minister of Finance. He urges me to tell the Minister of Finance to stop talking about inflation. I will never do that. Inflation is an insidious illness—

• (1420)

Ms. Copps: So is unemployment.

Mr. Mulroney: —that affects most of all the elderly, the poor and people on fixed incomes. We want to keep inflation down and not let what happen when the Leader of the Opposition was minister of finance. We do not want a repeat of that.

Now, with regard to the very serious question my hon. friend raises, the bank rate is down by some 409 or 410 basis points.

Ms. Copps: The polls are down.

Mr. Mulroney: My hon. friend says the polls are down. Well, I cannot quarrel with that; the polls are down. But you know what? They have been down before and as long as they are up on election day, that is what matters. It means we have stuck to a very serious economic game plan that has brought about recovery.

In point of fact, apart from the very significant decline in interest rates, my hon. friend who raised questions about Toronto will acknowledge that housing is one of the most important indicators of economic growth or decline. In March, sales of existing homes increased by 64 per cent in Toronto. The March sales were the highest total since April 1988. This indicates that the beginnings of a recovery are there and all Canadians can look forward to better economic times.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that the Prime Minister decided to answer my question on interest rates. Yes, there was a slight drop in the interest rates. However, they remain four percentage points higher than in the U.S. So, the Canadian dollar is very high and therefore our Canadian products cost too much on the international market. When will the Prime Minister come to realize that, if we had a more competitive dollar instead of a high interest rates and high dollar policy, jobs could be created across the country which would allow the 223,000 Montrealers who today are looking for jobs to regain the dignity they are entitled to as citizens of this country.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the interest rates dropped not slightly, as the hon. member said, but by a full 4.5 points over the last 11 months. That is quite substantial! I recognize without hesitation, though, that interest rates of 11, 11.25, 11.50 and 11.75 per cent are still too high. I readily admit it. I

think, however, that the hon. member will agree with me that 11.5 per cent is much better than the 22 per cent, which was the level at which the interest rates were when he was in power.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Chrétien: I am about to talk about Diefenbaker.

Mr. Mulroney: The Leader of the Opposition wants to tell me something about Diefenbaker, and I will talk about Mackenzie King afterwords—

Mr. Chrétien: Tell us about the unemployed, Mr. Prime Minister.

Mr. Mulroney: Go ahead, talk about Diefenbaker but, please, do not bring up interest rates!

[*English*]

Mr. Chrétien: You are like the Blue Jays yesterday, Brian. Not the Expos.

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, I also have a question for the Prime Minister.

Today the Conference Board in its forecast said it expected the rate of inflation to go up 5.7 per cent this year, up from 4.8 per cent last year. If the Prime Minister is so concerned about inflation, why are he and his government pursuing policies which the Conference Board said are making inflation worse rather than better?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, no one said what my hon. friend suggests has been said. The government acknowledged when it brought in the GST, that there would be an increase in the inflation rate. Notwithstanding that, we were seeking to bring about in the second half of this year renewed economic growth in a non-inflationary climate.

We agree that inflation rates at 5 or 6 per cent are still too high. My hon. friend will sympathize with me I am sure because he was a member of a government where inflation went to 13 per cent. We are keeping the rates down to 6.5 per cent or 5 or 5.5 per cent. I think we should be entitled to a few words of congratulations from my hon. friend.

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, the close to 1.5 million people who are out of work due to the policies of this government are certainly not going to find any words of congratulations for the Prime Minister.

We have high unemployment, a too high dollar and, in spite of the Prime Minister's words, a still too high interest rate. Is this not proof that the government's budget is the wrong budget for the wrong time? Why will the Prime Minister not admit that his budget is making the economy worse rather than better? Why will the government not bring in new policies, a new budget to create jobs and get the economy moving again right now? Why will it not give those words of encouragement to the 1.5 million people this government has put out of work?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, in recent weeks the IMF, the OECD and the World Bank, among others have expressed support for the policies being pursued by the Government of Canada.

If my hon. friend has an alternative to the policies that are being followed by the Government of Canada, we would be happy to hear from him unless it is a typical Liberal recommendation to spend more money and to tax not only our children but to start taxing our grandchildren. That Liberal policy we will not follow.

I share my hon. friend's concern in regard to any degree of unemployment. In the first five and half years of this government, some 1.6 million new jobs were created, 87 per cent of them full-time and some 65 per cent of those jobs went to women. I think that is a good record.

As we come out of this recession in the summer and the autumn, it is the hope of this government that Canadians will maintain that kind of job-creating record which I point out to my hon. friend, in the first five years, led the OECD countries with the exception of one. I think that is a powerful record and it is one that Canadians can achieve again.

* * *

REFUGEES

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

A few months ago, the world watched as the coalition countries went into war and today we are watching a human tragedy, particularly of the Kurdistan population. For the Kurdistan population certainly the new world order must look very much like the old world order.

We found almost $1 billion in Canada to fight that war, $600 million of which was allocated in the February budget. What kind of real humanitarian aid are we now prepared to give? Clearly, we cannot walk away from this situation. What kind of humanitarian aid, above the $3 million already committed, is Canada prepared to give to the suffering of these people?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, there may well have been some Canadians who, faced with the various problems in Iraq, were prepared to have Canada walk away from its responsibilities.

This government has never walked away from its responsibilities. We do not intend to do that now. The hon. member will know that in August of last year, Canada announced something in the neighbourhood of $77 million in humanitarian assistance to deal with—

An hon. member: You make a partisan play out of everything.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): If you cannot stand the heat go home to Victoria.

• (1430)

As I indicated, the Government of Canada made available some $77 million in August, particularly to Jordan and to Egypt, but also to other countries. We not only made that commitment, we delivered on the money.

On Friday my colleague and I announced a contribution of $3.3 million to various international humanitarian organizations. I am pleased to announce today that an additional $4 million will be provided to international humanitarian organizations to help ease the suffering of the Kurds. I should say that about $2 million of that additional continuing contribution by Canada will be to the Canadian Red Cross to expand its operations in Turkey. Others will be to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for operations in Turkey and in Iran, and UNICEF will receive some $300,000 for its operations in Turkey.

I am also pleased to announce that the first consignment for the International Red Cross will be carried to the region by a Canadian Boeing 707 which will leave Trenton tomorrow.

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is for the minister.

There was a good answer to a very simple question and eventually we got to it. I am glad to see that the government is giving more aid in this area. That was simply what the question was about.

[*Translation*]

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the Kurds in Canada are very worried about their families in Iraq. I would like to ask the minister what the government will do to help Kurdish families, the Kurds here in Canada, obtain information about their families in Iraq?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, there have already been conversations between representatives of my department and spokespersons and representatives of the Kurdish community in Canada. We intend to continue these consultations.

Of course, it is difficult for us or for anyone to obtain accurate information on the Kurds in Iraq. Much of that area in Iraq is in upheaval; there is a great movement of people: more than a million are now travelling to the borders of Iran and Turkey.

I think that the best guarantee we can give Canadians and others is to find ways to stop Saddam Hussein's activities, to stop the attacks on the Kurds. In the United Nations and through our humanitarian acts, we are seeking ways to end this tragedy.

[*English*]

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, certainly we all agree that it is necessary that the Kurds be protected and be given the protection of the United Nations. I am sure that the minister would agree that part of that in the long term is to ensure that we have arms control in the world. The United Nations should take a strong stand on arms control and let Canada be a participant in that.

In particular on the whole issue of arms control and disarmament, I would like to then ask the minister who

has made very good comments about arms control and disarmament why his government just this week slashed by over 50 per cent funds to disarmament groups, down to a meagre $111,000. Is this a commitment to peace that this minister and this government have by slashing funds for disarmament?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, no one questions the commitment to peace or to practical methods of arms control by this government. There is a program of restraint in place. It does apply to certain activities, including the Disarmament Fund.

The hon. member has raised questions with regard to the role of the United Nations in this crisis with respect to the Kurds and I think the House may be interested to know the current situation as Canada sees it.

The House will know that the European Community has proposed a sort of enclave under UN protection. We share some of the concerns of the Secretary General of the United Nations with respect to jurisdiction. But in the circumstances, we would nonetheless support that European Community proposal.

However, if the enclave idea is not acceptable, we have set out an alternative Canadian proposal. There was a discussion on Saturday between my office and Ambassador Yves Fortier. Yesterday afternoon, Ambassador Fortier, on behalf of Canada, made a formal proposal to Jean Claude Aimé, the Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations, regarding an alternative Canadian proposal, which we believe avoids the problem of sovereignty. That proposal would involve—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Mr. Speaker, I assume the House is interested in the nature of the—

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Secretary of State.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Mr. Speaker, our proposal involves two elements. It involves the sending into Iraq of a civilian United Nations presence which would have in the first instance a responsibility for ensuring the co-ordination of delivery of humanitarian and other assistance. It would also assign to that civilian United Nations presence a sort of ombudsman role which would be able to guarantee, as best the world can, that undertakings with respect to amnesty are being honoured and would be able to offer some indication to citizens of Kurdish origin in Canada and to concerned citizens around the world.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I think you would agree that as much as we may welcome the proposals by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, it would be much more helpful to the members of this House if he had given a statement in the House and we had time to properly consider and respond to it.

I would like to put a question directly to the Prime Minister. Last fall the Prime Minister acted as the co-chair of the special summit on children. At that time he declared very directly that Canada was committed to the eradication of suffering of children around the world.

I think the Prime Minister would agree that there is no greater spectacle of children suffering than the many thousands of wounded and hungry children in the hills and mountains in the boundary areas of Turkey, Iraq and Iran.

I would ask the Prime Minister: In his capacity as the Chairman of that summit, will he not accept that he has a special obligation in the case of the suffering of the Kurdish children, and will he under the auspices of the UN organize a special meeting of all the participants who were engaged in that children's summit to come together to mobilize a major, comprehensive aid effort on behalf of the suffering children of Kurdistan. Is that not the kind of responsibility and leadership the Prime Minister could show today?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, indeed Canada co-chaired the World Summit for Children at the United Nations, and along with some 70 or 75 other countries, we undertook some obligations, all of which, with the support of members of Parliament, the government will respect.

My hon. friend raises a most serious question about not only the tragedy unfolding in Iraq, but also the special implications for children. It was with this in mind that the Secretary of State for External Affairs instructed the ambassador at the United Nations, Mr. Fortier, to meet yesterday with James Grant, the Executive Director of UNICEF, to discuss with him a series of options that would indeed help children in these circumstances. Canada made at that time a signal to the Executive Director our intention to make a very substan-

tial financial contribution to assist the progress of the UN plans along this way.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I think the Prime Minister would agree that a commitment of $300,000 to UNICEF is not exactly the kind of commitment that would meet the proportions of the tragedy we now see of the tens of thousands of children who are suffering.

I think what we have to understand is that this is not just a problem of immediate relief, but is a long-term problem dealing with resettlement, refugees and reconstruction. In that case, in addition to the actions that I am asking the Prime Minister to take as Chairman of the Children's Summit, would he also agree to set up an all-party parliamentary delegation to go to the region, to look at the issue, to come back with recommendations about how Canada—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

• (1440)

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): I suppose Tory members are not concerned about the case. It is tragic that on that side of the House they are so indifferent.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Will he set up a delegation in order to go over there and come back with a unanimous recommendation on how Canada can make a commitment on the long term to help the Kurds who are currently suffering the kinds of tragedies we all see daily on our TV sets?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I have no difficulty at all in asking the government House leader to examine the suggestion made by my hon. friend.

I think in the circumstances, all of us who have been watching television know the enormity of the tragedy there. Perhaps the money that we would spend for that parliamentary trip would best be spent by sending it right to the children and their parents.

I can tell my hon friend that the Secretary of State for External Affairs and I view, as do all members of the House, very seriously this enormous tragedy that is unfolding. I will acknowledge that our financial resources are tight. We are strapped, like many other governments around the world.

This will not be an excuse for the Government of Canada not to do more than its share to make sure that this enormous burden is alleviated and that children, and innocent men and women who are fleeing oppression are not made to pay the price.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. John Harvard (Winnipeg St. James): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister about the economic situation in Manitoba, which is grave.

Unemployment has soared in my province in the past year. There are 48,000 Manitobans who are looking for work. When it comes to attracting private investment, Manitoba is dead last in Canada.

In other words, Tory policies are killing Manitobans. I want to ask the Prime Minister: When is this government going to become pro-active and devise a plan that will produce jobs and investment for Manitobans?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I think it is fair to say that this government has been as generous with Manitobans as any government in history. It is certainly doing well relative to the rest of Canada.

We understand very significantly the needs of Manitobans. That is why we have increased our job-training funds there under the CJS, and will do more through our new programs under the unemployment insurance program.

I should say that Manitobans as well will benefit from economic policies that include lower inflation, lower interest rates and greater housing starts and better construction permits. The kind of economic recovery that this government is encouraging will benefit Manitoba as well as everywhere else.

Mr. John Harvard (Winnipeg St. James): Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell this minister that the very future of Manitoba is at stake.

Our young people, who see little incentive to stay in our province, are being punished by a 20 per cent increase in their university tuition fees. On top of that,

we are now told that we face massive lay-offs in the provincial civil service.

All of this comes after this government reduced federal transfer payments to the provinces. I want to know from the Prime Minister: When is the government going to move? Is it going to wait for more economic disaster?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, what the hon. member is doing is fearmongering, and all this is pre-budget speculation.

What he might consider looking at are things that are happening in other provinces, including under the Liberal Government of Newfoundland.

What this government wants to do is ensure that Manitoba and other provinces will benefit from the kinds of programs we put in place. I think that the hon. member, rather than speculate, should look at the tangible benefits that have come about.

Mr. Steve Butland (Sault Ste. Marie): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Prime Minister.

The Conference Board of Canada has, I guess, confirmed what Canadians already know. This government's fiscal policies and in fact all policies are a dismal failure.

I cite a litany of these failures. The latest federal budget is contributing to the weak outlook for 1991. The real Gross Domestic Product is forecast to decline. The Consumer Price Index rate is forecast to increase to 5.7 per cent. I could go on.

When is the Prime Minister and this government going to admit that its policies are incorrect and address the issues to give Canadians some hope rather that despair?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, what the Conference Board of Canada has done is essentially come into agreement with the Government of Canada concerning the outlook for the economy. We know that the country is going through difficult times. That is why we have a plan for economic recovery.

Even the NDP Treasurer of Ontario says that the government cannot create jobs for everyone. Even the treasurer of the NDP Government of Ontario says that it is time that people were better trained, that interest rates came down, so that the economy could move ahead.

Surely the kind of economic recovery that we have put in place is the kind of thing that even the NDP talks about in those few moments when it has an intelligent comment to make.

Mr. Steve Butland (Sault Ste. Marie): I do not think that is an answer, Mr. Speaker, and I do not think Canadians will accept it.

I want to talk about the North American free trade agreement which will only exacerbate the Canadian problem. Sugar producers are now on side with wheat producers, pork producers and steel manufacturers in this country. With regard to pork producers, the Minister for International Trade said: "We won a great victory". That victory is going to be superseded by American political intervention.

When will this government protect Canadians and develop the political will and stomach to deal with Americans as they deal with us in trade issues?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I do not know when between the question of the hon. member's leader and the question of the hon. member opposite the NDP lost its interest in developing countries and in poorer countries that need our help and need work.

I remind the hon. member as well that, when we brought in a bill with job training in it, they stood in the way and did everything they could to ensure that the bill did not pass and that we could not provide adjustment and training for our workers in a new global training environment.

We know that this is important for the future of Canada. We know that we cannot wish away the deficit. We know that we have to trade in order to survive and that trading with the United States and Mexico under these agreements is going to be good for Canadian workers. If that member's party had not stood against our training programs, we would be much further ahead today.

* * *

STEEL INDUSTRY

Mr. Jim Peterson (Willowdale): Mr. Speaker, just part of the ongoing tragedy of this government's program for deindustrializing Canada is our steel industry. Over the past two years it has lost 8,400 or fully 19 per cent of all its permanent jobs. Last year American steel producers

more than doubled their share of Canada's domestic market.

What will the minister of industry do to restore these 8,400 steel workers jobs to Canada?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, obviously that was the same kind of question that the member for Willowdale asked me at a committee recently. He knows very well what the steel industry has faced recently, in fact more than in the last 20 years, much more competition than before from many developing countries. For that reason the industry has to be restructured.

What we see today, particularly in Ontario, are consequences of that reality. We are working with the industry. The member knows very well what we did for Algoma. We are trying to find, particularly with the government of Ontario, answers to that kind of question.

He knows very well that the steel industry, as with any other industry in Canada, particularly exporting industries, has to have good conditions, including interest rates, the dollar and the inflation rate. With those kinds of conditions, they will face the reality they have to face and the industry agrees with us.

The member knows well that in the years that the dollar was higher than it is today, the steel industry did not face any problem because conditions were different. I believe he knows that very well.

• (1450)

Mr. Jim Peterson (Willowdale): I am incredulous. Our steel industry has for a long time told us that it is more modern than the Americans. Our steel industry has repeatedly told this government that it's high interest rate, high dollar policy, has cost it a 20 per cent decline in competitiveness.

When will this government stop delivering on rhetoric and start delivering on jobs? When will this minister for industry stop his deindustrialization of Canada?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology): I am sorry, but I will have to give a few figures to my friend so that he can be very well informed as to what happened. In the 1960s the dollar was at $1.05 and the steel industry did not have any problems. But amazingly, the worst period for the steel industry in Canada was when the dollar was at 70 cents in 1982. That was a one-year period.

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton—The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Prime Minister. The free trade agreement does not define as yet what a subsidy is. Yet, Sydney Steel Corporation has been countervailed against for having received a subsidy—not after the free trade agreement was signed, or even while it was being negotiated, but long before it was even contemplated.

Why is this industry being punished retroactively for having in good faith accepted federal and provincial assistance which was in accordance with Canadian laws and international agreements? Why is this government not standing up against this injustice?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member on reconsideration would recognize that there is not prejudicial action being taken against the Canadian steel industry. There is, as my colleague has just indicated, a period of difficulty being experienced by that industry now in various parts of the country. We are in close regular contact with leaders of that industry, and indeed others involved in the industry, to ensure that full access is had to all government programs, and that they are able to take advantage of provisions set out under Canadian trade law.

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton—The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to suggest to the Secretary of State for External Affairs that there is a double standard here.

During the 1980s, the U.S. steel industry received $30 billion in assistance from governments in the United States, while in Canada, Sydney Steel was the only one to receive such assistance.

I want to know when the government is going to organize a countervail against the importation of U.S. steel into Canada.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): I know the hon. member is a serious member. I would be interested in considering a response to that question in two pieces of information. First, I would like him to provide me with documentary indication as to the extraordinary sum of the subsidy that he alleges, and second, I would be interested in knowing about what I

take is a new Liberal policy of retroactive countervail measures.

* * *

CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Saskatoon—Humboldt): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for External Affairs. The day after April Fool's, CIDA delivered by hand letters to CUSO and other NGOs announcing that their grants would be effectively cut from 3:3 for each dollar to 2 for each dollar, an effective cut of 25 per cent, and other amounts for other NGOs.

These NGOs had contracts with CIDA, some signed very recently. Yet CIDA has summarily broken those contracts, forcing NGOs to renege on some of their own development contracts for development and to lay off staff.

Will the minister tell us why the government has targeted development NGOs, our most effective and efficient ODA delivery system, for such massive cuts?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, let me first say that I will want to look into the detail of the question. The Minister for External Relations is not in the House but she and I will look at the details of the question.

Let me say that there is no targeting of development NGOs. This government has demonstrated a very real reliance upon those organizations in a variety of ways, including facilitating development assistance to countries with which we do not want to have, for various reasons, a government-to-government relation.

The hon. member knows that the country faces very serious economic conditions. We have to deal with them. That requires some policies of restraint. No part of Canadian government activity, indeed no part of the Canadian community generally, can be exempt from the implications of trying to put a Canadian economy in shape today so that it will serve the interests of the Canadian future.

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Saskatoon—Humboldt): Mr. Speaker, our concern is with the people who require this aid in the Third World countries. In order that the NGOs can plan in the future, will the minister commit this government to review these cuts in consultation with the NGOs, and will he commit the government to ensuring that no further cuts will be made in this particular manner?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): The government is always prepared to engage in consultation with NGOs and with others.

I would not want to leave a misleading impression in the House. We are dealing with certain very difficult conditions of restraint. We are taking account of those. I would not want leaders of any NGO organization to think that a process of consultation would be put in place that would reverse the necessity for CIDA, like other parts of the Canadian government, to be affected by the restraint program that economic circumstances and the profligate practices of past governments have placed upon the country.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Joe Fontana (London East): Perhaps in the absence of the Minister of Finance I could bring the Prime Minister up to date with some housing statistics from his own housing agency, CMHC, and including the Minister of Employment.

Released reports today indicate that housing starts across this country are down 21 per cent in Ontario, and in western Canada and Atlantic Canada there has been absolutely no improvement, contrary to what the Prime Minister has indicated today.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister when his government, instead of making false assurances and giving hopeless rhetoric to the people of Canada, will admit that its policies on the economy are too little, too late and too painful?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the policies of the government are neither too little nor are they too late, nor are they too painful.

We are very sympathetic to the people who have lost their jobs. That is why we are trying to bring our training programs into line with what people will need for jobs in the future, not for jobs in the past.

I would like to point out to the hon. member that housing starts are running at a rate of 106,000 versus 104,000 the month before. It is very clearly the beginning of some signs of life.

There are also other signals that the economy is turning around in terms of new investment that was in *The Globe and Mail* last week, and so on. That shows that our policies are working.

Mr. Joe Fontana (London East): A hundred and six thousand housing starts this year is 56 per cent less than last year—56 per cent less—and 100,000 jobs have been lost in the construction industry in this country.

I want to ask the minister, or whoever speaks for housing in this government, when will the government put affordable housing in the neighbourhoods for this country and for the people who want to buy them, and put construction workers back to work?

Hon. Shirley Martin (Minister of State (Indian Affairs and Northern Development)): Mr. Speaker, this government has been working on affordable housing. It will continue to work on affordable housing.

The housing market is starting to turn around. Multiple bids are now being made on houses that are on the market. The real estate people see a turn-around, and that turn-around will come. If the member will be patient, he will see that the statistics will continue to improve over the next few months.

* * *

• (1500)

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

Mr. Speaker: I wish to draw to the members' attention the presence in the gallery of Mr. Frank Stock, Solicitor General of Hong Kong.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: I have a question of privilege from the hon. member for Verdun—Saint-Paul. I just might advise that there is another question of privilege and I will get to that hon. member in a few minutes.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PRIVILEGE

MEMBER FOR VERDUN—SAINT-PAUL—CHANGE OF AFFILIATION

Mr. Gilbert Chartrand (Verdun—Saint-Paul): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a short statement. On May 22, 1990, I rose in this House to announce my decision to leave the Conservative caucus. My action was motivated by my deep frustration with the process to ratify the Meech Lake Accord. A month later, Clyde Wells confirmed my apprehensions. He let Quebec down and endangered Canada's very existence. Such a dastardly act deeply disgusted me.

I have worked with the Bloc Quebecois for a year and I note that its parliamentary motivations are basically negative and aimed only at destroying the country.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Chartrand: Mr. Speaker, being an essentially positive individual, I do not want to work with a group that has such a motivation. Furthermore, I am convinced that the Bloc Quebecois's strategy will ultimately divide the votes of Quebecers and make Jean Chrétien Prime Minister of Canada.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Chartrand: Now one of the reasons I entered politics was and still is to fight everything that Mr. Chrétien represents.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Chartrand: The forceful unilateral repatriation of 1982 and the desire to put Quebec in its place.

Mr. Speaker, as a member from Quebec, I cannot go along with such a strategy and I can no longer allow myself to remain in the Bloc. Last May 22, I told the House: "I still consider the Prime Minister to be reliable and honest, because he made every possible effort to have the Meech Lake Accord respected in full."

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Chartrand: On this point, I have not changed my mind. Despite everything, the Prime Minister has always behaved with dignity and has always been the only leader to seek new ways for a positive resolution of the Constitutional impasse.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Chartrand: –an editorial of March 30, and I quote: "We unreservedly support the leader of the government of Canada who so far has been—".

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member is rising on a question of privilege, but is getting very much into debate. I would ask the hon. member to come to his point and close off his remarks.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chartrand: Of all the Prime Ministers of Canada, he may be the one who has made the most sustained efforts for maintaining national harmony and Quebec's full participation in the common destiny of Canada.

Finally, I fear that the Bloc Quebecois is becoming a subsidiary of the Parti Quebecois. That worries me even more because two respected commissioners of the Bélanger-Campeau Commission, Mr. Béland and Jacques Proulx, said recently that the Parti Quebecois places its partisan interests above the interests of the Quebec community.

I was not elected a member of a great Parliament to become a puppet of a provincial party.

Mr. Speaker, I inform you today that I have spoken with the chairman of the caucus and we agreed that I can return to the political party for which I was elected.

In conclusion, the only question I want to leave with all Quebec families is the question families really ask: Will I just act instinctively or will I really think before destroying it?

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

OFFICE OF THE MEMBER FOR RICHELIEU

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu): Mr. Speaker, when I rose yesterday on a question of privilege—it had to do with my rights and privileges as a member of Parliament—you answered rather briefly that it was an matter of administration. It is indeed, Mr. Speaker.

Nonetheless, I would like to take a minute or two to clarify this administrative matter. You will recall that members complained a number of times about things like the bus schedule. That was a matter of administration, but you settled it by talking to the management in an effort to help preserve the rights and privileges of the members.

Let me remind you, Mr. Speaker, with regard to my office being moved in my absence and without my staff being present or notified, that I had written you on March 5 to advise you that there were people lurking around my office. Your secretary told me I would be receiving a letter from you stating your position since I was asking you to intervene to make sure that the assignment of offices to members of Parliament would be processed in an unbiased fashion.

You told me it was a matter of administration. Let me remind you that Mr. Riedel wrote me on April 7 informing me that the authorization to move on Sunday morning, without my consent, came from the Chair.

My question of privilege—and I would like you to answer my question, Mr. Speaker, not necessarily today but perhaps at a private meeting where we could clarify the matter—was this: when you gave by phone the go ahead to Mr. Riedel to move my office, did you also authorize him to open it without permission and without a warrant, while the RCMP cannot even do that?

In my assigned office, I found my papers and confidential letters in envelopes such as these with a plastic tab on them. I brought two or three to show you. I found in boxes the entire contents of my own office which had been moved in my absence.

That is what I am concerned about, Mr. Speaker. I know it is a matter of administration, but I am asking the Speaker of the House to protect me against administrative decisions that affect my rights and privileges as a member of Parliament and give people access to my office without my permission, without a warrant, tamper with my computer system—they did—disconnect my telephone lines, take away my desk, open— I was even handed a new set of keys for my drawers after moving all that was under lock and key in my office. The locks were changed and I got the new keys only the following day. It is unacceptable to do that on a Sunday without notifying me. It is in that context that I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to look into this problem so that no other member ever has to go through the same ordeal. Never in the history of this country has a member of Parliament been insulted in this way. I trust your fairness, Mr. Speaker, in settling this matter when we meet so I can regain my full privileges as a member of Parliament even if I do not sit with a party with a whip— You, why don't you shut your face!

• (1510)

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Richelieu raised this matter yesterday and, as he correctly states, I felt it was not a question of privilege but a question of administration.

However, I have received very courteous messages from the hon. member for Richelieu. I have listened carefully to what he said and I would be very pleased to meet with him and also to arrange a meeting with some of the officials who took part in the move. As far as I am concerned, his right to hold his place open on this question of privilege will remain.

I will make arrangements with the hon. member.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu): Mr. Speaker, I would like to withdraw something I said at the end. A member pointed his finger at me and insulted me and I added one last word to my sentence which was not at all meant for you but rather for him. Nevertheless, I wish to withdraw that last sentence.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. member.

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Lac-Saint-Jean): Mr. Speaker, further to the remarks of the hon. member for Richelieu, I do not think that we have to make it an emotional issue, or politicize it, but I believe that it raises a problem which should be resolved in that Parliament is a place where members have rights that must be respected and are protected by the Speaker of the House. We know the Speaker. We know you and hold you to be a democrat and someone who is particularly devoted to the interests of Parliament and the protection of members' rights.

But the question was raised, Mr. Speaker, and it is as follows: Does the Speaker of the House have the absolute right to have his assistants and subordinates enter locked offices when the member is absent and without his knowledge. The question might not concern members much today because it happened to a Bloc Quebecois member, but if it happened to a member from another party, perhaps members would be a little more concerned. I would ask this House to deal with the issue. Some administrative body should look into it, but there is a fundamental distinction between the administrative right to assign office space and the right to enter a locked office without a warrant.

Does this mean that members must from now on protect themselves by installing their own lock and having their own key?

Mr. Speaker: I listened with some concern to the statement by the hon. member and naturally I took some interest in the subject. As I said, maybe after meeting the hon. member for Richelieu, we can find a satisfactory answer.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Andre (p. 19027) and amendment of Mr. Dingwall (p. 19156).

SPEAKER'S RULING

Mr. Speaker: On Tuesday, March 26, 1991, when Government Motion No. 30 to amend the Standing Orders was first before the House, the hon. member for Kamloops rose on a point of order to ask the Chair to rule that certain aspects of that motion were "in whole or in part improperly before the House" and "in whole or in part out of order".

His focus of attention was on paragraph 30 which he characterized as proposing "to amend the right of the Commons to debate supply before it is granted to the Crown", and on paragraph 20 which he said introduces "a new Standing Order which can over-ride the failure of the minister to obtain unanimous consent from the House".

The hon. member sought to establish four points which he set out as follows:

> First, that these provisions seek to erode the historic authority of the House and the rights of its members and are thus contemptuous of the House as they will tend to diminish its dignity and impede members in the discharge of their functions.
>
> Second, these proposals exceed those limits imposed by the Constitution and by statute and the power of the House to regulate its internal affairs.
>
> Third, adoption of these proposals would be a *de facto* amendment to those limiting statutes and are thus an attempt to achieve by simple motion changes which should both be statutory and constitutional.

and,

> Fourth,—our traditions and practice require that they be found out of order.

The hon. member's second and third points involving as they do a definition of the limits of the Constitution and other statutes have given the Chair some pause. The hon. member argues that acceptance of the proposals at issue would make a *de facto* change to the Parliament of Canada Act and to the Constitution Act by amending our privileges by means of simple Standing Order changes.

In his ingenious argument the hon. member likens this to changing statute by means of an appropriation act and based on the Chair's own recent decision prohibiting such a practice, invites the Chair to make a similar ruling in this instance.

[*Translation*]

The problem with that is that, were the Chair to agree to the hon. member's request the Speaker would then be placed in the situation of having to interpret the Constitution and the Parliament of Canada Act. There are many precedents showing that the Chair should not venture into such an area.

[*English*]

As my predecessors have so often reminded the House, the Speaker has no role in interpreting matters of either a constitutional or legal nature. On May 2, 1989, I had occasion to refer hon. members to citations 117(6) and 240 of Beauchesne's fifth edition and to a decision of Mr. Speaker Lamoureux of July 8, 1969. At that time I explained:

> The reasons for these citations are straightforward. The Speaker should not sit in judgment on constitutional or legal matters. That role belongs more properly to the courts and to the administration of justice. Previous Speakers have been very careful in strictly addressing themselves to matters of a parliamentary or procedural nature while avoiding dealing with constitutional or legal matters.

Again, on February 7, 1990, as recorded at page 7954 of *Debates* when the hon. member for Kamloops had presented a detailed, intriguing argument, in fact, one not dissimilar to the present argument, to the effect that closure contravenes the Constitution of the country. I said:

> I am not prepared to rule on it because if I did I would be straying into an area in which I am not allowed to go. He states that our rule in the House contravenes our Constitution. That may or may not be, but the authorities for many, many years back make it quite clear that I cannot rule on a legal or constitutional issue.

[*Translation*]

Likewise, the Chair must avoid interpretating in any way, even indirectly, the limits set in the Constitution or the Parliament of Canada Act. It must be noted however that the constitutional limits relating to our quorum and the need to get a Royal recommendation in relation to any appropriation bill also appear in the Standing Orders of the House, being prodecural matters of course.

[*English*]

Accordingly, I would set aside the second and third points advanced by the hon. member for Kamloops. I hasten to add, however, that these arguments have not been dismissed lightly, nor is their disposition fatal to the hon. member's case for there is ample substance still to be considered in respect of the remaining two points he formulated.

The hon. member argues that the provisions in paragraphs 20 and 30 "seek to erode the historic authority of the House and the rights of its members and are thus contemptuous of the House as they will tend to diminish its dignity and impede members in the discharge of their functions". This aspect of the issue involving as it does both privilege and contempt is clearly and area into which the Chair not only may, but must, venture.

The hon. member for Kamloops takes objection to that part of paragraph 30 of the motion which proposes that:

> —if the House does not sit on days designated as sitting days pursuant to Standing Order 28, the total number of allotted days in that supply period shall be reduced by a number of days proportionate to the number of sitting days on which the House stood adjourned—

The hon. member is quite clear in distinguishing between those aspects of the proposal which reduce the number of supply days in an ordinary session from 25 to 20 and the proposal to reduce the number of allotted days in proportion to the number of sitting days. The former, he quite properly recognizes as quantitative change which is not a procedural concern; the latter is, he submits, a qualitative change to the rights of the House over supply. As the Chair understands the hon. member's argument it is that in tying the number of supply days to the number of sitting days, the proposal ruptures the linkage between allotted days and the granting of supply and consequently infringes upon members' historic right to air grievances and petition the Crown before supply is granted. The hon. member supports his claim that the proposed new Standing Orders might lead to the government claiming supply

without hearing grievances or resort to a hypothetical example.

• (1520)

[*Translation*]

Although the Chair has no intention of dealing with hypothetical matters—that is not the role of the Speaker—and should not lay the rules governing House proceedings, the Chair does take seriously any claim that the fundamental rights of this House have been or could be misrepresented. So, the Chair has examined the proposal in question and its potential effect on the supply process.

[*English*]

The purpose of our existing Standing Order 81(8) is to establish for any calendar year three supply periods ending December 10, March 26 and June 30 in which different aspects of the business of supply are considered. In the proposed amendment, Standing Order 81(8)(a), this purpose remains unchanged, but the date of the June supply period is altered to June 23. The number of allotted days is reduced from 25 to 20, proportionately, within each period. Proposed new sections 8(b) and 8(c) are also added to the Standing Order. Section 8(b) introduces the concept that should the House not sit on days designated as sitting days in the Standing Orders, then the total number of allotted days in that supply period would be reduced proportionately. New Section 8(c) provides that should the House sit more than the prescribed number of days, extra allotted days would be added, again proportionately.

Viewed in context, it is very difficult to see these changes as any more than an adjustment to the supply process. Arguably, rather that divorcing the allotted days from the supply period, the proposed changes might make them a more integral part of that process by adding a condition which makes them more responsive to the actual process. In the past, when the House did not sit for extended periods during a supply cycle, as, for example, when a new session of Parliament opened in the middle of a supply period, adjustments to the number allotted days were subject to negotiation and were usually achieved through special orders of the House. Such special orders were passed in 1971, 1974, 1980 and 1989.

[*Translation*]

It seems that the proposed changes, by establishing a set formula to determine how such adjustments are to be made, would add an element of certainty in what has been, admittedly, an ad hoc process.

[*English*]

In this way it appears to the Chair that rather than detracting from the right of members to air grievances before supply, it might be argued that the proposed changes secure that right. Accordingly, the Chair cannot find that particular aspect of the point of order raised by the hon. member for Kamloops is well taken.

I turn now to that aspect of the hon. member's point of order which dealt with proposed Standing Order 56.1. This would be a completely new addition to the rules of the House. It provides that if, at any time during a sitting of the House, unanimous consent is denied for the presentation of a routine motion, then a minister of the Crown may request during Routine Proceedings that the Speaker put the motion. If 25 or more members rise to oppose the motion, it shall be deemed withdrawn otherwise it shall be deemed adopted.

The routine motions to which this new process applies are delineated in paragraph (b). They are those motions made upon Routine Proceedings, which may be required for the observance of the proprieties of the House; the maintenance of its authority; the management of its business; the arrangements of its proceedings; the establishing of the powers of its committees; the correctness of its records, or the fixing of its sitting days or the times of its meeting or adjournment.

Accordingly, there is a very limited range of motions to which this proposed process can apply.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Kamloops claims that the proposal would "override unanimous consent". In his opinion, that clause "proposes to change our notion of unanimous consent and to enable the rules of procedure and operations of the House to be changed by an agent of the Crown unless 25 members of the House object." He also pointed out that the proposal would establish "two classes of members, those who by virtue of being ministers of the Crown can obtain unanimous consent as long as 25 members do not object, and those ordinary

members for whom unanimous consent means no one objects".

[*English*]

In considering the hon. member's claims, the Chair's attention was drawn to the fact that there are precedents for the type of process suggested in the new proposal. Standing Order 26(2) deals with the conditions under which any member may move to extend a sitting and sets at 15 the number of members required to foreclose a move to extend the sitting. Similarly, Standing Order 53(4) provides for the suspension of certain Standing Orders to deal with a matter of an urgent nature. Only a minister of the Crown can propose such a motion and if 10 members rise the motion is deemed withdrawn; otherwise, the motion shall have been adopted. Similarly, Standing Order 98(3), which sets out the terms under which an extension of sitting hours during report and third reading stages of a private members' bill may be sought, also stipulates that if fewer than 20 members support the motion to extend, the motion is deemed withdrawn.

There are certain similarities also between the proposal and existing Standing Order 78 respecting time allocation in that both use a ladder-like type of approach depending upon the extent of agreement forthcoming to securing the right to propose a motion.

Examples also abound in our Standing Orders of discrimination among types of members. Ministers of the Crown have certain prerogatives that private members do not; private members may put questions to ministers of the Crown during Question Period, but ministers may not question private members; party leaders are afforded certain recognitions denied to all other hon. members; the government and opposition Whips have certain rights peculiar to them alone and finally, and perhaps most personally pertinent, the Speaker is denied the right to participate in a debate or to vote on any question before the House, except in the case of an equality of voices. So, the concept of affording differing powers to various groups or individuals is not foreign to our Standing Orders, and, while it may well be the subject of debate, is not reason enough on its own to cause the Chair to intervene on procedural grounds to prevent the proposal from being debated by the House.

During his intervention in the discussion of this point of order, the hon. Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons emphasized that the type of motion envisaged in the proposed new rule could only be introduced during Routine Proceedings when this House is habitually full. He termed the 25 member requirement a significant and major inhibition to the abuse of the rule.

The hon. member for Kamloops is quite correct in stating that proposed new Standing Order 56.1 would "over-ride unanimous consent"—indeed, it is a condition precedent to putting the motion during Routine Proceedings that unanimous consent must have been previously denied. However, this "over-ride" provision can operate, as the Chair understands it, only with respect to a certain very limited range of motions offered at a specific time in our daily agenda by a minister of the Crown. What the Chair must decide is, is this proposal so offensive, does it challenge the authority of the House and impede members in the performance of their duties to such an extent that it should not be allowed to be put to the House for debate and decision. Based on the fact that we have similar procedures existing with respect to other types of motions and given the very limited application of the new proposal, the Chair cannot accede to the request of the hon. member for Kamloops that paragraph 20 of the motion respecting the Standing Order amendments be ruled out of order.

The Chair commends the hon. member for Kamloops for bringing his concerns to the attention of the House and for the cogency and seriousness of his argument. The Chair does not take lightly any decision respecting the privileges of this Chamber or of an individual member of it. It is only by constant vigilance that we can ensure the preservation of the privileges necessary to the carrying out of our responsibilities as elected representatives. In citation 21 of Beauchesne's Fifth Edition, it is stated:

> The most fundamental privilege of the House as a whole is to establish rules of procedure for itself and to enforce them.

• (1530)

In coming to a decision on the point of order raised by the hon. member for Kamloops, the Chair was very much aware that this House is about to embark upon an exercise of that fundamental privilege. In the view of the Chair, it would be incongruent to deprive this Chamber, by fiat from the Chair under the guise of protecting privilege, of the opportunity to fully explore the options available to the House in the exercise of its most basic privilege. The privilege which this House enjoys to set its own binding rules of procedure and to regulate its own internal affairs must be guarded just as jealously as the

rights, immunities and privileges of individual members of the House of Commons. When the two are in conflict, or apparent conflict, it should be the House and the members thereof who resolve the difference.

Traditionally the House has accommodated concerns about the text of its current and proposed Standing Orders through the process of debate, amendment and clarification through agreement. Furthermore, the House and all hon. members may seek to clarify, to modify and to interpret House rules and practices by recourse to points of order, questions of privilege and to the committee charged with the review of and report on the Standing Orders and procedures in the House and its committees.

So seriously does the House view its duty to review and to evaluate, to establish and revise its Standing Orders, that it has even designated by Standing Order 51 that they shall be automatically reviewed and debated at the beginning of the first session of every Parliament.

While the hon. member does not have a point of order, he will have several future opportunities to propose changes to the Standing Orders.

Again, I emphasize that the argument raised by the hon. member for Kamloops was obviously very carefully considered. The matters are important matters and I hope that he will be able to accept the basis of this ruling, which is that ultimately it is the House that must make up its mind as to the orders by which we are governed.

I thank the hon. member.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Before resuming debate, I have a decision—

[*Translation*]

—to give you on the amendment or motion by the hon. member for Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing.

Unfortunately, I must rule the hon. member's motion out of order, because Citation 437(1) of Beauchesne clearly states: "An amendment setting forth a proposition dealing with a matter which is foreign to the proposition involved in the main motion is not relevant and cannot be moved."

We resume debate with the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier.

AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, in participating in the debate on my House Leader's amendment, I would begin by saying that basically, any privilege is based on a citation from Beauchesne which reads as follows:

[*English*]

I believe, from memory, the most fundamental privilege of the House is to establish rules of procedure for itself and to enforce them. I think that basic tenet is important to the debate today. I recognize the importance of the evolution of the rules and the procedures of this House; the written rules and the unwritten rules because we have unwritten rules, unwritten conventions. But I deplore the fact that this substantive proposal to change the rules of procedure of the House was not put to a committee of this House for study and consideration as it should have been by the government.

In 1985, the McGrath commission was asked by the House to look at in-depth change to the Standing Orders. A committee of the House worked hard and long, looked at the evidence and made some serious proposals which were, in large part, accepted by the House and adopted by us. I deplore that we did not go that route again and ask the House, through its committees, to give us the benefit of a serious scrutiny of the proposal put to us by the government.

The proposals are indeed serious and will probably cause some great difficulties for many of us.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, since the first day of this 34th Parliament, April 3, 1989, which is already two years ago, the present Standing Orders have all in all served Canadians' interests well. Minor modifications might be useful, no doubt, sustantial modifications, perhaps, after study and consideration, but not, to lessen the privileges, the legitimate right of members to participate in the Canadian democratic process of parliamentary debate—not at that cost. In the few minutes at my disposal, I intend to show you that these measures, this bill, if adopted, would gag members by reducing the time

allotted to them to debate legislation proposed by the government.

I think that the effectiveness of Parliament would thus be reduced. The quality of legislation would suffer and, again the role of legislators would be diminished in public opinion.

With the present Standing Orders, the House has not at all been idle. We need only look at what has happened in the past two years. The House has not been paralysed, it has not been held up by the delaying tactics of the opposition as the government leader would have us believe. Since April 3, 1989, the House of Commons has sat 299 days. In that time, we have studied 100 bills and 30 government motions. We have had 48 opposition days. Nearly 150 public bills and 712 motions from members were presented. From April 3, 1989 to December 31, 1990, members debated 96 government bills for 569 hours and 37 minutes, an average of roughly 6 hours per bill, which is not excessive, Mr. Speaker. It is not what I would call delaying tactics by the opposition. Members made 3,701 statements under Standing Order 31. They asked 6,108 oral questions. One hundred seventy reports from standing, joint, special and legislative committees, were tabled. Eight thousand thirty-seven petitions were presented in the House. Mr. Speaker, in two years, that is a lot of work. Delaying tactics did not prevent members from working. Just look. Just ask. It is there, it is public. The records are open to everyone.

Therefore, it is wrong to say that the present Standing Orders have served this Parliament badly. And I ask why then, Mr. Speaker, repair something that works and that works well? To calm some people on the government side who are losing ground in public opinion? That is no reason. To hide the government's desire to muzzle legislators, the Standing Orders are being used to have us believe that it will improve the situation. Mr. Speaker, we are not that naive.

The most important privilege given to a member so that he can perform his duties freely is the freedom of speech, Mr. Speaker, and that is what we should strive for, to let more members express themselves and tell the House what their constituents are telling them, to express their constituents' opinions in the House.

With these proposals before us, the federal government is restricting the right to speak and, I think, hindering us in the performance of our duties.

• (1540)

[*English*]

The government has brought forward substantial changes to the rules. We in the Liberal Party oppose several of these changes, not all, several of them, and I will touch upon the main ones.

Many Canadians do not understand, and I do not blame them, all the rules of procedure of this House, the intent, the impact, and therefore cannot appreciate the changes. But take it from me, these changes will not improve debate. These changes will not give more members of Parliament more time to debate questions of importance to this country. We believe that Canadians must be made aware of what is going on in Parliament and to do that, we believe, Parliament sits and should sit longer.

I was here from 1972 until 1978-79. We used to sit at night. We did not like it very much but we sat until 10 or 10.30 p.m. and we thought we would improve things. We changed the system. We improved it by allowing members of Parliament to go home for supper with their children, by allowing members of Parliament to go to their ridings more often. It was an improvement which I think was successful.

Yet, here we have a proposal that in my view does nothing to restore or improve public faith in Parliament. In *The Ottawa Citizen* of March 23, the government House leader is quoted as saying: "The changes are needed to rekindle public faith in the institution of Parliament". He goes on: "The excesses of the adversarial extremes have brought disfavour on the House and reduced our reputation".

Coming from a member of a party that stormed the Chair, that rang the bells for two weeks, how much credibility does that have? Not much.

In *The Globe and Mail* of March 23 the same person, the government House leader, was described as believing, and I quote: "that Canadians are jaded with perpetual political bickering in Parliament. The people want their politicians to make a difference and they want them to spend more time closer to the voters".

The government House leader, as usual, misreads Canadians and public opinion. What Canadians want is better leadership from the government. They are indeed tired of empty promises and secret deals and dice-throwers. That we agree with, but it is time we saw some leadership over there and less of this nonsense about people wanting to see their members in their ridings.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you from having been elected six times to this House that if you are not in your riding, and if you do not work, you do not get re-elected by the community. I would hope that most members here have that experience, that if you work, you get elected. If you do not work, you do not get elected. It is a heck of a privilege to represent 100,000 people as I do in Ottawa—Vanier, and I take it very seriously.

I do not think it improves my work in my riding, which fortunately happens to be close to this place, by saying to me that members of Parliament are demeaning Parliament by having adversarial debates. That is what debate is all about.

The proposals for change were put to the opposition in January of this year. Just to rectify some of the facts that were put to the House yesterday by the House leader, he said we have been dealing for a year with these proposals. That is nonsense. They were put to me as House leader of the opposition in January 1991, and I immediately circulated them to the members of my caucus for their consideration.

This battle is not for show. This battle is because we oppose the suggested changes, because we believe they will not rekindle public faith in Parliament. Possibly less partisanship as we saw this morning by the government Whip would help. I could agree with that. Possibly a little less gagging of Parliament. This is the government that in five years used the gag 34 times. Unbelievable.

The government is proposing to reduce the time of the opposition that represents the views of the millions of Canadians who may not always agree with government policy. They want to shorten the number of sitting days from 175 to 134 days. They are cutting many of the days of the Official Opposition, traditionally used to voice the concerns of our constituents in this House on the 25 or so days a year that the opposition has at its disposal to call the debate on a supply day of the government.

[*Translation*]

By cutting 41 sittings days, the government is sparing itself 41 question periods. Perhaps that will be an improvement, but I do not think it will change anything. It might do a little more to put to sleep the media concerned only with question period, this daily 45-minute exercise in partisanship, those who are not interested in following the proceedings of the House the rest of the time and who never or seldom attend committee sittings to see what is being done there, where in fact the bulk of the work is done by responsible members working on legislation, bills and reports referred for their consideration. No one talks about that, Mr. Speaker. Heaven forbid! During these 45 minutes when there can be a run-in between two members, if it is funny, they will laugh, but, if it is dull, if the opposition does not bring it off they will say that the opposition is not with it.

I wonder, if the cynicism—I am not sure this is the most appropriate term—that colours the media's perception of this Parliament and the House of Commons, is not indeed a serious cause for concern.

The government limits to 15 minutes per day the time allotted to presenting petitions from the Canadian people. This limit is pointless, considering the fact that petitions have taken on average 8 minutes per day over the past two years. Now the government wants to reduce it to 15 minutes. I fail to understand!

These petitions are drafted, circulated, signed and sent to be tabled in this House by Canadians from all walks of life, rich, poor, interested in politics or not. Petitions are a legitimate, legal and democratic means by which the ordinary citizen can make his opinion known on a matter that concerns him.

The government wants to reduce from 8 to 6 days the number of days to debate the throne speech. However, over the past two years, only 27 of the 1,611 hours of debate were spent to debate the throne speech. Yet, it is important. It sets the course for the opening session and indicates the direction the government intends to take. The members, both on the opposition side and the government side, find it important to take part in this debate, because it gives them the opportunity to address various subjects of interest to their riding.

Mr. Speaker, the government muzzles the members during the debates, imposes time allocation on them and, on top of that, reduces without reason the time to debate time allocation. In five years, this government attempted 31 times, as I mentioned earlier, to impose time allocation, Mr. Speaker, a measure which had previously been used only 29 times over 19 years. It was not used more than 29 times over 19 years and they used it 31 times over five years!

The government reduced by two hours the debate time when closure is applied. This is by virtue of the motion dealing with Standing Order 57, which puts an end to the debate. During this 34th legislature, closure was applied 8 times on very important bills, namely the bills on capital punishment, free trade, the goods and services tax, unemployment insurance. The intent, I gather, was to give the greatest number of members possible a chance to be heard. That is not what happens when closure is applied.

The government is reducing from 25 to 20 the number of sittings days allotted to the business of supply, designated as allotted days. These days are a fundamental aspect of our work. Allow me to quote a few more statistics. Out of the 1,611 hours the House sat between April 3, 1989 and December 31, 1990, only 174 hours, or 10.8 per cent of the time, were allotted to this most important task of making the government accountable for the way it spends the Canadian taxpayers' money.

• (1550)

Also, Mr. Speaker, what irritates me in these proposed changes is the fact that if the House does not sit following a decision made by the majority, and the government as we know has the majority, then the opposition will have to give up one allotted day for every week the House is not sitting. In other words, we stand to lose allotted days if the government decides to adjourn the House for more than one week.

The government wants to reduce from six to four the number of days allotted to the Budget Debate. Can you imagine! Out of the 1,611 hours of debate we have had since April 3, 1989, the Budget Debate took only 43 hours and a half, that is less than 3 per cent of the time of the House. Yet, during the Budget Debate, members can talk about what policies the government wants to take to reduce the deficit, to decrease our national debt, to create a better climate and bring the Canadian economy back on track. Mr. Speaker, since 1989, we have barely spent 3 per cent of the 1,100 sitting hours discussing the Budget.

The only reason why the government is limiting debate is that it wants to hide its poor financial performance from the Canadian people.

An hon. member: That's right!

Mr. Gauthier: In fact, the government has not reduced the deficit which reaches $30.5 billion in 1991. It has increased the national debt to $380 billion, and so on. Mr. Speaker, we have got to have a serious debate on this issue.

An hon. member: Exactly!

Mr. Gauthier: One of the most important points in the changes to the Standing Orders has to do with a new parliamentary calendar. I know that I do not have much time left, but I would like to cover this point. The proposal in no way favours a member who must return to his riding every week to see his constituents and his family on the weekend. It does not encourage that, Mr. Speaker. It gives a week every three weeks, and we know that the government will wait for that week off to make its negative announcements and those they do not want to debate in the House because we will see ministers making punchy statements or issuing press releases that otherwise could be examined seriously here in the House during oral question period or in debate.

Mr. Speaker, I swear that that is what will happen. You will see. They will use that week to get their negative messages across or to announce things on which the House will not have a chance to speak.

An hon. member: That is true!

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, in my years here, I have suggested some things and I would like to conclude on that because what I have to say is positive. A while ago, I asked that any bill tabled in the House have a summary on the first page to help understand what the bill is about. Every legislature in the world that I know like those in France, England and several provinces do the same. They have the bill with a description, a brief concise explanation of what it is about. We do not have that here, eh? Many people spend their time unable to understand what it is about. If the bill were accompanied by such an explanation, we would be further ahead.

Mr. Speaker, I see that you are about to rise. Thank you for your attention.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Questions and comments?

Mr. Baker: A question, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): A question?

[*English*]

Mr. George S. Baker (Gander—Grand Falls): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member.

I wonder if he could relate to the House what he was going to say before he got cut off.

Mr. Gauthier: That is a very good question. I was about to say that I have, over the years, given notice on the Order Paper of several changes which I would like to see. For example, I would like to see that when the bells of the House are ringing to call members for a vote that standing committees of the House should interrupt or suspend their sittings to allow members to come here and vote. There would be no great harm in doing that, and it would allow all of us to be here and do what we are supposed to be doing. I think it would be a positive step that committees would adjourn or suspend when the bells are ringing, calling members to the vote.

An hon. member: Tell us more.

Mr. Gauthier: I think that the changes proposed here would also be improved if, for example, the transparency of our work was more evident. I think committees could be televised. I believe that we should choose two or three committee rooms and improve the message by possibly televising more proceedings.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, one of the most important points in this reform proposed by the government is that it will reduce the time of debate; they would have us believe that by sitting less, we would give the people of Canada better value.

[*English*]

May I just end my remarks by referring to an editorial which the House leader used yesterday in this House which I think needs to be responded to and that is the editorial in *The Ottawa Citizen* of yesterday. *The Ottawa Citizen* had an article stating that the reforms may aid credibility and it goes on and gives its support to these proposals.

This may be the opinion of the editorial board of *The Ottawa Citizen*, but they should try to demonstrate for us in this House how these proposed changes could restore the credibility of the House of Commons. I doubt very much that these changes would do this.

The proposed changes they mention give MPs more time to spend away from the House, reduce sitting days, cut the length of speeches, limit the time for debating bills or borrowing authority, limit the number of Commons committees meeting at one time or other. Does all this improve the credibility of this House? No, Mr. Speaker.

There are perhaps other changes that could restore credibility: a reduction in the level of partisanship, for example. The majority of MPs here are dedicated, hard working, serious men and women who do their best to represent their constituencies. Perhaps, and I alluded to that a few minutes ago, the media feels there is a lack of credibility. Maybe the cynicism that colours their perception of this House should be changed. That is possible also.

As well, they find it difficult to move, as I said previously, to more than the Question Period. They have not, in my view, given serious coverage to the committee work of this House. If Parliament is irrelevant, and I disagree with that statement that *The Ottawa Citizen* makes, it is in my view time for us all here, the four estates, to look at ourselves seriously. The editorial states: "Our political leaders are diverting attention away from the seat of democracy by relying on commissions". That is possible.

The Ottawa Citizen should be able to make the connection between the intent of the proposed rules and the desire of the government to draw less attention to its vastly unpopular policies and fiscal mismanagement. I do not think this editorial is very helpful. If the editors of *The Ottawa Citizen* could only have gone back to their drawing board and, very seriously, put this proposal before a group of persons who could have helped them understand it, it would have been much better and much more fruitful.

In closing, I have one proposal. There are, as I said at the beginning of my speech, two sets of rules: the written rules, the Standing Orders, and the unwritten rules, the conventions, the practices, the methods and everything else. In the unwritten rules it is said that the opposition chairs three standing committees of the House of Commons: Scrutiny of Regulations, Public Accounts, Management and Members' Services. Those

three committees have traditionally been chaired by the opposition.

I do not doubt the government's intention here. I suspect that it will hold to the convention that the opposition members will have the chair of these three committees. I would hope they would. I am worried because one of the committees, Management and Members' Services, is in an envelope and it kind of disappears within the management committee of the House. Therefore, I would like to ask publicly if the government intends to change this long-standing practice of appointing a member of the opposition as chair of those three traditional standing committees. There is no rule that says we have to act that way, but there is a convention, a practice, that has been with us for a long time. I would hope that they will continue this practice.

• (1600)

Mr. Arnold Malone (Crowfoot): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to address the House on what is obviously a very important subject to all members of Parliament.

I represent the constituency of Crowfoot. One of the rules that is recommended for change is that members would be serving in the House of Commons for a period of about three weeks, and then would have a week to receive constituency representations.

Mr. Speaker, when I look at my constituency, I see that my riding is larger than 33 nations in the world. Within my constituency are 113 individual communities and therefore when I am at one of them, there are 112 at which I am not. It should be obvious that that rule, bearing in mind that mine is far from the largest constituency in the country, if Parliament is to work, if we are to represent the people, we must be available to hear the views of our constituents in order to come here to place those views before Parliament.

I was in the House of Commons when the hon. member for Skeena made the comment that he had no difficulty in going home every weekend. For those persons who do not know where that member's riding is, he would have to fly to Vancouver, and I am not sure of the route today, but he would either fly north to Prince George, and then from Prince George into Prince Rupert and, not knowing where he lives, would probably have a car drive thereafter.

It may well be that this hon. member can travel some 12 or 14 hours and attend, as he said, some six meetings on a weekend. It may be that he, with his pectorals rippling, his latissimus dorsi all bulked up, crawling with power, and his deltoids and his triceps and his biceps all bulging and knotted masses of muscles, hardened, and going with his tight T-shirt on with a big S on it, is more powerful than a locomotive and faster than a speeding bullet and that big S stands for super-Skeena.

Everybody will not be like that member. Everybody will not be super-Skeena. I remember the predecessor to the hon. member for Skeena, the Hon. Iona Campagnolo. I sat beside her on the plane once, shortly after she was appointed to the cabinet. She went home every weekend. She lamented the almost five-hour flight to Vancouver, waiting, then getting on the flight to Prince George, waiting, taking a small plane to Prince Rupert, and having a two-hour car drive to get home. She went home every weekend. However, she lamented how difficult and how hard it was on her.

Let us suppose that the hon. member for Skeena can go home every weekend. Let us suppose that no one cares about our physical condition when we do arrive. Is it not legitimate to ask the question: what about a Chamber of Commerce that meets, perhaps, every Wednesday, or a Rotary Club that meets every Tuesday, or an organization of professional women that meets every Thursday. If we go home on weekends, do we presume that everyone in our constituencies who invites us to address them or to make representations or to listen to hearings has to schedule the country within a Saturday and a Sunday time frame?

What about those persons who are somehow going to be elected to Parliament? Are they to go home every weekend and to have six or seven meetings as the member for Skeena attests, and then never once have an opportunity for some co-existence with their families? Yet, to be able to come down here and as one of the policies of an institution, to support Parliament and its move to help and assist and strengthen the families when, in fact, they are detracted from them by the very demands of the job. My constituency is large, but is not nearly as large as the Western Arctic or Eastern Arctic. It is not nearly as large as two other constituencies in my home province of Alberta or as large as most of the

northern ridings of the provinces or even some parts of the central provinces on the prairies.

It is appropriate for us to look at the whole matter of how we represent our constituents, our availability to them and the opportunity to be real representatives by the fact that we are among our people on a regular basis and can schedule meetings to hear their views.

What I also wish to address is that while there are some who lament the new rule changes that are being proposed, I am one who believes that this institution must focus more sharply on the rules that are already in place. We who have been here for a long time—and I have now been here for some 17 years—lament that there is a decay of Parliament. It came most predominantly when television came to this institution.

What has happened is, I think, an utter disgrace to the nation of Canada. Every member of Parliament should pause, reflect and to ask the question: Who is being served by how we behave here? I do not think it matters much if one member calls another a slanderous name or imputes a motive or suggests that they lie with respect to any of us as individuals. Obviously, it is a discourtesy, but to the extent that it weakens the institution of Parliament it is a national tragedy.

We must take a look at the rules of this place and examine the conduct of all members of the House, particularly when it comes to Question Period. There is real reason for further examination, for asking ourselves to enforce the rules that we have above and beyond the simple examination of some new rule changes. The notion that a question cannot be argumentative, the notion that questions cannot be repeated, the notion that we are not allowed to impute motives one to another, or that a question cannot intend to slander another person, those are all part of Erskine May or Beauchesne. Yet we feed, in a daily diet, of verbal conduct that simply would not be accepted in any other form of civil meeting procedures in some other part of our society.

This Parliament is the mirror through which Canadians see themselves. How we conduct ourselves here is how Canadians ultimately end up feeling about Canada. I might be accused by members of the New Democratic Party of being somewhat pro-American when I give the following example. I hope they will forgive me but it is not my intention. Many Canadian citizens leave Canada to take graduate degrees in the United States. They enter into cultural readjustment when they come home because they sense, after a period of time of working in the United States, that there is a negativism in this country which permeates through the society and leads people to the perspective and to the view that somehow we, in this nation, simply are a group who want to complain and complain about almost everything and anything. Whatever degree there is to that perspective of those who re-enter Canadian society after being away for a while elsewhere, it starts right here in this place. We have an adversarial system, separated by two sword lengths in which we develop as professionals in finding the negative.

• (1610)

I have been here 17 years, more than half of which I was on the opposition side of the House. When we watch the news and when we read the newspapers, we very seldom come away with a sense of what is good about our country. So seldom do we sense the pride and the joy of being Canadian. Very seldom do we accent the positive and certainly not on a continuous basis or in a full-fledged basis on a wide variety of issues. Instead, no matter what we all might be going right, there is a grovelling towards finding the negative. That is because the central institution, I believe, is one whose design is to find the negative. That is how Parliament was established, to find the negative.

While it may well be that there is some advantage to that—and I would be the first to concede that there is advantage in focusing in on those policies and acts of government that need to be improved. I also submit that the rules that have been developed over the years that we will find in Erskine May and in Beauchesne say that questions should not be argumentative, should not have preambles, should not impute motives. If we turn a deaf eye or ear to that, then what we are doing is ignoring the reason the rules were put there in the first place. Those rules are there because we must act with civility in this place. We must conduct ourselves in a manner that Canadians will feel pride in their country. We have to be able, through this institution, to reflect Canada in a way

that Canadians can see this nation for the blessed advantage it really is.

The truth of the matter is that no one is more Canadian than at that moment when they arrived home from a trip elsewhere. When they come back to Canadian soil, when they have compared us with whatever else might be on earth, that becomes the point at which they say: "This is the land in which we have the greatest of opportunity".

We need to revisit not only the rules before us in this debate, but we need to expand beyond that to the whole question of individual relationships and conduct. We must treat each other with the kind of dignity that will come from orderly, parliamentary conduct. We need not enter into innuendo, into slanderous comments.

As an example, I think of a comment made by an hon. member some many years ago. He rose in this House and accused another hon. member of not having the morals of an alley cat. When Mr. Speaker asked him to withdraw his comments, he admitted that he was wrong and said: "Mr. Speaker, I withdraw. The hon. member does have the morals of an alley cat".

I use that example because it is of a period long before this present one, but the example can be found today. According to Erskine May, it is all inappropriate, you cannot do indirectly what you cannot do directly. As an institution we need to focus on those kinds of statements. We cannot allow members, in some slanderous way, to simply twist things and achieve points in a political debate when the fact of the matter is that we are here for one purpose and that is to serve the common good of all Canadians.

We are entering now into a very interesting period of time, a constitutional crisis of our nation upon which this institution is going to be looked at for its relevancy and its capacity to be able to resolve issues.

If we took the Canadians who think Question Period is a wonderful part of the parliamentary process, that it really reflects their views, that it is a positive period of legislative process, and put all those Canadians on Vancouver Island; and then we got those who thought it was a negative process, that it was disadavantageous to Parliament, and we put them on Prince Edward Island, the weight distribution of this country would so change that the poor people on Vancouver Island would be 30,000 feet above sea level.

There is virtually no one who will stand up and say, I saw Question Period last week on television and I just wanted to report to you that I thought it was tremendous, it was a great display. None of us hear that when we go home. People do not come rushing up, but every one of us when we go home hear criticisms about the conduct here.

We, as a chamber, need to look at the rules again, about how we conduct ourselves in this House. That has to be an aspect that must tag along with all of the other rule changes that are coming at this very sensitive time, particularly as we enter into this constitutional crisis in which Canadians are asking whether or not we want to remain united, whether we want to remain a nation.

Frankly, I don't think Canadians are asking that question; they already have the answer. What they want to know is that this place will conduct itself in a manner where they can look towards it with respect and with the full and absolute belief that we are all here with the common interest of each of them in mind. We are not here to subrogate any one individual, to impute motives to another, to use long preambles that are argumentative when Erskine May says that they ought not to be, and to use our time in Question Period simply to embarrass the other person as a person. It is time we quit debating personalities and started debating issues. That means you stick to facts and to statistics. It is a drier and duller debate, but, sir, I can tell you this; it is a lot more profitable and advantageous for all Canadians when that is the way in which this institution conducts itself. I would commend it to every member of the House of Commons.

Mr. John Brewin (Victoria): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the remarks and comments of the hon. member for Crowfoot. He has been a member of this Parliament for a long time. I listened particularly to his comments about Canada and think they would be well received on all sides of the House.

I would ask him this. He is the chair of the committee on which I sit, the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs. I would like his comments on the impact of these rule changes on the work of the committees, as well as what is being left out, in terms of

making this institution work more effectively for the people of Canada.

• (1620)

Let me call his attention to a very particular aspect of the committee work. First of all, as I understand the proposed changes to the Standing Orders, the effect would be that the various committees would go into what are called envelopes. Only two committees within the envelope can meet at the same time. If one of the committees is meeting virtually around the clock, this will put great limits on the time available for the other committees to meet.

The reform of the committee structure in Parliament before I got here back in 1984 was intended, as I understand it, to permit even closer scrutiny to the workings of the various departments than had been possible before the rule changes of 1984 went into effect. However, it strikes me that the rule changes proposed here will even further restrict the committees from doing the job that they were earlier intended to do.

The effect of the rule changes in 1984, before the current rule changes come into play, is as I see it, to really hobble Parliament in the role that it may have in scrutinizing expenditures.

Our committee is responsible for reviewing the expenditures of the Department of National Defence, $12.5 billion a year, billions of dollars on expenditures for military equipment which as far as I can see, given the end of the Cold War, are obsolete. Yet our committee has virtually no time, even under the present structure, to review these billions of dollars worth of expenditures. We have had one meeting at which the Minister of National Defence came to address the question of estimates.

As the spokesperson for our party, I had 10 minutes worth of questions, and that included the time given to the answers. We have a good chairman. He was ready to try to find extra time for us, but the minister's availability ran out.

We have very limited time to do that function. We also have limited time to study general policy. In particular, I would like him to address how these rule changes are going to make it possible for the committees to do the job they have to do. Surely, the direction of these changes should have been to expand the capacity of the committees, rather than restrict them.

Mr. Malone: Mr. Speaker, my first comment to the hon. member—I anticipate that there will be some laughter when I say this—is that we do not live in a perfect world.

Having said that obvious fact, the truth of the matter is that we are not going to be able to do everything that we think ought to be done in every condition in all situations and at all times.

The hon. member for Victoria states that this is going to restrict the committee's capacity and then he said: "as was the case the last time that the rule changes were there". Maybe the hon. member is as mistaken this time as he was with respect to the last time.

I was here before the present rules changes came in. We could not study anything in any committee unless the minister mandated us to do it. If it was controversial, we simply could not get a mandate.

What happened with the rule changes out of the McGrath committee is that now committees on their own discover and develop their own subject area. That is what they researched. That is what they put forward.

When the hon. member says that this is going to restrict us like the last changes restricted us, first of all we need to bear in mind that he might just as well be wrong about this one as he was the one before, because it is a lot better now than it was in that first situation.

When my good friend from Victoria says that $12 billion of expense money is obsolete spending now that there is peace in the Middle East, he is absolutely right. As long as he can guarantee me that there will never again anywhere ever in the world be another agitation of one nation against another, then spending on military defence is absolete. I want a greater guarantee than somebody's word that somehow that expenditure is obsolete. The Kuwaitis sure do not believe that it is obsolete. We had the capacity within the world to give them back their nation after they were intruded upon by a dictator. I would submit that the obsolescence that he would attach to the federal expenditures for national defence are only accurate if there never again was to be a provocation by any nation against another.

He talks about the importance that he attaches to the estimates. He may very well attach importance to the estimates. Many members do. The hon. member is saying that I do not. Now I have not said I do not. He is saying that. That is the old thing I asked him not to do a

few moments ago and that is to impute motives, because I have not said that.

At the end of the day, I think it becomes of equal importance, not only to examine the estimates, but for members of Parliament to help in the designing of policy by undertaking studies and by thoroughly investigating that policy with witnesses before committees. In the long run, I believe the emphasis ought to be placed on this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Order, please. There are other members who want to ask questions or make short comments.

Mr. David Berger (Saint-Henri—Westmount): Mr. Speaker, I would like to refer to a comment made by the member for Crowfoot. He stated that he does not hear in his constituency, compliments about Question Period. He said that he believes we should stick to facts and not be argumentative and so forth.

I would suggest to him that is a somewhat Pollyannish way of looking upon Parliament and the responsibilities of members of Parliament. Apart from my opinion of his comment, is it not really the voters who should decide upon the performance of members of Parliament and of the parties that are represented in this House? I thought that when I was elected to Parliament I was elected to come here to articulate the views and needs of my constituents in the best manner that I am able to, that I was elected to debate and I was elected to ask questions.

Does he not agree that is the role of a member of Parliament? As he knows, the rule changes he claims to favour, which were proposed by the Conservative government, will precisely provide fewer opportunities for MPs to ask questions, to debate and to articulate the views and needs of their constituents.

I would like to ask him how he feels that providing fewer opportunities to MPs will enhance the status of Parliament in the eyes of his constituents and in the eyes of all Canadians?

Mr. Malone: Mr. Speaker, of course the hon. member is correct when he says that his role is to come here and articulate views to the best of his ability on behalf of his constituents. That is right. That is why we are here.

But the hon. member represents a constituency that is very close to this Chamber. He does not have to travel very far. Canada is the second largest nation in the world; 4.5 time zones from east to west. Constituencies are long flight distances away. One of the rule changes will allow for a period where we can go home to be in our constituencies and to hear representations.

The hon. member who asked the question said: "Isn't he right to be able to articulate on behalf of his constituents?" I submit to him who lives very close to his constituency that he has an opportunity that I, the hon. member for Edmonton East, the hon. member for Victoria and the hon. member for Arctic West do not have, and that is to get home with the same frequency, or even mid-week for important events. We are extending an hour every day so that the period we are at home is virtually made up in debating time by the length of time we have extended the debate here.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Before resuming the debate, it is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the Hon. Member for Hamilton West—Airports; the Hon. Member for York Centre—Harbourfront Corporation; and the Hon. Member for Cape Breton Highlands—Canso—Fisheries.

• (1630)

[*English*]

Mr. George S. Baker (Gander—Grand Falls): Mr. Speaker, perhaps I could add a few words to this debate.

We have in our Canadian House of Commons a procedure for changing the rules that is not present in any other legislature, as we call it. This is a legislature. In the world, that I know of, we are part of the British parliamentary system. Parliament comes from the word *parler*, to speak. This is a speak shop here.

They have a procedure set down to change the rules. We do not have any such procedure. So, we cannot as government members do in this debate. They say: "Well, how about if you had Question Period and you had the British system where there is a question from the opposition and then a question from the government". That is what they do. In every question period in the British House of Commons, the questions go to the opposition member, to the government member, to the opposition member to the government member.

The House leader says: "Why do we not have that"? Then the deputy House leader stood up and said: "How about if we had a system like they have in Britain where

the Prime Minister is only there for three days". That is true. Cabinet ministers only have to show up for one day, and you give notice to the minister about your question. You must give notice.

You do not tell the minister what your supplementary question is going to be, but you give him notice. The deputy House leader said: "How about if we had that in the Canadian House of Commons?". Then the Whip stood up and suggested the most revolutionary thing of all. I'm sorry, it was the member from Surrey, British Columbia, who suggested: "How about if every motion and every debate came to an end, not in seven days, but in seven hours as they do in some of these other parliaments". Of course that is true in Britain, New Zealand and Australia. Motions come to an end at the end of every sitting day. That is true.

But what these members did not say to this opposition was: "How about if we had the system of committees that they have in the British House of Commons? How about that system"? That is what they forgot to say. That is where the action is.

The committees are completely divorced from the House of Commons. They do not need terms of reference. They operate completely autonomously. That is where the action is in those legislatures throughout the world which have a system in place for changing their rules of procedure.

By rules I mean all of the rules. Some of our rules, as the hon. member before me pointed out, are by custom. For example, somebody bows to you, Mr. Speaker, in the chair. You often wonder why somebody bows to you. I mean, it is very unusual to have a member walking across the floor and he bows to you. He bows. You often wonder why, when the Speaker comes in, the Sergeant-at-Arms says: "Take your hat off to the Speaker". You often wonder why you cannot sit up in the gallery up there without having a tie on. You are not allowed. If a man tried to come into the House with a leather jacket on, with a shirt and tie, he would not be allowed. There are certain rules that are sometimes very difficult to understand.

I imagine it must be difficult for people in the gallery to understand. If they took out a pencil right now, at this very moment, and started to take notes, they would be told they are not allowed to do it in any part of the gallery.

An hon. member: Except in the press gallery.

Mr. Baker: Yes, except in the press gallery, and except a portion of the gallery here to the right of the Speaker for ministers' assistants and a section of the gallery just next to the gentleman up there who is operating the console, operating the microphones, and there is a little section where the Speaker and the guards allow somebody to take notes.

The Canadian House of Commons has been very slow to change. I suppose we have been the slowest to change of any legislature under what we call the British parliamentary system. It was only in the 1950s that women were allowed to come into the House and sit here without a hat on. Members might be interested to know that at that time when two female MPs in the House of Commons stood up and asked why it was that whenever a woman comes to this House and sits in the gallery, she must have a hat on, the Speaker in a classic ruling for the Canadian House of Commons recited St. Paul in the first epistle to Timothy.

An hon. member: Oh, oh.

Mr. George S. Baker (Gander—Grand Falls): No, no, then he made reference to the first epistle to the Corinthians, which I will not repeat here today. He made reference to those particular proclamations in giving his judgment. The Speaker then set the precedent by saying that as far as he was concerned, a woman should be able to come to these galleries and wear whatever she pleased. So that was the precedent that was set.

Mr. Speaker also in that judgment answered my question as to why people bow to you. It is because the first House of Commons was in a chapel and the Speaker's chair was on the altar. Because it was on the altar, people had to bow. They had to bend their knee when they came in front of the Speaker. That tradition has held until today in this Chamber. The tradition of not allowing anyone to take notes in the gallery stems back to when they did not want people to be sending out

newsletters about what was supposed to be going on in the House of Commons.

Today, that is a rule in the Canadian House of Commons. You are not allowed to take a note when you visit the House of Commons.

We have been slow to change, to put it mildly, some of the rules of procedure that we have in this House. I believe that drastic changes are necessary in the way that the House of Commons conducts its business. Changes are necessary, but not these changes that have been brought in today. These changes that have been brought in today would not address the concerns that I as a parliamentarian have had for many years.

• (1640)

My concern is this. No matter how you look at it, this House of Commons has two main functions. You could draw up a list of 10 or 12 functions that we have, but there are two main ones: to pass laws and to arrange things in our rules that make the government accountable to the people. There is no other way that the government can be held accountable to the people of Canada, except through the Canadian House of Commons and the press.

What has happened over the years to our rules is that we have changed drastically in what we have accepted as acceptable. No longer can a government be defeated according to our precedents if a vote on a money bill is defeated. Mr. Speaker, you know the precedents that we have set there. No longer can a cabinet minister be held responsible for what happens in his department.

If we go back over Canadian history, we would recognize that cabinet ministers had to resign from time to time for things that happened in their department. I remember one case had to do with customs. Another case had to do with the post office. The assumption was made in our rules that a cabinet minister was held responsible for what happened in his department. If something happened that was completely unacceptable, that cabinet minister had to resign.

Today we not only do not hold ministers responsible for what happens in their department, but they need not even know what goes on in their department. That is what has evolved over a period of years.

I suppose because the departments have grown so big that it would be ridiculous to suggest that the Minister of Transport would be expected to know every little thing that goes on his department. The rules have changed, the procedure has changed so that a minister does not have to know. He does not have to answer a question in the House. He could stand up and say no to every question. He need not stand up at all. He is not held responsible for what happens in his department. A government cannot be defeated as a government and have to call an election because of the defeat of a money measure. The accountability of the Government of Canada to the people of Canada has now become practically non-existent in the House of Commons.

The other thing which really bothers me, and I sure some of the other members, is the completely unacceptable manner in which we pass bills and some of the tragic errors that have been made. We passed an unemployment insurance bill the other day. Now we see under that unemployment insurance bill that if somebody were collecting unemployment insurance and if they worked part time and reported their earnings, and their earnings meant that the unemployment insurance was reduced by a dollar or two every two weeks, if they quit that part-time job that they were reporting the earnings from, they would now lose all of their unemployment insurance for 12 weeks. That is what was passed in this Parliament. The Parliament of Canada passed that law just recently.

It was under the provision that dealt with quitters. Nothing was said in the legislation that I could see about part-time workers who were working while they were collecting unemployment insurance. It did not say that when they were reinstated after 12 weeks they would not get 60 per cent of their income but it would be reduced to 50 per cent.

It was the former Minister of National Health and Welfare, who was around just a moment ago, who brought in the bill on the advance child tax credit payment. What an outrageous situation that has created. We passed a law in the Canadian House of Commons that said we were going to give people an advance on their child tax credit. The Government of Canada did not even think about the fact that the qualifications for

receiving that would be determined the following January, because that is what was in the old legislation.

We have in Canada today this outrageous, completely unacceptable situation. Say a fire occurred in the house over Christmas and the children were away for the first week in January and not under her care. Now she, by law, has to pay back every bit of the advance child tax credit given by the Government of Canada.

Some hon. members: Shame.

Mr. Baker: That is what the Government of Canada passed in this Parliament.

The legislative function of the House of Commons has deteriorated considerably because bills are no longer examined as they used to be when the system was much simpler in this House of Commons. It should be the job of members of Parliament to have complete hearings on issues. If you are going to give a child tax credit you bring in the people who are to receive the child tax credit. If you are going to change unemployment insurance, you bring in the people who are going to get it and who know the system. Then you do not make those mistakes.

There are two main functions of the House of Commons. There is accountability to the people of Canada through the House of Commons. That has practically disappeared over the years. As a legislative body passing laws, we should not be proud of some of the laws that have been made by this legislature in recent years.

Because of that, Mr. Speaker, we have to change our procedures, but in the opposite direction to what is being proposed here today. We cannot take a portion of the British House, or as the hon. member said a few moments ago, what is happening in New Zealand, and transplant that rule to the Canadian House. You cannot take a spoke unless you take the whole wheel. And maybe what is in the socket is not going to work.

In my final minute, what I want to suggest to the Government of Canada is this. Let me say that this has been done in every legislature under the British parliamentary system and is quite a simple procedure. If you go to the British House and you ask them: "How do you change your rules?", they will tell you that they have a committee, not of parliamentarians, but a committee that is there all the time examining the rules of procedure and constantly making suggestions for change.

You cannot judge another legislature.

• (1650)

You may go to another legislature in Britain, New Zealand or Australia and say: "Oh boy, this looks great.", but does it really? Do you know the rest of the story?

The rules have evolved to meet that country's requirements and those circumstances. I do not know why the Government of Canada would not then put in place this year a permanent mechanism for changing rules of procedure. I have been in this House for 17 years. I have watched the motions come forward one after the other as the years go on.

There are little games played with this rule, that rule or some other rule. Usually, as is the case here, the government is simply trying to remove a little more of the accountability from the House of Commons and its accountability to the people of Canada.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I know there is a lot of interest in this subject, and I am wondering if there might be unanimous consent of the House for us to extend the sitting this evening to allow more members to participate in this debate.

Some hon. members: No.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): There is no unanimous consent. The Hon. Member for Bonavista—Trinity—Conception for a question or comment.

[*English*]

Mr. Fred J. Mifflin (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception): Mr. Speaker, I have a comment and a question.

First of all, I want to say how much I have enjoyed the usual excellent presentation of my colleague from Gander—Grand Falls. I certainly found his comment, in a general sense, very instructive and very interesting.

Knowing perhaps a little bit more of my colleague's background than other members of the House, I know he speaks with great authority from both the House of

Commons and indeed from the provincial legislature of Newfoundland.

His experience gives me even more confidence in the comments that he has made in a general sense.

If I may be permitted a comment, and one tries not to be very partisan about these kinds of things because there is give and take on both sides, what I have trouble understanding is that for as long as this country has existed, we have had changes in rules.

I find it very difficult to understand in the days when we are sending men to the moon, when we have telephones, video sets and conference calls why all of a sudden in this particular year of our Lord we need to now do things differently. I find that very difficult to understand.

An hon. member said last night: "You can do face to face what you cannot do by telephone." Yes, indeed. I would like to do all my business face to face, but by necessity of time, I have to do a lot of things by telephone.

I know also that the hon. member for Gander—Grand Falls does a lot by telephone as well. I suppose one is never totally comfortable with rules. As human beings, I suppose we would always like to have total freedom, but I see rules as things that are applied to organizations and individuals which allows them to operate in a concerted, agreed manner that produces a better effectiveness in the over-all system.

Sometimes people suffer a bit. Sometimes people gain. I am not in favour of the rule changes, but I do not want to get into that right now.

Really, what I wanted to do was ask the hon. member if he could perhaps talk about some of the specifics that he is not very happy with. He may even be able to suggest in his vast experience and knowledge on this subject some of the things that he would like to see.

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member from Newfoundland for his question.

I want to point out to the House that we do a lot of things in Newfoundland differently than we do them here in the House of Commons. I suppose I could use up my six minutes to tell others about the differences.

One of them that just occurred to me is that the government, in the House of Commons and everywhere under the British parliamentary system and in the provincial legislatures, always sits on the right hand of the Speaker. In the legislature in Newfoundland they sit on the left-hand, and the reason for that is interesting. When you look at all the procedures, there are various times when you refer to the person on your right. In this particular case you have to translate that because as you know, all of our rules in the provincial legislatures, and really federally, all refer back to Erskine May. Provincially they refer back to Beauchesne and in between we have our Standing Orders.

Anyway, the reason for the change in Newfoundland was that back in the days when the first legislative building was built, there was only one fireplace. This was before the days of central heating. That fireplace was to the left of the Speaker. Of course, the government always claimed the warmer side of the House. That is where our tradition came from as far as sitting to the left of the Speaker rather than the right of the Speaker.

The hon. member asked me what changes I would like to see.

An hon. member: I want to sit close to the fireplace.

Mr. Baker: I want to sit close to the fire.

I will make reference to one change. Perhaps somebody might be reading this transcript, or might be in the process of changing rules provincially or federally. It refers to decorum here in this and other legislative bodies.

Mr. Speaker, have you ever looked at the decorum in certain provincial legislatures on television when they replay portions of their proceedings at night? You notice the considerable difference between that decorum and the decorum here in the Canadian House of Commons. It appears as if we are more orderly. It appears that way.

I want to say that where you find legislatures that have very poor decorum it is because the House rules permit the use of the word "you", y-o-u. That is interesting. The next time you visit a provincial legislature or visit another country that has a legislative body derived from the British parliamentary system, wherever you have a chamber that permits the word "you" to be used during Question Period or at any other time, the decorum is completely terrible. It goes out the window. It is personal.

That is why all of the traditions of the House, all of the rules of the House, have an intermediary. People sometimes ask why we are always talking to the Speaker when we are speaking in the House. Why do we not talk to the minister? Why do we not talk to the people? Why are we always talking to the Speaker?

Mr. Epp: He's the only one who listens.

Mr. Baker: The hon. member said that perhaps he is the only one listening.

That is one suggestion I would make. That is to make the use of the word "you" completely unparliamentary, and if a member stands up and says "you", he should be told to sit down.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I have a very brief question for the member for Gander—Grand Falls.

The number of members required to refuse consent, and this was put to you two or three times today in this House, to extend the hours past the normal adjournment is 15 under our present rules. It is proposed to increase that to 25.

When we were in opposition from 1984 to 1988, it was 25. There were 40 of us in opposition. The member for Gander—Grand Falls was there with me and he knows that it was difficult for us sometimes to get 25 members in the House. We are going back to that 25. Is that not what I would call an anti-democratic way of handling the smaller parties of this House? Is that not what I would call an anti-democratic way of handling the smaller parties of this House? Is that not the tyranny of the majority by asking those of us who have less to do more?

• (1700)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): It being five o'clock p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

Private Members' Business

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS—BILLS

[*English*]

CRIMINAL CODE AND SUPREME COURT ACT

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed from Thursday, December 6, 1990, consideration of the motion of Mr. Domm that Bill C-210, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Supreme Court Act (habeas corpus) be read the second time and referred to a legislative committee.

Mr. Girve Fretz (Erie): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak to Bill C-210 on the subject of Canada's extradition process as I was the seconder of the motion.

Extradition defined is the "handing over by one government to another government, upon the latter's request, of a person accused of or convicted of a crime in the requesting country."

Canada has entered into an extradition treaty or arrangement with 40 countries, including the United States. Our proximity to the U.S. underscores the importance of having an extradition agreement wherein fugitives fleeing from the U.S. into Canada and vice versa can be returned to the country where the alleged crimes took place and justice served. A fugitive must not be allowed to assume that by crossing a border into a foreign country that he has found a safe haven, free from prosecution.

Recently, Canadians were reminded of the alleged heinous crimes of Charles Ng, charged with the sex slayings of 11 people in California. We were reminded of these crimes because the families of the slain victims, the whereabouts of the remains of some of them are still unknown, came to Ottawa to request that the federal government extradite Ng to the U.S. so that he could be tried. I, along with others members of Parliament, met with these distressed families, at the invitation of the hon. member for Peterborough, the sponsor of the bill.

We are reminded as well, because on February 21, 1991 arguments were being presented before the Supreme Court of Canada as to whether or not Charles Ng and convicted killer Joseph Kindler should be extradited to the United States.

Canadians who have been following the case of Ng know that he fled to Canada illegally in 1985 and was then arrested in Calgary for shoplifting. Ng was sentenced to serve four and a half years in a Canadian federal penitentiary. Canadians have been awaiting a decision on Ng and Kindler since 1985. It has taken five and a half years of appeals to get this far.

Why are Canadians saddled with the presence and the cost of incarcerating these individuals? While Ng, under the present extradition treaty with the United States, cannot be surrendered to American authorities until he has served his sentence in Canada, most would argue that our extradition process is too slow and in need of significant modifications.

The member for Peterborough has introduced this bill which would provide for changes to the Extradition Act, the Criminal Code and Supreme Court Act to make extradition to the U.S. a speedier process. I support and encourage the thrust of his bill because it reduces the number of appeals available to a fugitive.

Fugitives like Ng have more judicial options and opportunities open to them than does a Canadian citizen who is accused of committing a crime here in Canada. Clearly, there is a grave danger that our extradition process is being taken advantage of by fugitives who see Canada as a haven from justice where they can avoid possible execution, as in the case of Ng, where in the state of California he could face the death penalty.

I would like to quote from *The London Free Press*, February 7, 1990.

> Capital punishment is a relevant issue. But while the death penalty has been abolished in Canada, that is no justification to impose our legal or social values on a neighbouring democracy, which guarantees fair and open trials.

These are surely the thoughts of the relatives of Ng's victims; after all, justice delayed is indeed justice denied. It is also the sentiments of 100,000 Canadian petitioners who are in support of my colleague and seatmate, the hon. member for Peterborough.

Bill C-210 will limit to one the number of appeals available to such fugitives prior to the case going before the Minister of Justice for a decision. Canada's extradition laws have not undergone any significant changes or a review for over a hundred years. This bill will reduce the number of processes and procedures currently at the disposal of an individual.

If these changes are instituted, a person attempting to fight an extradition order will only be entitled to the initial extradition hearing and one appeal to the relevant provincial court of appeal.

These amendments will effectively eliminate the fugitive's right to appeal the extradition by way of a writ of habeas corpus. It will also eliminate any possible appeal of the decision to the Supreme Court of Canada before the case goes before the Minister of Justice.

If these changes are adopted, the two court proceedings which will be available to the fugitive to argue his case will be as follows: first, an extradition hearing which is presided over by a superior or a county court judge will decide whether the fugitive should be committed to prison in view of the extradition; second, an appeal of the extradition judge's decision to the court of appeal in the applicable province.

Let us use the Ng case as an example of how these amendments then would be applied. With the amendments in place, Ng would have had only an initial extradition hearing and appeal of that decision to the Alberta Court of Appeal. Ng would not have been able to apply for a writ of habeas corpus, nor be allowed to ask the Supreme Court of Canada for permission to hear the case. After these two court proceedings, the case would then automatically go before the justice minister for a decision.

By eliminating these two steps, the time frame involved in an extradition case would be substantially reduced.

I want to conclude my remarks by saying to the House tonight that here we have an opportunity to let this bill go to a vote. I hope that as has happened previously the NDP will not continue the debate and will allow the House to vote on this very important bill.

Mr. Waddell: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. I want to put on record that it is not the members of the NDP who have spoken on the bill, it has been the government as well as some of the Liberals, but mainly government supporters. So please do not tell us falsehoods in the House, and check the debating time./

Mr. Fretz: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this same point of order. If that is the case, we will watch the clock closely and see who is the last member to speak in the House in this debate.

Mr. Riis: This is a very important issue and I just want to re-emphasize the point. I have just looked over the record and it seems that day after day when we debated this issue it has been members of the government that have been carrying on the debate.

Mr. Waddell: Right on. Right on.

Mr. Riis: Just to keep the record very factual, the overwhelming number of people who have "spoken out the bill" have been government members. Very few opposition members have spoken.

Mr. Nunziata: Mr. Speaker, the record is also clear, that the government and the Liberal opposition support the speedy passage of this private members' bill, and it is the NDP that opposes it.

Perhaps the House leader of the New Democratic Party could stand up and indicate whether his party supports the private members' bill that we are debating this afternoon. If that is the case, then we can end the debate right now and call the vote.

Some hon. members: Question.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I wish all honorable members could cooperate. I think all parties have expressed their opinion. Messages have been sent from either side, so that we could come back, as required by the rules, to the heart of the debate. Has the hon. member for Erie finished his speech? Resuming debate?

Some hon. members: Question! Question!

[*English*]

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston): Mr. Speaker, I have noted with interest that no member of the New Democratic Party rose to speak on this bill when you called for speakers. I suspect that when we near the hour of six o'clock, New Democratic Party members will rise in order to kill this bill, in order that it not proceed.

• (1710)

I do not intend to hold the bill up. A member of the New Democratic Party says that it is my intention to hold the bill up. That is not my intention.

I would simply indicate to members of the House that I support this bill. The Liberal Party supports this bill. The Liberal Party believes that the present extradition procedure is cumbersome. It is unacceptable. There are unacceptable delays within the extradition procedure and as an interim measure we would like to see this particular private members' bill passed in order to expedite the procedure.

We are dealing here with Bill C-210, which was introduced by the hon. member for Peterborough. This bill, in effect, would streamline the process. The explanatory note indicates that this amendment, which is an amendment to the Criminal Code and to the Supreme Court Act, would limit to one the number of recourses available to a fugitive committed to prison under the Extradition Act.

Under the rules of the House, this particular private members' bill is given an opportunity to be debated in the House. We are dealing with this bill at second reading stage. If no further member rises to further debate the bill at second reading stage, it is referred to a legislative committee. The legislative committee has the authority, the jurisdiction to call witnesses and to examine the bill.

If any political party opposes this bill or opposes any private members' bill, they can talk it out. In other words, an hour has been set aside. It is now 5.12. If no other member rises prior to six p.m., then the matter is put to a vote and the matter is referred to a legislative committee.

The government supports the bill. As I indicated we support the bill. The New Democratic Party is on record as opposing the bill. If I am in error, if I am wrong, then I am sure that once I have finished speaking, the New Democratic Party will correct the record.

As an hon. member has indicated, the Extradition Act has not been amended in over 100 years, notwithstanding the fact the extradition procedure in Canada is a cumbersome procedure. It allows for criminals to come to this country and, in particular, from the United States and

seek safe haven, knowing that the extradition procedures, as cumbersome and lengthy as it is, it is possible for a convicted criminal, let us say a convicted murderer to come to this country and to escape justice.

It is also possible for a suspected criminal, someone who could be suspected of a mass murder in the United States, for example, to come to Canada and avoid facing the music in the United States for a lengthy period of time because of the extradition procedure. The delays are unconscionable.

In Canada today we have two very celebrated cases, two high profile cases involving individuals from the United States who have come to Canada to seek save haven. They have used the extradition laws of this country in order to avoid facing due process in the United States. In particular, there is an individual in prison here in Canada who has been in prison for the last six years, one Charles Ng, who is suspected—he is not convicted— of having committed multiple murders in the State of California in the United States.

Six years ago that individual attempted a robbery in Alberta, was apprehended, convicted and sentenced to a period of incarceration in Canada. Since that time, the government of the State of California has sought the extradition of Mr. Ng to the United States in order to face trial for those murders, a far more serious crime than the crime that was committed here in Canada.

Given the procedures available to any individual, including Mr. Ng, here we are six years later and that individual has still not been subjected to due process in the United States. A trial has not yet taken place in the United States.

That is unacceptable and it is unconscionable. Justice delayed is justice denied.

Canadians, and in particular people living in the province of Ontario, will know of the Askov decision. The Supreme Court of Canada has said that if an accused person is not brought to trial within a reasonable period of time, then the state, or the Crown, could no longer prosecute, that these cases ought to be thrown out of court. In fact, thousands upon thousands of cases in the province of Ontario and elsewhere in this country have been dismissed because of the Askov decision, which says that because of lengthy delays involved in the prosecution of an offence, an individual is denied a fair trial.

That works both ways. If an individual, who might ultimately be held responsible for a serious crime, is not brought to trial within a reasonable period of time, the likelihood of the Crown being able to prove beyond a reasonable doubt, which is a very high standard indeed, and able to convince a jury beyond a reasonable doubt that the person is responsible for that crime, that likelihood is diminished. With the passage of time, memories fade, witnesses disappear, witnesses die, and it becomes that much more difficult to secure a conviction.

In the Ng case, the suspected crimes took place over six years ago. With every passing day, the State's case is weakened in the State of California. Is it any wonder that people like Charles Ng are using the Canadian judicial system in order to delay the trial in the State of California.

It is not acceptable. For that reason, I support and my party supports Bill C-210. I should point out that I am a member of the standing committee on justice and that the chairman of the standing committee on justice, the member for Mississauga West is also present in the House today. The standing committee on justice has considered the issue of extradition and has made recommendations to the government in order to streamline the procedure.

On November 23, 1990, the Minister of Justice indicated in a press release and in a statement in this House—in fact, it was a response to the report of the justice committee—that an extensive and major review of extradition law was under way.

That was three or four months ago. The government has been in office for over six years now, and I think Canadians can justifiably ask where is this much-needed legislation that would streamline the procedure, allow for due process and justice in cases where individuals come to this country and are suspected of having committed crimes in other jurisdictions, or have been convicted in other jurisdictions and have escaped to Canada.

I know that I have but a minute left in my submission. In view of the urgency of this particular matter, in view of the cases that will in future come before Canadian courts, I would ask all members to support this private member's initiative. Also I would ask members to try and convince the Minister of Justice to have the government

bring in other amendments that would streamline the procedure and make it that much fairer.

I would hope that prior to six p.m. today, a vote could be called at second reading stage and that the matter can be referred to the standing committee on justice. The standing committee on justice could then expedite consideration of this bill.

• (1720)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): On a point of order, the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam.

Mr. Waddell: Mr. Speaker, having spoken in this debate, I am not entitled to speak again, but I wonder if I could seek the unanimous consent of the House to pose a short question to the member.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Ian Waddell (Port Moody—Coquitlam): I wonder if the member would answer this. I am concerned that because the member for Peterborough's bill really drastically reduces the process, the extra number of extradition hearings, including removing the process of habeas corpus, which is an ancient part of British and Canadian law, does the hon. member not think that this would probably make the bill unconstitutional?

Mr. Nunziata: I do not believe that the bill is unconstitutional. The hon. member is a lawyer. He has his own legal opinion as to the constitutional validity of Bill C–210. He will have the opportunity, as will the Department of Justice and all other interested individuals, to make submissions before the justice committee as to the constitutionality of this particular bill.

The bill does streamline the procedure. It only makes common sense to allow an individual one hearing and several appeals, to the court of appeal in the province where the extradition hearing is held and ultimately an appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada. Under the present procedure there are a number of different avenues of appeal open to an individual that is subjected to the extradition procedure.

Surely any reasonable person, including the nine justices on the Supreme Court of Canada would agree that an individual should have one avenue of appeal. If a person is convicted of murder in Canada today they have an appeal to the court of appeal in the province in which they were convicted and a further appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada. No one is suggesting that the person should have a further avenue of appeal either to another country or to the Federal Court of Appeal. There should be one streamlined procedure. That is all we are suggesting.

If the member has an opportunity to speak again, we would like to know whether the New Democratic Party will allow this bill to get to committee, so we can more fully answer the question he put.

Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Southeast): Mr. Speaker, Canadians were shocked by revelations of the Charles Ng case as referred to by the member for York South—Weston and by my colleague, the member for Erie.

Charles Ng was captured in Calgary in July 1985 by a friend and constituent of mine, Sean Doyle. Mr. Doyle had little idea at the time of just who he was capturing when he apprehended Charles Ng.

Canadians have been frustrated by the extraordinary and extended delays in the extradition of Mr. Ng. The U.S. requested extradition of Charles Ng in February 1987. Still Ng remains, at the expense of Canadian taxpayers', harbouring this fugitive in Canada.

The case raised a lot of attention in Canada and a lot of people were upset by this ongoing process. Many of us followed the cause taken up by the member for Peterborough in championing this cause to expedite the extradition process in cases such as the Charles Ng case. Like many members here, I circulated petitions in my constituency to encourage revision and repeal of some of these extradition matters.

The hon. member for Peterborough proposed Bill C–210 which is before us in the House today. The intention of the Domm bill is to streamline Canada's extradition process which currently provides a multi–tiered system of appeals. Specifically, this bill attempts to limit one of the number of appeals available to a fugitive in an extradition case before the Minister of Justice renders a decision.

The objective of the bill, to avoid delays in handling requests for extradition, is clearly commendable, just what all those who signed petitions were demanding. No one wants to allow excessive delays in the extradition process which could turn Canada into a haven for fugitives who have been accused of serious crimes in other countries. On that matter I expect we will agree, having heard the media attention that the well–publicized extradition cases have received during the last year.

Beyond that, however, what we must seriously consider is how to best achieve the goal of sound and effective extradition law for Canada. Upon receipt of the hon. member's bill I asked the Department of Justice to examine its implications and the likelihood of achieving what we are attempting to do.

The Department of Justice advised that Bill C–210 would amend the Criminal Code to preclude appeals from decisions and applications for habeas corpus. At first glance the proposal appears to eliminate appeals to provincial courts of appeal and to the Supreme Court of Canada.

The reality of the bill is that behind the optimistic facade lurked grave dangers. When one goes beyond a superficial survey of Bill C–210 it quickly becomes apparent that the bill would create profound problems. Not only does the bill have the potential to exacerbate the problem of delay in extradition cases, it could have detrimental consequences which extend well beyond extradition cases.

Simply put, the bill is not what it seems to be and unfortunately does not accomplish what it was intended to do.

Allow me to provide some examples of the dire impact of passing Bill C–210 which on the face of it may seem to be what we have worked for, a positive response to the problem of delay. The bill appears to remove appeals from decisions concerning habeas corpus. However, these decisions would then become final decisions and according to section 40 of the Supreme Court Act, final decisions can be appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada if leave to appeal is granted by the court.

Therefore while the bill appears to remove two steps of appeal it opens up the possibility of a new level of appeal.

Furthermore, independent from appeals of judicial decisions in extradition cases, appeals of the decision of the Minister of Justice remain available.

I am trying to emphasize here that the appeal process in extradition matters is a delicate and complicated legal process. A slight legislative adjustment can create a ripple effect which impacts on related statutes, in some cases by opening up new avenues of appeal.

For example, Bill C–210 would repeal paragraph 39(a) of the Supreme Court Act. This amendment is simply supposed to be consequential to the amendments proposed to the Criminal Code. In reality the amendment would have serious negative results.

I am advised that Bill C–210 would remove a paragraph from the Supreme Court Act. That paragraph, however, is a particularly important paragraph because it removes two possible avenues of appeal that are created elsewhere in the act. Therefore, by removing that paragraph that prevents appeals in habeas corpus matters, the bill opens up two new appeal steps that are provided in sections 37 and 38 of the act. In other words two avenues of appeal would be open which do not currently exist. They are prevented at present by the paragraph that Bill C–210 would remove.

The Department of Justice informs me that another adverse consequence of the repeal of paragraph 39(9) of the Supreme Court Act is that it would not only aggravate present delays in extradition cases, the possibility of new delays extend beyond extradition cases.

It would not only open up the possibility of new appeal routes in extradition cases, but would also open up the same two avenues of appeal in any criminal case.

By creating new avenues of appeal that did not previously exist, Bill C–210 may increase the workload of the Supreme Court of Canada for all criminal cases and not simply extradition. Hence the bill which at first blush attempts to eliminate a single appeal route could have the opposite effect. It could create new avenues of appeal and have a far–reaching detrimental impact on the criminal justice procedures.

A further negative impact of the proposed amendments is that it could raise constitutional issues and be challenged in the courts on the basis of the Charter of Rights. Such challenges could increase the delays involved in the extradition process which would intensify the problem of delay which the bill professes to ameliorate. This demonstrates once again how the bill is not what it seems to be or what was intended.

Furthermore, Bill C–210 which purports to conclude appeals from habeas corpus decisions does not necessarily preclude such appeals. The bill allows for appeals in certain cases. There is an exception created by the bill; it allows for appeals arising from section 28 of the Extradition Act. This means that when a fugitive has not surrendered within two years after a habeas corpus

application the fugitive may appeal the habeas corpus decision. Therefore appeals from habeas corpus applications are not necessarily precluded by virtue of the proposed amendment.

• (1730)

Instead of facilitating extradition, Bill C–210 could result in fugitives being freed because the Crown also is left without the ability to appeal a habeas corpus decision. This could occur due to the fact that any arguments based on the Charter of Rights may be raised for the first time at the application for habeas corpus.

A judge at an extradition hearing does not have the authority to consider such arguments, given the nature of the proceedings. Consequently, if an error is made concerning a charter issue, or other legal issue, the appeals would not be available.

On one hand, if an error is made in favour of the fugitive, the fugitive may be released without any possibility of appeal by the Crown other than to the Supreme Court of Canada, if leave is granted by the court.

Of course, the fugitive might very well have left the country by the time the case is heard. Fugitives may be inappropriately released according to Bill C–210. On the other hand, if an error is made in favour of the Crown, the Minister of Justice may be faced with ordering the extradition of a fugitive on the basis of a questionable judicial decision.

By trying to plug a hole in the dike, Bill C–210 knocks down the dike. I trust that I have exposed the dangers in proceeding immediately with piecemeal amendments of limited effect to the extradition process such as Bill C–210.

It would be a grave error to adopt the bill which is not, unfortunately, what it seems and which, when closely examined, has unintended adverse effects. The bill in its present form is inadequate. It raises serious constitutional questions and is ineffective in streamlining the appeal process. Unattended ripple effects will undo the benefits the bill is trying to achieve.

In view of the complex nature of the appeal process for there to be sound and effective legislation, a comprehensive review which would fully examine all of the ramifications is required.

I am advised there is a comprehensive review currently under way which is considering a broad range of issues including, as its first priority, the means to streamline the present appeal process. In view of the ongoing review, it would be a mistake to adopt the bill now. It will not accomplish what it sets out to achieve.

Mr. Derek Blackburn (Brant): Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief. I just have a few remarks to make.

The previous speaker has simply vindicated the position of the New Democratic Party on this bill. We have not been standing in our place arguing against the government's attempt to get Ng back into the United States.

We do not want people like Ng to remain in Canada, but we have said consistently that this bill is just bad law. That is all there is to it. It is bad law. It is a bad bill that is badly written.

Frankly, I think it should be withdrawn.

What we have asked for in this Chamber is for the Minister of Justice to expedite her processes in her department to bring forward to this House a bill that is not only constitutional, but that is workable. That is what we want, and that is what we have been arguing.

The hon. member for Peterborough has tried to use this bill for cheap political purposes. He has tried to spread the word across the country that the New Democratic Party is soft on alleged criminals like Ng. That is what he has done consistently. He said that in committee, elsewhere and in this House.

What we are asking for is better legislation. If the hon. member for Peterborough wants this bill to go to committee, fine. He can have it today. I am going to sit down in about 30 seconds, and I hope nobody else stands up. We will let it go on division, but if you want to vote, fine.

I think the hon. member for Peterborough and the hon. member for Erie know now that it is a bad bill. It is badly written, and it should be withdrawn.

I am asking at this point in time if the hon. member for Erie, who spoke a few moments ago, is prepared on behalf of the hon. member for Peterborough to withdraw this bill. His own party wants him to withdraw it. His

government does not support the bill. It has made that abundantly clear. I do not know where we go from here.

I am going to put it squarely back on the lap of the hon. member for Erie or whoever else wishes to speak at this time. We have no intention of blocking this bill, and from proceeding further.

Mr. Horner: I do not know on what basis the hon. member states that this party does not support the bill. I believe that this bill should come to a vote right now and be referred to committee where it can be amended. I support the bill entirely. I do not think it is bad legislation. I want to say that the next speaker who stands up will have the voters to answer to because this is a bill that is sorely needed.

Some hon. members: Question.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Suzanne Duplessis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Science and Technology)): Mr. Speaker, I rise to commend the initiative of our colleague the member for Peterborough who is trying, with this Bill C-210, to expedite judicial proceedings for extradition.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I cannot support the approach taken to make such proceedings as expeditious as possible. Therefore, I cannot support this bill, however commendable the intentions of our distinguished colleague. I intend to use the few minutes I have to explain to the hon. members present what makes this initiative commendable and more particularly why I cannot support it.

Over the past few years, it has become clear that crime knows no border and that appropriate measures must be taken to prosecute criminals where they committed their crime. I am sure my colleagues will agree with me that when I say Canada should not assume the legal costs relative to crimes committed abroad by a fugitive.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, the fugitive suspected of having committed a crime in the United States, for instance, must be extradited to that country to be tried and, if convicted, serve his sentence there.

Modern means of transportation allow fugitives to easily cross borders and find refuge in a foreign country. Canada prides itself for its open style of government and the fact that all can travel freely in the country. It is quite easy to enter Canada since we promote foreign exchanges and do not go out of our way to make entering the country difficult. Our fellow citizens who would the first to complain about long line-ups at the border upon their return from abroad.

On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, this really makes it easy for a fugitive criminal to find refuge in our country and take advantage of the freedoms we cherish and all enjoy.

These past few months, we saw some fugitives come to Canada and try to prolong their stay as much as possible by using all sorts of legal appeals to delay the final decision regarding their return to the country requesting their extradition.

Therefore it became pretty obvious that we should try to limit the means of appeal and to avoid duplication and all the various levels which allow several years to go by between the extradition request and the time when the fugitive can be extradited.

So, Mr. Speaker, we try to keep our borders open while making sure that those who are foolhardy enough to take refuge in Canada will be promptly extradited. I am not unaware of the fact that appeals are necessary for justice to be done but also to appear to be done. I think it would be wrong to think of deporting someone by means of extradition without allowing this person to challenge the legal principles on which this extradition is based. However, we must keep a balance between repeated appeals and a complete lack of remedy.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, I consider bill C-210 as a very worthy initiative since its objective is obviously to speed up the appeal procedure in case of extraditions. The sponsors of this bill wanted to keep certain appeals possible while preventing others.

• (1740)

Unfortunately I cannot condone the approach taken in Bill C-210 because, in my humble opinion, it does not meet the desirable goal it had set. You have heard, Mr. Speaker, my colleagues try to explain the difficulties of revising the extradition appeal mechanisms. I have no intention of going back over this, except to say that I do recognize its validity.

Mr. Speaker, by trying to do away with certain extradition appeal mechanisms, we would create even greater difficulties which would make the extradition laws still uncertain for a long period, and this would of course

benefit those who want to use the laws to their advantage to take refuge as long as possible in Canada. Indeed, it is well known that uncertainty in the legislation fosters litigations which ultimately may have to be dealt with the Supreme Court of Canada. While these questions of principle are debated as they should be, many cases remain in abeyance. Surely, such a result is neither desired nor desirable.

I am confident, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Justice will be able to introduce in this House a bill dealing with this thorny issue of extradition appeals in the most orderly fashion possible. I understand that this legislation is in the makings and that this House will have the opportunity to examine it before long. This difficult issue must clearly receive special consideration by this House on a priority basis. However, I cannot agree with such a narrow approach as the one followed by Bill C-210 which would add new uncertainties to the act. Far from resolving the issue, Bill C-210 would be adding to the problem, and for this reason I cannot endorse it.

In closing I want to emphasize, Mr. Speaker, that our colleague's initiative should be commended by the members of this assembly and that it is more for technical reasons than because of the philosophy behind this legislation that I will have to vote against Bill C-210.

[*English*]

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park): Mr. Speaker, as you noticed, I did try to get the floor quite a few times. Because this is a private members' bill, I feel it is my place to express the views of my constituents on this bill. They have lobbied very hard that the government do something to change the legislation so that someone committing a crime in one country will not look for haven in Canada or in other countries. So my constituents of Parkdale—High Park want to fully support this bill.

I do not buy the nonsense that the government members are giving, that it is not a good bill. That is why this process is referring it to a legislative committee. That is where all the kinks will be worked out. Anyone who will get up now and speak against this bill just to kill time should search his or her conscience and should report back to their constituents, because the message I am getting from my constituents is: "You politicians do something about this". They are fed up with criminals like Ng taking refuge in Canada.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed

Some hon. members: On division.

Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a legislative committee.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Does the House agree to call it 6 o'clock?

I give the floor to the hon. member for York Centre.

Mr. Kaplan: Mr. Speaker, you know that there are three questions to be raised, requiring three answers.

I am here, but I do not know if the person to answer them has already arrived or even if the others who come before me are already here as well to make their statements.

PROCEEDINGS OF ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[*English*]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

AIRPORTS

Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I am privileged, as I always am, to rise this evening in debate on the adjournment proceedings.

On May 15, 1990, I rose in this Chamber on a question in an area of great interest to me, my constituents and to

many Canadians. The question I asked was in response to the series of tours the Minister of Transport undertook of federal airports at the time of his appointment to that portfolio.

The minister was interested in examining Canada's major airports with a view to not only learning about the capacities of the facilities, but of examining the problems with respect to air transportation of which, of course, there are many. However, no such action has been taken by the minister in relation to either solving air traffic problems or in developing an over all transportation system for the 21st century.

There have been many changes in the direction of air transport policies since I raised the issue a year ago. Negotiations into updating the 1974 bilateral air transportation agreement into an open skies agreement between Canada and the United States are set to begin this week here in Ottawa, which will significantly alter the way air transportation has managed in both Canada and the U.S.

While these negotiations will probably result in a new agreement that will bring increased air traffic into Canada, the government and the Department of Transport have not given consideration as to how they will deal with the problem. The shortage of air traffic controllers for one is well documented.

I believe that two things are essential in this debate. First, Pearson International Airport at Toronto is at maximum capacity and needs to have pressure taken off it. Second, Canada is a country built by transportation networks, first by sea and by rail, now in air transportation and, accordingly, Canada needs some kind of multi-modal system of transportation which will work effectively.

On the first point, I have suggested many times in this place that the government must consider alleviating pressure on Pearson International Airport by diverting some air traffic to Hamilton Airport. There are many reasons for diverting traffic from Pearson International and there are many more reasons why the traffic should be diverted to Hamilton.

As you may recall, because of three losses of separation incidents at Pearson which occurred within a month of each other, a cap was placed on the number of flights that could arrive and depart from the airport, commonly known as aircraft movements.

There are presently only 76 movements per hour allowed at Pearson. Such a situation developed, some analysts say, because of the lack of adequately trained air traffic controllers at the facility.

In addition, testimony from the investigation into the Dryden inquiry air crash indicates that because of delays on the runway at Pearson International during the winter months, planes which are de-iced risk the reoccurrence of ice buildup as they wait on the tarmac for take-off.

Transport Canada has acknowledged that it will deal with the problem by installing more de-icing machines, but the implications for tragedy are obvious. Pearson has outgrown itself. Terminal 3 has added another 24 gates to Pearson and proposed new runways promise increased traffic.

As the President of the Air Transportation Association of Canada noted: "Runways at Pearson have a finite limit. That limit has been reached."

• (1750)

Practically everyone but the Minister of Transport is convinced that what is needed in southern Ontario is a second principal airport to meet the needs of the region to take pressure off Pearson. In fact, in his annual report ending March 31, 1990, Auditor General Ken Dye criticized Transport Canada for failing to deal with deregulation and for funding the network of airports in Canada without clear rationale.

One way to rationalize the system is to develop a network of transportation that meets the needs of the future. In addition, the Federal Environmental Assessment Review Panel charged with studying the environmental implications of new runways at Pearson stated that Transport Canada lacks a master plan to deal with the system of airports in southern Ontario and questioned whether it was appropriate for Transport Canada to be building new runways in the absence of such an over-all master plan. The review panel suggested to Transport Canada that it develop such a plan and consider the roles of other airports in the region.

This is the same view I have taken since having the privilege of becoming a member of Parliament and serving as a member of the transport committee.

In 1989 I chaired a task force meeting in Hamilton at the airport to examine its capacity to accept increased

traffic from Pearson. Hamilton airport has all of the basic infrastructure necessary to handle more air traffic.

When I hear the distant rumblings from the Department of Transport about building a new airport at Pickering or Buttonville, I cannot imagine why. Building a complete facility with all of the necessary modern components would cost hundreds of millions of dollars and would be a waste when all the region needs is improvements at Hamilton.

Even in a Transport Canada study Hamilton airport was shown to be the best alternative, priority number one, to Pearson International over Toronto Island, Buttonville, Oshawa and Downsview. The government may scoff at the idea of a second principal airport in the region, but by looking at many similar situations in cities across the world, we seem to be the only one saying that bigger is better.

For example, one analyst explained that Hamilton airport was unacceptable to handle more traffic than Pearson because it was too close. On the contrary, Hamilton is only 70 kilometres from Pearson, but that is much farther than the mere 16 kilometres that separates two of the world's busiest airports, JFK and Laguardia in New York. They transfer between each other by road for connecting flights.

Then there is the example in California. Passengers transfer between San Francisco International and Oakland International by both road and rail to catch connecting flights. Passengers also connect from San Jose from San Francisco, meaning that there are actually three principal airports in that region.

In conclusion, airline passengers are looking for alternatives. The alternatives are that there are other ways in which this government can help to establish a rational system in this densely populated area of southern Ontario which will see positive effects right across the country, a second principal airport and a multi-modal approach to travel between them and right across this country.

Mr. Benno Friesen (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada)): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member from Hamilton poses a very important question for him as a member for the region. He suggests that the Hamilton airport be a second major airport in the region.

I wonder if he has considered at least two very important questions in posing that as a solution for what he says is the large number of people who want to use that as a passenger terminal. One, if the air carriers themselves do not want to land there, or have not suggested they want to land there, how does he propose to divert the flights from Air Canada or CP to Hamilton if they do not want to go there? Does he want to have compulsory landing patterns or instructions for those airlines so that they have to land in Hamilton whether they want to use Pearson or not?

They may want to land at Pearson, but they have got to go to Hamilton. Is it going to be another Mirabel pattern? Is that what he is proposing? And if he is going to make it compulsory, for whom? Is it going to be Air Canada? Is it going to be Canadian, or is it going to be feeders? How does he propose to handle the whole matter of choice for the airlines if all of them want to go to Pearson, and presumably that is where the passengers want to go? How is he going to divert them to Hamilton? That is a legitimate question and he has not dealt with that.

The second question is what about the neighbours to Hamilton, his neighbours in Ancaster? I understand and I have here a clip from his own local newspaper, *The Hamilton Spectator*, of May 24, 1990. The headline reads: "Ancaster may sue regional Hamilton airport nuisance". Are the people of Ancaster going to be happy with having increased traffic and landings at Hamilton?

I think those are two legitimate questions that we can ask the member if he has given thought to them. But it would be wrong to leave the impression that I think the member inadvertently left and that is that the minister has been ignoring the fact of Hamilton airport. In fact, the airport receives an annual subsidy for operations and maintenance which amounted to $700,000 in 1989, and $1 million in 1990. The facilities at Hamilton have also been upgraded and expanded by the department, including a $65 million program in 1987, and a $900,000 project to extend the regional trunk sewer in 1990, thereby increasing the airport development capacity. A $1.5 million program for apron and taxiway expansion was completed in 1990, and a $2.5 million modification to the air terminal building is virtually completed.

When you have those kinds of expenditures, you cannot say that the minister has been ignoring.

One more point, Mr. Speaker. I know he has raised questions about the ILS on runway 06. Yet the regional municipality has accepted the decommissioning of the ILS. It should be noted that it does not degrade the available level of service as an ILS is available on the 8,000 foot runway.

I think that the member, in order to be fair, ought to concede that the minister has been giving due attention and we ought to let the airlines do some choosing as to which facilities they want to use.

HARBOURFRONT CORPORATION

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, like the previous speakers, I am very happy to have a chance to expand on some points that are really hard to make in the context of Question Period and the issue about which I am glad to have this extra time is the developments at Harbourfront in the city of Toronto.

Harbourfront had a somewhat controversial launching, but there is absolutely no doubt that it is a very valued asset in Toronto today, something appreciated by the people to the point where traffic jams on weekdays and weekends are more the issue than lack of use.

There have been problems with Harbourfront. Its policies have been criticized, but none of them have been criticized as much as the criticism of the federal government's proposed solution to the problems at Harbourfront.

We rose in December to ask some questions about the government solutions to the Harbourfront problem and we certainly did not receive satisfactory answers. The minister told us that the mayor of the city of Toronto was happy about the solution of Harbourfront. He failed to mention that of the 16-member council only one member, the mayor, was happy about it. All the other members of council had objected to the imposed solution of the federal government and, in fact, as I rise now we are awaiting one further study—maybe one study too many—of what the solution to the Harbourfront problem should be.

I do not have a whole solution fleshed out to put forward. It is not the function of the opposition to do so, but I want to draw attention to the serious problems with the government's so-called solution and I ask these questions in the spirit that three months later, almost four months later, that have elapsed since the question was asked, the government may well have come to recognize the problems with its so-called solutions.

This is a solution by the way which will result in the federal government, which once owned at the beginning when Harbourfront was established, 100 acres of land. Now at the end of it, if this solution is implemented fully, the government, the Harbourfront non-profit corporation, will only own 10 acres of land.

• (1800)

We are giving the park back to the people. We are going from a federal landholding of over 100 acres to a federal government landholding of 10 acres. We have complained that the cultural and recreational programming, which the government says it guarantees will continue, will in fact not be guaranteed.

There is not enough funding provided to ensure that these programs will continue. The government has made a commitment to maintain that programming, but the funding that they have provided will not do it.

It needs a better solution. It wants to pass the burden to the city of Toronto to sustain this programming, but the programming could be sustained by the use and development for commercial and other purposes of the rest of the land.

The second problem that I want to focus on is that instead of using the surrounding land to its full economic advantage for the programming at Harbourfront, the government is basically embarking on a program which gives it away.

Naturally, there is going to be some consideration paid for it by the private developers who are going to be acquiring some of this 100 acres of land. Coopers and Lybrand, an independent appraising firm which did an appraisal of it, found that the land that the corporation is disposing of to private developers in return for what we call the pipeline land is the land that is on the south side of Queen's Key and actually facing the water. It is actually worth $36 million more than the federal government is going to be getting for the favours that it is giving in return.

In other words, $36 million which might have been available for funding of the Harbourfront programming is instead being transferred to private developers. When I raised that question with the minister, you will not believe what he said in reply to me. He said: "We had to pay a premium to get that land back from the private

developers to whom long-term leases had been given by the former Harbourfront board."

I asked the question: "Why should the federal government pay a premium to get land back?", meaning pay more than it is worth. The federal government has the power to expropriate land. If the owners of these leasehold interests do not want to sell them back to the government at fair market value, instead of arranging to give them a premium, more than fair market value, the federal government has the recourse of taking the land back and having the court determine what a fair value is.

I think a fundamental error has been made in moving from dealing with land at fair market value to paying premiums to developers to get land back that it is determined should be put back into recreational and other activity related uses for Harbourfront.

I also feel—we raised this in our questions—that it is a mistake to give fee simple, that is, permanent ownership of this land to developers. The way in which the former Harbourfront board of directors was proceeding was to just give long-term leases. Eventually, these interests would revert to the people of Canada.

After the period when I asked my question took place, the board of Harbourfront, the members of which were all appointed by the federal government, refused to adopt the solution that the federal government is trying to impose. It refused to play ball with the government in allowing this transfer to take place. Even though they were federal appointees and good Tories, they refused to go along with it.

The government had to wait for the term of office of the Harbourfront directors to expire and then appoint nominal people who were committed to the government's agenda and to their transitional program to try to carry out this unpopular solution which is no solution because it will not work.

Hopefully, today we will be able to hear that the government is at least waiting for the city of Toronto's report and will not proceed with the program which we were so critical of last December.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Nicole Roy-Arcelin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, the new approach to the management of Toronto's harbourfront announced last November by the Minister of Public Works is a fair, intelligent and progressive solution to a rather complex problem. It is the result of months of consultations with many interested organizations. It shows the foresight, imagination, and sustained effort of many groups and individuals.

The most important feature of this new plan is that it will give the Toronto waterfront back to Torontonians. As David Crombie recommended, all new construction south of Queen's Quay-West must cease, with the possible exception of small buildings that the city considers to be in the public interest. From now on, this area will contain only public land and buildings. It will be given over to Torontonians and the many visitors who go there every year.

Under this new plan, a public charitable foundation will be set up to fund the very popular, cultural, recreational and educational programs of the new Harbourfront Corporation.

This will allow its new programs to be put of a sound financial basis enabling the Harbourfront Corporation to plan activities more freely and with confidence in the future.

Mr. Speaker, the plan being implemented reflects the remarquable consensus arrived at by those who formulated it. It reflects the opinion of the hon. David Crombie who, for over two years, has been playing a major role in defining what lays ahead for the Toronto waterfront. The key elements of this plan were first set out in August 1989 in the first interim report of Mr. Crombie's Royal Commission on the future of the Toronto waterfront. This plan also contains ideas expressed in the study Mr. Duncan Allan, the Premier of Ontario's advisor on the development of the Toronto waterfront, commissioned by of the Ontario government. Throughout the development of this plan, there were consultations with the City of Toronto, including the mayor, the aldermen and representatives from various municipal services as well as with the Toronto Urban

Community. Discussions are ongoing concerning the implementation of this plan.

Mr. Speaker, it is unusual for such a complex question issue to be endorsed with such unanimity considering the many organizations involved. In this case, it is really no wonder, since it is generally recognized that this plan will mark the beginning of a new and better era for Harbourfront. In this context, the people of Toronto and the millions of people who visit the city will benefit from a more accessible waterfront, more parks and recreation facilities as well as a cultural and educational program, the funding of which will be guaranteed.

[*English*]

FISHERIES

Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso): Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to give voice to the tremendous frustration felt by the 6,500 residents of the island of Isle Madame, which lies off the southeast coast of Cape Breton Island in my riding of Cape Breton Highlands—Canso.

This frustration stems from a series of decisions taken by the Minister of Fisheries last December. One such decision reduced the offshore share of the cod quota in 4T–VN by 9 per cent, from 53,000 tonnes to 48,000 tonnes.

Isle Madame and its 6,500 residents are particularly reliant on one fishery, located in Petit De Grat, on Isle Madame, namely Richmond Fisheries, which happens to be the sole employer in Petit De Grat.

Imagine the horror of the people of Isle Madame upon learning last December that the Minister of Fisheries had reduced the enterprise allocation for Richmond Fisheries in 4T–VN, not by 9 per cent but by 37 per cent of the total allowable catch.

Since that time, the residents of Isle Madame and of Petit De Grat have asked one question of the Minister of Fisheries: Why? Why have you singled us out? Why are you putting at risk our very way of life?

Since that time the Minister of Fisheries has maintained a stony, almost contemptuous silence, as if to say "I don't owe you an explanation, I am the minister".

Since that time, I have risen in the House time and time again, asking the Minister of Fisheries for an explanation and asking him to reverse this disastrous decision for the sake of the people of Isle Madame. He has either been unwilling or unable to provide an adequate explanation for his actions.

• (1810)

The last time I rose in the House on this issue was on Friday, March 15. That morning, Richmond Fisheries announced that it was tying up two of its four trawlers, putting 26 trawlermen out of work. The minister was not in the House at the time, but his parliamentary secretary responded to my question.

The parliamentary secretary conceded that, "the effects on Richmond Fisheries and so many others, are unfortunate, but they are in the long-term interest of all those who depend on the fishery."

It is indeed unfortunate that neither the minister nor his parliamentary secretary have provided an adequate explanation to either Richmond Fisheries or the people of Isle Madame as to why this company was singled out for a 37 per cent cut in its enterprise allocation, nor have they even attempted to.

I wrote to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans on January 7 asking him for an explanation of why he had taken this action. I also pointed out to him that his action was in violation of his own management plan, specifically principle 10. I have yet to receive a reply from him to my letter, or an explanation as to why he has chosen to violate his own plan.

On December 18 of last year I rose in the House of Commons to question the minister of fisheries on the subject of these cuts and their potential impact on the people of Isle Madame. I asked the minister then if he realized that he risked forcing Richmond Fisheries out of business. I also asked him that as the sole employer in Petit de Gras why he did not provide the people of this village an explanation beforehand.

Did the minister believe that the community was not worth saving. In the minister's response, he did not even mention the people of Petit de Gras nor Isle Madame, nor did he provide me or the people most affected with any sort of explanation.

At a time when Canadians in every part of the country are fed up with the way their views are ignored, and with the seeming inability of their elected officials to represent their concerns, could there be any greater symbol of that widespread discontent than the minister of fisheries' refusal to listen to the people of Isle Madame and the representations of Richmond Fisheries. These people want an explanation from the minister. The minister has

simply not bothered to respond, most probably because he does not have an adequate explanation for his actions.

To virtually ignore the people of Isle Madame, to refuse to listen to their heartfelt concerns about the survival of their community and their way of life, represents the most dangerous form of arrogance and self-satisfaction on the part of the minister of fisheries.

In their communication with the minister the representatives of Richmond Fisheries and the people of Petit de Gras and Isle Madame have shown a tremendous degree of restraint. At a time when they could be angry and contemptuous of the minister, they have remained cool and collected. They have done so, because they realize the continued existence of their community may depend on their ability to convince this minister that he is dead wrong and that the results of his folly could be catastrophic.

Let me quote from correspondence sent to the minister by a community action committee in Petit de Gras, formed for the reasons I have just cited.

In a letter dated February 22, they write in the most plain and simple language as follows: "Our economic welfare is at stake and its fate is in your hands. The 1991 management plan, should it remain as it is, will destroy the economy of Isle Madame. We are not asking, Mr. Minister, for gifts of money, nor are we asking for make-work projects or grants or assistance packages".

Indeed they are not. They are asking for an enterprise allocation for Richmond Fisheries which is more in line with the total allowable catch for the 4T-VN region. Is this asking very much? Why is the minister doing this to Richmond Fisheries and to the people of Isle Madame? Again, I quote from the community action committee's correspondence:

> We submit to you, Mr. Minister, that Richmond Fisheries is the model for the survival of the industry. On the capacity issue, look at the number of destructive bottom drag licences they have taken out of the fishery. Look further at their total compliance and agreement in stock-preserving cuts that have been applied to certain troubled quotas. Study carefully the rate of observer coverage maintained by Richmond Fisheries and compare it to any other element in the 4T-VN fishery. Seek out, if you can, any other operation which has an in-house, totally reserved, D.F.O. inspection team.

Richmond Fisheries is a model for the industry to follow, and yet it is being forced to tie up its trawlers and lay off its employees simply because the minister, for some unknown reason, has it in for them. Why? Why does he seem to harbour a grudge against Richmond Fisheries? They and the people of Isle Madame who rely on Richmond Fisheries have shown the minister courtesy time and time again.

The minister has taken this disastrous decision in contravention of his own management plan, in contravention of all available scientific evidence and despite the urgent and reasonable appeals made by Richmond Fisheries and the people of Isle Madame for him to consider.

Mr. Benno Friesen (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada)): Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the hon. member that it may be that the answer given by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans or by myself may not be the one that the members in his community of Richmond or Isles Madame are looking for or can provide comfort to them. That may be. That is not to say, though, that the minister has ignored them or that he is arrogant or that he has singled them out.

I think it is grossly unfair for the member, who I think understands, to accuse the minister just because he cannot provide the kind of an answer he wants. He is accusing him of ignoring them or of being arrogant or having other things to do. I do want to provide an answer. Again, it may not be the answer that the constituents whom he represents are looking for, especially in the short term. I do think it is the answer in the long term.

The 1991 groundfish management plan has provided a reasonable balance between the conservation of the resource and stability for participants in the industry and for the economy of Atlantic Canada. The total allowable catch, the TAC for the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence cod in are 4T-VN, January to April portion was reduced from 53,000 tonnes in 1990 to 48,000 tonnes in 1991 and 43,000 tonnes for the years 1992 and 1993.

The decision to reduce the TAC for this stock was based on scientific information which suggests that most of the cod harvested in the deep waters of 4-VN during the period January to April originate from 4-T. The reduction in the offshore share was undertaken to preserve the cod stock at 4-T, as 4-VN, JA and 4-T are both part of one large cod stock.

The decision to reduce the offshore share of this stock does not violate Principle 10 of the groundfish management plan. This stock is now under multi-year management. Over the next three years, 1991 through 1993, the TAC will decrease by more than 15 per cent. Under such conditions, guidelines in the groundfish management plan state that adjustments to the inshore-offshore ratio can be considered.

The effects on Richmond Fisheries are unfortunate, but the decision taken was part of the groundfish management plan for 1991. These decisions are based on the long-term interests of all those who depend on the fishery. For the cod stock in question the quota sharing arrangement between fleet sectors has not been decided upon for the final two years, 1992 to 1993, of the plan.

Departmental scientists are closely monitoring the fishery and should biological indicators suggest a change in the TAC, this advice will be considered. For 1991, an additional 500 tonnes of 4-VWX redfish will be available to Houston Fisheries as a result of the removal of 4-VWX redfish from the groundfish developmental program in 1991. This fish could potentially be processed at the Richmond plant.

For fishermen, plant workers and communities affected by quota reductions and stock depletion, the Government of Canada has developed the Atlantic Fisheries Adjustment Program. This program has elements which will help rebuild fish stocks to ensure an abundant resource base in the future, provide adjustments to current realities through assistance to plant workers and trawlermen and economic diversification within the fishery and for fishery dependent communities affected by quota reductions and stock depletion.

Unfortunately, there is not a magic wand to make fish appear or reappear. This government is very sympathetic to those who are suffering from the effects of lower quotas. This government has taken measures that are responsible and sensitive, conservation for a sustainable and viable future and a comprehensive adjustment program for Atlantic Canada.

I hope the member and the members of his community will appreciate the fact that conservation is a very important ingredient in the management scheme, so that the people in his community in the long-term can have the livelihood they so richly desire and deserve.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at two o'clock p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

The House adjourned at 6.20 p.m.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, April 10, 1991

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S.O. 31

[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Gabriel Desjardins (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, on April 5 Environment Canada released a report on the levels of dioxins and furans found in stream and marine deposits in the vicinity of 47 paper mills using chlorine bleaching agents. This report shows very clearly that Canadian paper manufacturing companies that use such an agent discharge these extremely toxic chemicals in the environment, in our rivers in particular Several of these pulp and paper industries are located in Quebec and in the Abitibi–Témiscamingue region, including Domtar in Lebel–sur–Quévillon and Tember in Témiscamingue.

So, Mr. Speaker, I urge the Minister of the Environment to put out regulations as soon as possible concerning these industries in order to eliminate dioxins and furans and put an end to this daily contamination of our environment, especially our rivers.

* * *

[*English*]

CANADA POST

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, at this opportunity I rise to condemn Canada Post for continuing to turn its back on the needs of Canadians. Under the direction of this government, hundreds of rural communities are losing their post offices and post office boxes are being removed from outside senior citizens' residences. While the post office spends millions of dollars changing its uniforms and logos so as to remove any mention of Canada, hundreds of community newspapers have been forced out of business by increased postal rates.

Canada Post must have a goal to serve Canadians. The post office helped to build this country and bind it together. It is truly a shame that the words and concepts of service and of bringing Canadians together are no longer important to Canada Post or this government.

* * *

FISHERIES

Hon. William Rompkey (Labrador): Mr. Speaker, Northern Ocean Resources, a consortium of fish companies in Labrador, has asked the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans for a 7,000 tonne allocation of cod and turbot off the Labrador coast. These companies, the largest of which are co–ops, represent all the fishermen and all the plant workers in Labrador. This allocation is urgently needed and absolutely essential to keep in operation the plants on which these people depend.

This is virtually a matter of economic life or death for the Labrador coast. These native people have lived there for centuries and their livelihood depends almost wholly and solely on fishing. They are closest to the resource, they have historic dependence and they have rights.

It would be the height of political immorality for the Government of Canada to grant fishing rights in that area to French ships while denying a quota to Labrador people. They desperately need, they unquestionably deserve, and they unequivocally demand their rightful share of offshore cod and turbot.

I trust the minister of fisheries will act with fairness and justice and say "yes" to the request. And as the season is fast approaching, he should do so immediately.

S.O. 31

CANADA POST

Mr. Gilbert Parent (Welland—St. Catharines—Thorold): Mr. Speaker, it has come to my attention that Canada Post is thinking of closing the Thorold post office.

It disturbs me that none of this was discussed with the workers or the union officials. The minister responsible has not come forward openly to my constituents to tell them of these plans. Why must this degenerate into a situation where my constituents must try to ascertain the facts from rumours and half truths only hinted at by local management? The hon. minister should be above such cloak and dagger methods.

I come to the point. My party and I are most adamantly opposed to such a move. The Thorold post office has been in operation for 40 years. The level of service has been exemplary. The workers have been able to provide many services that were not available to people in many larger communities. Here we are, faced again with the destruction of small town Canada, the backbone of this nation. We will have more centralization, higher prices, more line-ups and less service. This scenario is just not good enough for my constituents.

This move was attempted four years ago by this government. My constituents are as incensed now as they were then. I say again, do not close the Thorold post office.

* * *

REFUGEES

Mr. Harry Chadwick (Bramalea—Gore—Malton): Mr. Speaker, the region of Peel is breaking under the strain of providing welfare for the largest refugee population in all of Canada, and they are getting no relief from government.

Well over a dozen reports have been developed by the region and have been submitted to all levels of government requesting that a way be found to accelerate the process of refugee determination so that refugees may then have the freedom to seek work and support themselves.

Every year, the region finds the burden of providing welfare services a greater and near impossible responsibility. The region is justifiably confused. What is its obligation under the general welfare act to provide for an increasing number of refugees who must use overburdened welfare services to survive? More importantly, should the regional government have to pay while the government tries to improve the system?

I urge the government to work closely with the regions and the provinces to find a better solution now before the system becomes irreparable.

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[*Translation*]

LABOUR RELATIONS

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, an agreement was signed this week, with Premier Bourassa in attendance, by the management of the Korean company Sammi-Atlas and representatives from the CNTV to allow the investment of half a billion in Tracy, Quebec.

This special agreement could have major significance not only for labour relations, but also for the future of the Quebec economy.

Over the past several months, the Quebec Minister of Industry and Commerce, Gérald Tremblay, set out on a mission to convince people of the merits, benefits and necessity of a new social contract in Quebec.

The union approved a six-year collective agreement whereby in three years' time, only salaries will be on the table for negotiation avoiding the possibility of a strike or a lockout, while the company is committed to invest in manpower training and to set up a joint committee on training.

A big cheer for the people of Tracy!

* * *

[*English*]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is carrying out a scorched earth policy against the CBC. He has finally shown his true disdain for our public broadcaster by appointing John Crispo to the CBC board of directors.

Mr. Crispo, as we know, has repeatedly shown his contempt for the CBC, and by his appointment can only hope to wreak further havoc.

All Canadians are threatened by this thoughtless and irresponsible decision which gives obvious preference to a Conservative supporter from central Canada.

Canadian media, officials and citizens have adamantly protested the recent cuts to the CBC. These people are now watching a continuing government vendetta to kill the CBC from the inside.

It is time that someone stops this barrage of hatred against our national institutions. It is time that this government provided the CBC with the money to do the job properly. And it is definitely time to remove John Crispo from the board that he was put on without any consultation.

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NATIONAL GALLERY

Mr. Felix Holtmann (Portage—Interlake): Mr. Speaker, the meat dress at our National Gallery is placing our artistic community in the slaughterhouse.

Politicians across the country have been barbecued for acting like hot dogs over the dress, and have been the butt of some criticism on the matter. Newspaper columnists have turned critics of the steak apparel into hamburger and many have been roasted for daring to question the appropriateness of meat art.

The issue is not whether or not tainted meat on a hanger is art or simply beef jerky.

The average Canadian who is concerned about bringing home the bacon sees the sausages who run the National Gallery as living too high on the hog. While the gallery openly displays its rib-eyes, some Canadians in soup kitchens remain picking over the bones.

• (1410)

Mr. Speaker, the good book says that you cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, but a Canadian artist has now proved that you can make a dress out of $300 worth of flank steak.

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COMMUNICATIONS

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, all Canadians should know that conflict of interest still exists. This government will just never learn. On March 5, Telesat Canada, a virtual Crown corporation with Canadian taxpayers as 52 per cent shareholders, filed a secret appeal asking cabinet to ride roughshod, by granting higher rates than the CRTC had granted.

So far, we have uncovered at least three cases of conflict; first, senior government officials are party to this appeal, as Telesat board members, while they also act supposedly as unbiased senior advisors to Cabinet. Second, in reviewing this appeal, the government could manipulate the value of Telesat shares to suit its announced privatization plan.

But it gets better. Third, Telesat has coincidentally, just days after filing its appeal, hired prominent Conservatives Bill Jarvis, former PC party president, Bill Fox, the PM's former press attaché, among others, to help persuade their former bosses, the cabinet, to up Telesat's rates.

Does the Prime Minister not recognize these glaring cases of conflict of interest? Will the Prime Minister end these conflicts today and have this review sent to a more appropriate forum, the CRTC or the Federal Court? In all decency, will the Prime Minister do just that?

* * *

[*Translation*]

CONSERVATIVE MEMBERS FROM QUEBEC

Mr. Nic Leblanc (Longueuil): Mr. Speaker, in 1981, the Liberal members from Quebec were called gutless and sheep. That is inaccurate and unfair to them. When you are a member of a Canadian caucus, your only option is to keep quiet. You must avoid shocking and disturbing the members from other provinces. The Conservatives from Quebec are in the same situation. Today I found a name for them: the quiet ones from Quebec in Ottawa. I say that without malice. The Conservatives from Quebec work hard. They are preparing all sorts of constitutional projects. But when the time comes to talk about them, they are very quiet. I admit that the Conservative members from Quebec have the right to say nothing, but I doubt that is an effective way to defend Quebec's interests in Ottawa.

S.O. 31

[*English*]

NATIONAL UNITY

Hon. Alan Redway (Don Valley East): Mr. Speaker, fundamental to Canadian unity are the issues of language and culture.

French speaking Canadians believe that Canada is a sacred contract between two founding peoples, French and English. More and more English speaking Canadians believe that this concept fails to recognize the legitimate place of native Canadians and the growing number of Canadians whose heritage is neither French nor English.

Can we reconcile these dramatically differing points of view? I believe we can if we face reality; the reality of a country in which English speaking Canadians are concentrated outside Quebec but also live in Quebec; in which French speaking Canadians are concentrated in Quebec but also live elsewhere in Canada, and in which native Canadians and Canadians whose heritage is neither English nor French live everywhere in Canada.

This reality defines the fundamental characteristics of our country. The reality makes not one part, not each part, but rather our entire Canadian nation, a distinct society.

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FORESTRY

Mr. Réginald Bélair (Cochrane—Superior): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Forestry tabled the first annual report to Parliament on the state of forestry in Canada.

I found the report to be somewhat misleading. It leaves the reader with the impression that our forests are in good shape. I believe that the figures in the report understate the problems of reforestation. The report emphasizes the progress and the laudable efforts that have been made in the last 10 years but seems to have forgotten that some 220,000 hectares of harvested forest land has not been sufficiently restocked.

Even though the net growing volume of our forest capital increased by 2.5 per cent between 1976 and 1986, Canada's productive forest land has decreased by 4.7 million hectares an area almost the size of Prince Edward Island.

I recognize the minister's good intentions. Yet, I also sympathize with him for not having the budget to support the initiatives that should be taken today to ensure the sustainability of our forests. The fact remains that we still have a lot of work to do.

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BALTIC STATES

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park): Mr. Speaker, on our recent visit to the Baltic states and Moscow, our parliamentary delegation was assured by an advisor to President Gorbachev that negotiations with the Baltic states, which had been stalled for five months, would resume.

Five days ago the Soviet and the Lithuanian negotiation teams went back to the negotiation table. Yesterday morning in Lithuania, Soviet troops moved in and began the occupation of a driving school, part of which was being used to house the national defence department of the democratically elected Lithuanian government in Vilnius.

This is not negotiation in good faith. The international community must not sit idly by while intimidation tactics are used and the rights of a democratically elected government are being violated.

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MEMBER FOR VERDUN—SAINT-PAUL

Mr. Garth Turner (Halton—Peel): Mr. Speaker, yesterday afternoon in this Chamber we all heard the words of the hon. member from Verdun—Saint-Paul as he informed us he was leaving the Bloc Quebecois to rejoin the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada.

As an English speaking Canadian member of this House, I rise to salute the courage of the member in this most difficult decision. I rise to thank him. These kinds of actions by this kind of person will, in the end, help us save Canada.

All of us in this House, outside of the remaining few dwindling members of the separatist Bloc Quebecois, stand for a united, free and strong Canada.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, my friend Gilbert!

[*English*]

But you cannot have your office back.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*English*]

DE HAVILLAND

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

In 1985, this government said it sold de Havilland of Toronto to Boeing for $90 million. In fact, by the time the deal was completed, Boeing got de Havilland free, plus $60 million in cash. We said then it was a bad deal and we still believe it was a bad deal.

Boeing has now announced it has sold de Havilland to companies controlled by the governments of Italy and France.

Will the Prime Minister tell us what action he is taking to prevent a bad deal for Canada from becoming a disaster for Canada? Can he assure us that these high technology jobs will be kept for the workers of Canada?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, obviously I will not start today by discussing the figures mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition because it would be very easy to contradict what he said. I just want to say that Aerospatiale in France and Alenia from Italy have reached an agreement with Boeing. We will be made aware of any proposal that is submitted to Investment Canada and at that time will apply the appropriate rules governing such a transaction. We will then be in a position to comment on something which is not at the present time a reality.

I would ask the Leader of the Opposition to just follow the rules of Investment Canada and wait for the proposal.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would tell the minister that we want action immediately, not to wait until all is lost before being able to ask questions. He knows very well that transportation and aviation are important industries for the Canadian economy, especially for the province of Quebec. He should also know that dozens and dozens of companies sell goods and services to de Havilland in Toronto. So can the minister seriously tell us that he believes that the governments of France and Italy will give priority to Canadians' jobs instead of taking those jobs back to Europe?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, I am always pleased and eager to follow up the comments of the Leader of the Opposition when he talks about the aerospace industry in Quebec. Canadair is another company privatized by the Conservative government and its president could assure the Leader of the Opposition that it is a wonderful success for Quebec.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Bouchard (Roberval): And, Mr. Speaker, can we overlook the announcement of $300 million for the Canadian Space Agency in Saint-Hubert—but the opposition leader must know that, despite his impatience, governments must work within the rules. And the rules say that companies acquiring a Canadian company must make an official application to Investment Canada. I tell him that once the official application is made and the company's business plan is submitted, we will be able to deal with the issue coherently and logically. Until then, you can frighten people as you are in the habit of doing, but that is not how we solve problems.

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to be able to answer the hon. minister that when the private sector let de Havilland and Canadair down and I was President of the Treasury Board, we were forced to take those companies back.

• (1420)

[*English*]

Now the same thing is about to happen. The private sector will cream the companies. They will go and the government in Canada will have to take these companies back. I think it is ludicrous for the minister to get up in this House today and tell Canadians that it will be the Government of France and the Government of Italy that keep high technology jobs in Canada.

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, we know the former government took over a lot of Canadian companies, but Canadians know of the disasters as well. They remember. We do not have to explain to Canadians what it means when the Liberal Party leads Canada in terms of the economy. They know the disaster very well.

I will repeat what I said. You can start a fear-mongering campaign in Canada. That is not what we say. We say: "Let us have a proposal. We will look at the proposal, and don't worry, we know how to manage Investment Canada."

Mr. Jim Peterson (Willowdale): Mr. Speaker, let us look at our record. Canadians have invested over $1 billion in the Dash-8 program and now the governments of Italy and France want to acquire de Havilland in order to enhance their own aerospace programs. What is more, on March 8 of this year the minister for industry said that he was prepared to consider financial assistance to those two governments to help them acquire de Havilland.

Some hon. members: What?

Mr. Peterson: Mr. Speaker, is it not time that this government stood up for Canadian industry and Canadian workers in the same way that the French and Italian governments stand up for theirs?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend makes an interesting point and perhaps a very significant one about the role of these governments with regard to possible employment opportunities in Ontario, very important and very significant. It had not come up, but I can tell him now that the Government of Canada would entertain very seriously an offer from the Government of Ontario to take over the de Havilland operations.

An hon. member: What a mean spirited answer.

Mr. Jim Peterson (Willowdale): Mr. Speaker, just look at what will happen when the French and Italian governments are the new owners of de Havilland. They will have to choose between production of the ATR series, their own aircraft, or the Dash-8 of de Havilland. They will have to choose between jobs for French and Italian workers or jobs for the 4,900 de Havilland workers at Downsview. They will have to choose between Italian and French suppliers or the 85 Canadian suppliers of de Havilland.

There is no quicker way to ruin de Havilland than to sell it off to our major international competitor. We ask the government today to say no to this, the worst of all business deals for Canada.

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, I said in my first answer, and I repeat, there is no proposal yet by Alenia or by Aerospatiale.

As soon as it is received, Investment Canada will consider the business plan. Of course, we can do what they do. We can try to get the feeling of people in Ontario to determine the future of de Havilland.

As a minister, I prefer to be coherent. I put the rules of Investment Canada, and I want to respect them. There will be a proposal and we will consider it. Then we will give the answer. Is this not coherent?

* * *

OPEN SKIES

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport.

Tomorrow, the minister and U.S. Transport Secretary Skinner will begin renegotiating the Canada-U.S. bilateral air agreement. The minister knows that there is strong support for improving that agreement, except for the "c" word cabotage which gives American carriers the right to compete for Canadian traffic within Canada.

Will the minister remove the threat to the Canadian airline industry and take cabotage off the table tomorrow?

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, as I suggested yesterday to a group of industry and labour representatives, Open Skies is part of a solution and not part of a problem.

I said at that time that there is a great temptation in troubled times to try to hide away from competition. That is not the way we can expand our airline industry.

We are going into these negotiations in an effort to expand our airline industry, and we intend to do that.

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in his speech, the minister used the unanimous report of the Special Committee on Transport to support his position.

In making a decision to include full cabotage on the table, the minister blatantly ignored the same committee's view which said that if the mega-American carriers were given cabotage rights, it would devastate our airline industry. We do not think that American carriers should be given cabotage rights under a new agreement.

I ask the minister again: Will he take cabotage off the table?

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I think my hon. friend would agree that there has been perhaps a slip in the words.

My hon. friend refers to the parliamentary report. I would refer him to the place where he says that the report makes an observation. The *status quo* is not acceptable.

The report makes another observation. We would encourage our negotiating team to explore the feasibility of obtaining exclusive cabotage rights for our Canadian carriers.

We are in these negotiations to get a better deal for Canadian consumers, a better deal for Canadian communities and more opportunities for our airlines. We intend to do that.

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary.

The minister does not seem to understand that there is a difference between cabotage for Canadian carriers and across the board cabotage which would allow the Americans to not only compete head on head, but would eliminate the Canadian industry.

Given this government's record in the transportation sector, whether it is marine, shipbuilding, air or road, it has systematically destroyed our infrastructure. When is the minister going to finally stand up and fight on behalf of the Canadian industry instead of working for a better deal for the Americans and the Europeans?

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Transport): To my friend of the *status quo*, I would say this.

First of all, if we understand the situation, cabotage is a red herring. The real issue here is improved access: slots, gates and preclearance. The full issue has to be examined.

I said to my friend: We are in these negotiations to get a better deal. Any time I ever got involved in negotiations, I did not take anything off the table before I got in the room.

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DE HAVILLAND

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

I would like to recall to him his words when he blessed the fire sale of de Havilland to Boeing more than five years ago. I quote: "What we are doing today is saving de Havilland and securing jobs for de Havilland workers. There will not be fewer jobs, but more jobs."

According to the union officials today, the direct result of this decision to consummate a new sale will be the loss of 1,700 jobs in Toronto alone.

• (1430)

Instead of hiding behind the guise of Investment Canada, which has never taken its responsibilities over the last six years seriously, will the Prime Minister today send a message that this sale will not be sanctioned, that he will have the courage to stop this sale?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I think the Minister of Industry, Science and Technology has laid out for the Leader of the Opposition the requirements that one must follow in seeking to deal with the problem that is raised.

There are rules and regulations that follow from the Investment Canada Act, all of which must be respected in considering this matter, and that is what the minister is in the process of doing.

I point out to my hon. friend, since she refers to a statement made in the House some five years ago, that at the time the company was in financial difficulty. Since Boeing took over it has invested some $1 billion, I believe, of new money in the company. The number of jobs was increased to 4,600, I believe, from 3,600. So, the experience that was opposed by the Liberals at the time was not unfavourable for the workers of Toronto. Their jobs concern us a great deal.

I do not think that the jobs of workers in Ontario or elsewhere are helped by a xenophobic attack on foreign investment, because Canada needs foreign investment across Canada, from Atlantic Canada to British Columbia. We are going to invite foreign investment and create national investment rather than put up borrowed taxpayers' money across Canada.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, the difference between the Liberal Party and the Progressive Conservative Party is that we have a policy on the Canadian aviation industry. You don't get it. It is certainly not France or Italy that will guarantee jobs for Canadians; it is up to the Prime Minister and the Government of Canada. So I again ask him: Is he prepared to meet his responsibilities and announce today that he will block a sale that, to begin with, will cost 1,700 jobs across Canada and result in even greater losses in Montreal and other Canadian cities? Is he prepared to block the sale?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should not get excited. The Minister of Industry, Science and Technology has just explained that there is a specific procedure to be followed. The hon. member tells me it is a question of philosophy. She may be right. I told one of her colleagues that the government would not be averse to receiving an offer in such a circumstance from the Government of Ontario, for example, or a Canadian consortium. On the contrary, we would like that. For now, proposals have come from international investors. Is the position of the Liberal Party that we must refuse offers because they come from foreign countries?

Oh, that is interesting! Say no offers made by a foreign government! Say no to foreigners and add to the debt!

Ms. Copps: Say yes to Canada!

Mr. Mulroney: She says, "Say yes to Canada." I can tell you that faced with the choice of free competition and international investments that will guarantee jobs in Toronto and elsewhere and charging it all to the national debt, we will chose private international investment.

* * *

[*English*]

OPEN SKIES

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport who tomorrow will begin the Open Skies negotiations with the United States.

The minister knows that our two major airlines are facing severe economic problems and that our fragile Canadian air industry has recently experienced over 4,000 job losses and many other lay-offs are imminent. Will the minister assure this House that in any deal with the Americans the Canadian bottom line will not be to grant the giant American air carriers cabotage so that we can protect our own Canadian jobs, our own Canadian airlines, and protect and advance the sovereignty of our own Canadian industry?

Will he give us this undertaking on the eve of these important negotiations?

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Transport): The undertaking that I gave the airlines, which I have reiterated time and time again in public, is that there will be no deal unless it is a good deal for Canadians; for Canadian consumers, for Canadian communities, and for Canadian airlines. I have every confidence in our negotiators. I have every confidence that as the negotiations unfold they will strike that good deal. I have that confidence. You have my assurance.

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, this is *dejà vu*. That is what they told us before the free trade agreement and they obtained a deal at any cost, and the cost is now being paid by thousands of displaced Canadians after you, sir, said we were going to have the greatest displacement program the world has known.

Given that Canadian Airlines does not want cabotage, Air Canada is conditional on it, the all-party agreement including Tories had universally rejected it, and our industry fears it, what interest, and whose interest, is the minister pushing by pursuing cabotage? And why is this government so bent on getting any deal at any cost?

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend referred to *dejà vu*. It is *dejà vu* all right. The Liberals were afraid to compete under free trade. We are not. The Liberals were afraid to compete under a new bilateral agreement, we are not. Neither are the Canadian airlines.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

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HEALTH

Ms. Joy Langan (Mission—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister of health. U.S. Food and Drug Administration researchers have found significant amounts of a cancer-causing chemical in the Meme breast implant. The researchers were so surprised at how much of the chemical 2-4 toluene diamine was released by the implant's foam covering when it decomposed that they repeated the testing and found equally large amounts of the chemical.

Will the minister finally give women of Canada a commitment, since one in 10 already faces breast cancer without having the additional risk of dangerous implants on the market, that in light of this research he will take the Meme breast implant off the market?

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I assume that the hon. member's question comes from the article in today's Montreal *Gazette*.

The department has not had the opportunity as yet of studying the American report. I do not know whether the hon. member has. If she has not, she is recommending that we take the device off the market before we have had a chance to study the evidence, while it remains on the market in the United States. The FDA has left it on the market.

We do not proceed in that fashion. What we do instead is to ask for the evidence, which we have done, and to ensure that we have the opportunity ourselves to analyse that evidence. If any of the evidence indicates there is a threat to the health of Canadian women, we will take such a device off the market, which has been our policy since the outset.

Ms. Joy Langan (Mission—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, it is nice to know that the government is not prepared to any longer be the wagon on the train.

Will the minister give us a time-line on how quickly it will come off the market? Once he has the evidence and has looked at this report, will he give us his commitment that women who have been the victims of the Meme implant will be warned about the dangers of the implant, as well as having it withdrawn, and will he give us a commitment that proper testing will be done on all implants?

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I will do my best to respond to the hon. member's three questions.

The fundamental issue here is whether she believes as we do that before you pick a date for pulling the implant off the market, you should see the evidence and make a judgment based on the facts.

If the hon. member is so convinced that this evidence has been in place for a long time, why has the FDA left the device on the market? Both in the United States and in Canada a review is being done of all implants that are on the market. The position remains the same. If any evidence comes forward related to any implant on the market that represents a threat to the health of Canadian women, it will be taken off the market.

• (1440)

The difference between the hon. member and members on this side is that we believe we have an obligation to see the evidence first, not simply to act first and then look for the evidence afterward.

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REFUGEES

Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

The human tragedy of the Kurds is worsening by the hour. Indeed as we speak some will die.

Iraq has already stated unequivocally that it will oppose any UN protected enclaves for the Kurds. Time is running out. The countries of the world must respond now in a humanitarian and compassionate manner.

Will the minister respond to the request of the Turkish government and the pleas of the Kurds that Canada, in concert with other countries, accept as refugees some of our fellow human beings whose lives hang in the balance?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, this House and this country are shocked by events in Iraq and are very much preoccupied with the situation of the Kurds.

We all recognize that the most effective solution to this tragedy would be for the attacks to stop and for there to be some sense of security among Kurds so that they could return to the land that was traditionally theirs and live there in peace and security.

What we have been doing has been first of all to send financial assistance. I am pleased to announce today that we are prepared to increase financial assistance through UNICEF and other international organizations to those areas on the border between Iraq and Iran where there is also a crisis.

The other dimension of our response at the moment upon which we are focusing is to take account of the problems that exist with the proposal put forward by the European Community for an enclave. That may not prove acceptable.

For that reason, Canada beginning last Saturday was putting forward an alternative proposal, the details of which I outlined to the House yesterday and which I discussed yesterday afternoon with the Secretary–General of the United Nations.

We hope that proposal by Canada, that alternative Canadian proposal, may contribute to a UN presence that would both co–ordinate the delivery of assistance much more reliably and provide some sense of security as to the fate of the Kurds in the region.

Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough West): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his answer. I am sure everybody in this House wishes that the problem will be solved as quickly as possible. In the meantime, while the government is considering its options, men, women and children particularly are dying.

Long–standing Canadian tradition has been to meet our responsibilities as a global citizen and accept people from around the world who are suffering personal physical torment. Canada's past response to the plight of the Vietnamese after the fall of Saigon offers a good example.

While the minister is considering these various other options, will he assure the House that this request of the President of Turkey that countries around the world accept refugees will be considered on an urgent basis so that Canada can take a leading role immediately in rescuing people from certain death?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I think the question certainly reflects the urgency the government feels around responding to the situation that exists with the Kurds.

We have certainly actively looked at the possibility of assisting through some refugee program. At the moment I would regard the situation as being volatile for determining what the final outcome may be.

It is certainly our intention to be in touch with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. I know that anything that will be done will have to be co–ordinated on an international scale. As I said yesterday I am not ruling anything in, but I am not ruling anything out either. We certainly are actively looking at this matter.

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PETRO–CANADA

Mr. David Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister of energy. It relates to the matters which led to the resignation of Premier Vander Zalm.

Bill Hopper, chairman of Petro–Canada, told the Hughes commission in B.C. of his dealings with Premier Vander Zalm, and I quote: "a premier of a province demands some attention" and further that the premier's involvement "helped open the door for" the purchasers with respect to the Fantasy Gardens Petro–Canada lot.

Will he tell the House if there are federal guidelines dealing with the sale of public assets by Crown corporations and if they were applied in this case?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member will know, Petro–Canada operates as a commercial interest. That is the manner in which its mandate is fulfilled.

I simply point out to the hon. member that in an article in *The Vancouver Sun* of April 4 it is indicated that federal Liberal energy critic David Kilgour said Hopper couldn't be blamed for taking the call from Vander Zalm.

Mr. David Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast): The minister should realize, Mr. Speaker, as he has also said to *The Vancouver Sun*, that he holds the only share in Petro-Canada as a trustee for the Canadian people.

Mr. Hopper has blatantly refused to talk to anybody since the report came down from Mr. Hughes. Will he, as the trustee for the Canadian people, ask the chief executive officer of Petro-Canada to come clean on this statement so that we can all know what, if anything, is the explanation?

While he is answering that question, will he tell us if he thinks this sale was closed for political reasons and not for commercial reasons?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I take what the hon. member says seriously. In fact on February 27, the NDP member for Port Moody—Coquitlam rose on a point of order and attempted to ask about this issue. He was not able to proceed with it further.

However, immediately upon that point being made in the House, I contacted Mr. Hopper and I asked for the full details. They are also in the Hughes report, as the hon. member will know. I can only refer to the Hughes report on page 49 where Mr. Hughes writes: "Nor would I presume to conclude that if Petro-Canada did provide this first right of refusal to the premier that it was necessarily improper".

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DE HAVILLAND

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry, Science and Technology who, in responding to questions about what the government intends to do about the sale of de Havilland to the European consortium, says: "Just wait and we will see Investment Canada does".

In view of the state of deindustrialization of Ontario already with massive job losses and the prospect that 1,700 jobs will almost certainly be lost as a result of this acquisition, and in view of the loss of technology in research and development that will occur as a result of this sale, does the government not think it should now state its clear position that it will not allow any further deindustrialization, any further loss of jobs, any further loss of research and development?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, I hope the member from Windsor is not going to ask me not to apply the rule. We are all worried about the industrial problems in Ontario and in all parts of the country. However, when there is a proposal, particularly by a foreign company or companies like Alenia and Aerospatiale, it is the rule to make the proposal to Investment Canada. It is what we do. When the proposal is made we have 45 days to analyse the proposal, give an answer and maybe an extension of time if it is necessary.

I believe the member will agree with me that in that kind of proposal which involves one of the most important aerospace industries in Canada we have to apply the law. We have to consider the way in which we can deal the best with that company. I would be surprised if the member does not agree with that.

• (1450)

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Mr. Speaker, I would agree with the minister if the minister would at all indicate what is his intention as a minister of the government to do.

My question to him is rather simple. Does he not agree that it is a responsibility of this government? By the way this is not a sale to companies; it is a sale to governments. Does he not agree that there should be applied conditions that will ensure the preservation of research and development, of engineering and design, of jobs and of the construction of whole airplanes rather than parts for a competing airplane already produced by those two companies?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, the first responsibility of any government is to respect the law it makes. It is the first responsibility.

We put forward Investment Canada to replace the very sick FIRA that we had before, put forward by the Liberal government. Investment Canada, unlike what is said by the member for Hamilton East, works very well and gives the services we expect from that kind of organization.

I say to the member that there is no way that the government will interfere in a process which consists of providing a proposal to Investment Canada. It is the process, and it is the process I will follow as minister responsible for Investment Canada.

Oral Questions

LAND CLAIMS

Ms. Ethel Blondin (Western Arctic): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

The aboriginal peoples in Canada have had their native communications program squashed, their organizational core funding threatened, their land use planning programs scrapped and their social assistance for off reserve Indians threatened, all due of course to economic restraint and this government's budgetary butcher block.

How then does this government have the audacity to justify and extend the very juicy $152,000 contract with Bernard Roy, a negotiator for the Oka land deal?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, in response to the hon. member, I would like to point out that the budget of this government introduced a few weeks ago showed a $200 million increase to the program support for aboriginal people, an increase of over 8 per cent at a time when all government department's are being held to a 3 per cent increase.

Second, that is not to mention the several hundred million dollars of additional new initiatives committed in the native agenda which the Prime Minister unveiled in this House last September 25. Many of those initiatives have already been announced and further are to be announced in the coming days.

Third, there have been dozens and dozens of agreements on land claims and new capital infrastructure in the native communities across Canada that I and my colleague, the minister of state, have signed in recent months. The premise on which the member's question is based is faulty.

In regard to Mr. Roy, the billings to the end of the past fiscal year were $33,000. He concluded the signing of a framework agreement with the Kanesatake community in February and continues very important work to secure a lasting settlement of the land issues at Kanesatake.

Ms. Ethel Blondin (Western Arctic): Mr. Speaker, it does not matter how this government throws money at the aboriginal problem, until this Prime Minister meets with the leadership of the aboriginal community. The Prime Minister has met once with Georges Erasmus in six and a half years.

The Ottawa Citizen quotes Mr. Roy's lucrative contract as including $4,000 for hospitality and $15,000 for travel. It is only half an hour from Oka to Montreal, and the average income for an aboriginal female is between $12,000 and $15,000 a year. With administrative costs of $9,000, how can the government allow Mr. Roy to profit so extravagantly over only an eight-month period and this problem has yet to be resolved?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that my friend said in her original question that we were not doing enough financially to assist the aboriginal people, and when the minister responded with indications of what we are doing, my hon. friend said money was not what she was talking about. Now the implication is that there is something improper with Mr. Bernard Roy—

Ms. Blondin: Well, no. He is your friend.

Mr. Mulroney: Well indeed—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps members would want the Right Hon. Prime Minister to be able to complete his answer.

Mr. Mulroney: Mr. Speaker, now I understand why my hon. friend raised the question; not because Mr. Roy is unqualified—because he is one of the most distinguished members of the bar of the province of Quebec and one of the leading barristers—but because he is my friend.

Well, fine, that is true. So is the Leader of the Opposition. We have had friendly oppositions, and he has had a lot to do in representing aboriginal people. I have never once questioned the large fees received by the Leader of the Opposition, because I am sure he was worth every nickel of it

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

* * *

REVENUE CANADA

Mr. Garth Turner (Halton—Peel): Mr. Speaker, we are now in the fourth month since the GST came into effect. The government made a pledge that the new tax system would be fairer, especially to small business people, through the removal of the old federal sales tax. However, some of these business people are wondering what went wrong.

My question is for the Minister of National Revenue. Why has it taken in some cases more than 90 days for tax rebates for the old FST to be issued on inventory these businesses had when the GST took effect? Can the minister assure this House that in a time of recession and intense competition he is doing all he can to help these cash strapped businesses?

Hon. Otto Jelinek (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will know that the change to the GST itself is going to bring better cash flow opportunities to the majority of Canadian businesses, plus make them more competitive.

However, in as far as the federal sales tax rebates on inventory are concerned, as I have stated in the past we have experienced some problems in some areas, the automotive industry being one, for the very simple reason that in some instances inadvertently manufacturers, dealers and distributors send in claims for the same vehicles.

Of course we are not going to send out money blindly. We have to take the advice of the Auditor General and check it very carefully. We have streamlined the operations, and now I am happy to report that as of the end of last month some 75,000 claims for over $1.5 billion have been sent out. The majority of businesses now are receiving the claims within the 21-day prescribed period.

* * *

DE HAVILLAND

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

The Minister of Industry, Science and Technology, in answering questions on the sale of de Havilland, said that the first responsibility of the government is to follow the law very carefully.

During the course of Question Period the Prime Minister said to members on this side, across the floor, that "we", the government, "have no intention of turning down this sale".

I want to ask the Prime Minister whether the government has already made up its mind that de Havilland is to be sold to ATR, a company controlled by the Governments of France and Italy. Yes or no.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I see my hon. friend, the Leader of the Opposition, agreeing with the statement. He was not in the House when it was made and neither was the member who has just raised the question, I believe.

The statement I made in response to a very unusual situation that occurred, namely some heckling from the member for Hamilton East—it was so unusual that I was shocked into a response— was that the Government of Canada had no intention of frivolously turning down foreign investment that is coming into Canada.

• (1500)

Mr. Speaker, I went further. I said we are entertaining a possible investment of $100 million that foreigners want to invest in Hamilton, Ontario, and I plan to encourage it.

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte): A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. To be perfectly clear, is the Prime Minister of Canada telling the workers at de Havilland, the people in the aerospace industry in Canada that it is the intention of the Government of Canada to transfer that industry, in particular de Havilland, into the hands of de Havilland's major competitor, thereby losing high-tech jobs in Canada. Is that what he is telling the House today?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend knows that I said no such thing. I said no such thing, directly or indirectly. He knows that.

What the minister has pointed out is that when this government came in we abolished FIRA, which we thought was sending out anti-investment signals around the world. We believed that foreign capital was needed in Atlantic Canada, in Newfoundland, for example, to help us develop Hibernia. A vast amount of foreign capital is needed.

I want to tell my hon. friend that in Ontario and in Newfoundland, when a foreigner wants to come in and invest capital in Newfoundland to create jobs in Newfoundland, if he follows the rules, we are going to give him the benefit of the doubt. The rules of Investment Canada are there, and we believe those rules are going to benefit the workers in Ontario. We care very much about the impact on the workers in the aerospace industry in Toronto and in Montreal, and we plan to work very hard to make sure they are protected.

[*Translation*]

MINING

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Industry, Science and Technology.

The Canada-Quebec Mineral Development Agreement expired in 1990. This agreement met effectively the objectives that were set by the Mulroney and Bourassa governments, but much more needs to be done in mining research and development in Quebec.

Mr. Speaker, my question is this: Will the minister confirm today that discussions are ongoing with the Quebec government to renew this Canada-Quebec agreement to support the Quebec mining industry?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology): Well, this is an excellent question, Mr. Speaker.

I can confirm to the hon. member for Abitibi that the sectorial agreements with Quebec have indeed expired in March 1991. We are now exploring an agreement with the Quebec government, but resources are extremely scarce.

We have already explore the ground regarding the forest industry, as I mentioned earlier. We are looking at the possibilities, Mr. Speaker, and, depending on the outcome of our discussions with the Quebec government, we may eventually come to some form of agreement regarding the mining industry as well.

* * *

[*English*]

POINT OF ORDER

DECORUM IN CHAMBER

Mr. Larry Schneider (Regina—Wascana): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have a growing concern with respect to the lack of decorum shown by members in the House of Commons, particularly members who have some previous federal experience.

I happened to view quite by chance Monday evening, while some 2,000 miles away, a speech given by the Liberal House leader, the member from Cape Breton—East Richmond. During his discourse I viewed a most obscene gesture made by him, a gesture no doubt that he felt would help make his point. I believe, Mr. Speaker, this occurred at about 5.34 p.m. on Monday. I found his gesture to be demeaning. It was an anti-feminist gesture. As a result, I find it repugnant, insensitive and cruel. As a Canadian and member of Parliament, Mr. Speaker, I would urge you to review the video of Monday's proceedings and see if you agree.

I have witnessed as well another member yelling profanities in this Chamber. The Speaker at that time ignored these off-microphone comments. In this particular circumstance, the member returned to apologize. Prior to this, another member refused to take his place when called on by the Speaker. Again off-microphone the member berated the Speaker as well as members in the House.

Mr. Speaker, it is my respectful opinion that if members continue to resort to sensationalism to make headlines, this Chamber may soon become uncontrollable. I sincerely urge your intervention in this matter. Mr. Speaker, is it any wonder that the public is withdrawing its respect for politicians when politicians themselves have no respect for one another.

Mr. David Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the hon. member, as well as other hon. members, knows there was no intention with that particular gesture to in any way make reference to any sexism whatsoever. If it offends hon. members, including the one who has spoken, I wish to withdraw.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION

TABLING OF 1990 ANNUAL REPORT

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): Mr. Speaker, in my capacity as Acting Minister of State for Housing, pursuant to Standing Order 32(1), I have the honour to present, in both official languages, copies of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's 1990 annual report.

CONSUMER AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS

TABLING OF REPORTS

Mr. Murray Cardiff (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), on behalf of the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of a report entitled *Report to Parliamentary Committee on the Exclusions to the Workplace Hazardous Materials* and a report entitled *Report of the Senior Advisory Committee*.

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PETITIONS

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. John Manley (Ottawa South): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions I would like to table today.

The first petition is from a large number of my constituents and calls on the government to further strengthen, rather than continue to cut, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, noting that the CBC provides a very important service to unity in Canada.

RAIN FORESTS

Mr. John Manley (Ottawa South): Second, while I am on my feet, I would like to present a petition in which the signatories, again from Ottawa South, call upon the Government of Canada to develop policies which would ensure that Canadian funds not flow into the destruction of rain forests in Brazil and other countries which have tropical rain forests.

GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

Mr. John Manley (Ottawa South): Mr. Speaker, my final petition is signed by a number of my constituents and calls on the House of Commons to express its lack of confidence in the government; a sentiment which I share wholeheartedly.

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. Neil Young (Beaches—Woodbine): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by several hundred of my constituents who claim that the government has cut CBC funding by $140 million over the next four years, resulting in 1,200 job losses and the closing of 10 regional stations.

My constituents urge the government to restore proper funding to the CBC so it can fulfil its mandate and role as the heartbeat of Canada.

CANADA POST

Mr. Ian Waddell (Port Moody—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to present a petition calling upon the Parliament of Canada to review the downsizing of Ridgeway post office in Coquitlam, British Columbia.

It is truly extraordinary. There are 1,800 or so signatures on this petition. It was gathered by Eileen Cassidy, who put a great deal of work into getting this petition.

The petition outlines the decline in service because of privatization and so on. I just want to read one clause, then I will finish with this. "Whereas having the postal service as a department of the federal government provides a link between the various areas of Canada and a needed boost to Canadian unity".

That is only one small post office, but a symbol of what this government is doing to Canadian unity and to services in Canada.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North): Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege to present two petitions signed by hundreds of people from my riding and adjacent ridings, protesting the discriminatory practices of Immigration as it pertains to people coming from India, particularly from the Punjab.

• (1510)

This petition points out that 85 per cent of the people seeking service in New Delhi are from the Punjab. It is difficult to travel from the Punjab to New Delhi and in some cases, it is dangerous.

The petitioners are requesting that the Canadian government establish a new Canadian consulate and immigration office in the Punjab to provide service.

The second petition points out that it now takes three to six years for a person from the Punjab to bring his or her spouse to Canada. The petitioners are calling on the government to establish a system where in a bona fide marriage a person may bring his or her spouse immediately, pending the processing of landed immigration applications.

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Rod Laporte (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of a number of farmers from Saskatchewan who are very concerned with what this government is doing with the orderly marketing system in this country, namely the Canadian Wheat Board.

The petitioners are very concerned that oats have been removed from the jurisdiction of the Canadian Wheat Board. They call upon this government to place oats under the jurisdiction of the Wheat Board and to give oats and barley the same protection under the Canadian Wheat Board that wheat now has.

That would mean that neither oats, barley nor wheat could be removed without Parliament deciding they should be removed and without proper consultation with the producers in western Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Could I have unanimous consent to revert back to Presenting Reports from Committees?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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FINANCE

REVISED 11TH REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE

Mr. Don Blenkarn (Mississauga South): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the revised 11th report of the Standing Committee on Finance in relation to Bill C–83, an act to revise and amend the law governing federal loan and trust companies and to provide for related and consequential matters.

[Editor's Note: See today's Votes and Proceedings.]

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QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Shall the remaining questions be allowed to stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Shall all Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS

The House resumed from Tuesday, April 9, consideration of the motion of Mr. Andre (p. 19027) and amendment of Mr. Dingwall (p. 19156).

Mr. David Berger (Saint-Henri—Westmount): Mr. Speaker, as I rise to speak on the Conservative government's proposals to change the rules of the House, I cannot help but reflect on the tremendous contrast between the spirit and tenor of these proposals and the spirit and tenor of the McGrath report on parliamentary reform which was tabled in this House in 1985.

Let us, for a moment, cast our minds back to 1984–85. We had a newly-elected government, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed may I say, trying to figure out what it could do to enhance the role of Parliament and private members of Parliament. The government struck a committee chaired by the member from Newfoundland, Jim McGrath, which came up with a series of proposals.

The committee was concerned about a lack of confidence in the House of Commons which it referred to as our central democratic institution. In its report tabled in 1985, it said: "We must strengthen the role of the House of Commons, and the key to restoring confidence in our central democratic institution is to enhance the involvement of the private member of Parliament in a number of areas."

That was the spirit which prevailed in 1985. Today, in 1991, some six years later, the government is in its second mandate. It has reached historic lows in the public esteem. I get the distinct impression from the Conservative government's proposals that its principal concern today is not to enhance Parliament, not to enhance the role of the private member of Parliament, but to diminish Parliament, to reduce the role of Parliament in our system of government. The Conservative government's proposal would reduce by 40 the number of sitting days in a year, from 175 to 135. This would reduce the number of Question Periods by 40 during the year. The number of opposition days, the days on which the opposition can choose the subject of debate in this House, would be reduced by five. The budget debate and the throne speech debate would be reduced by two days.

As I see it, these changes will strike at the very foundations of parliamentary democracy. I would like to explain what I mean. From an early age most Canadians learn that we live in a parliamentary democracy modelled after the British system. The distinguishing feature of a parliamentary democracy is that government is accountable to Parliament. One of the principal means by which this is done is through Question Period. It is the occasion *par excellence* for members of the opposition to question the government about its policies and administration. It is through Question Period that an opposition can uncover weaknesses in government policy, or contradictions between cabinet ministers, and where cabinet ministers must respond for their administration of their departments.

We can all remember occasions where governments have been defeated after having their failings exposed during Question Period. That is how important Question Period is to our system.

What often makes Question Period so effective is its unforgiving nature. Day after day the Prime Minister and the members of the cabinet are required to be in the House of Commons and answer questions. When a government is on the ropes, when a minister is under attack, there is no avoiding Question Period.

Yet the Conservative proposal to change the rules of this House will do precisely that. It will allow the government to avoid Question Period by providing for one week off in every four. It is not difficult to imagine circumstances where this week off will allow a government to regroup or will allow a minister to regain his or her composure, to better prepare his or her responses, if the government and if the minister have been coming under heavy fire. It will allow the government or a minister to save his or her skin. That is what having one week off in every four will do.

I can remember in my few years in this House a number of occasions, whether one wants to refer to some of the unfortunate episodes where cabinet ministers of this Conservative government were forced to resign; or to episodes prior to the 1984 election where the Minister of National Revenue in our government, the Liberal government, came under fire for certain practices of Revenue Canada at that time. Cabinet ministers would have loved to have been able to get out of this House and to get away from the lights and the questioning during Question Period. That is exactly what these rule changes will allow a minister to do.

I do not think it is overstating the effect of this change to say that the Conservatives will be undermining one of the principal foundations of parliamentary democracy, namely the accountability of government to Parliament.

• (1520)

The Conservatives also propose to reduce the number of days on which the opposition can choose the subject of debate.

[*Translation*]

To explain the importance of so-called opposition days, I would like to go over some features of our parliamentary system.

In a parliamentary system, it is the government's responsibility to present a legislative agenda. This distinguishes our system from the American one, where bills are sponsored by members of Congress themselves.

Those who follow the sittings of this House on television often see the words "Government Orders" followed by the name of the bill in question at the bottom of the screen. That means that the House is debating a government bill. That is the general rule. The government determines what is debated by this House. Only exceptionally does the opposition set the agenda for the House.

At present, the Standing Orders of the House allow the opposition about 25 days a year, but the government proposes reducing this to 20. Opposition days enable a member in co-operation with his party to choose a subject of interest to the riding he represents, a particular region of the country or specific groups. For example, these opposition days have given us the opportunity to deal with issues concerning people in the Atlantic, the West, fishermen, farmers or education, to give only a few examples.

Mr. Speaker, you well know my interest in issues related to science and technology. You also know that science and technology hardly receive the attention they deserve. Many experts attribute this lack to the fact that we have been unable to develop a scientific culture in Canada; that is a culture that favours science, education, knowledge and the development of our human resources.

The reason is clear. Because we are very rich in natural resources, we were never forced to develop this scientific culture. In short, education and research are not priorities if we can always cut another tree or dig or export more oil to solve our balance of payments.

Several times in recent years, Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party has used opposition days to raise issues of science and technology. These opposition days have made it possible for us in the opposition to ensure that the House deals with these important questions. On March 14, 1991, I presented a motion to remind Canadians of the Prime Minister's promise to double Canadian spending for research and development.

Mr. Speaker, we had a good debate that day. Many members told me that they appreciated the opportunity to deal with these issues. Also, I received many calls and letters from Canadians who share my interest for these matters. They told me that they also appreciated the debate.

Nevertheless, the government wants to reduce the number of opposition days, Mr. Speaker. This means that the opposition will have less opportunity to choose the questions to debate and these issues would not be raised if we had to depend on the government.

[*English*]

Similarly, the Conservative government's proposal will reduce the throne speech debate by two days and the budget debate for two days. Canadians who are not members of Parliament may not know that it is not always easy to participate in a budget debate. There is always a long list of members who wish to speak and there is often not enough time for all members to do so.

Reducing the length of the budget debate by two days will of course mean that far fewer members of Parliament will be able to participate in the debate. And what is more important to our constituents than the budget?

I cannot figure it out. I thought that my primary role as a member of Parliament was to come here to Ottawa to this House of Commons and try to articulate the views and needs of my constituents in debate. I was to question the government and hold it accountable in debates. Yet, with the Conservative government's proposal, fewer members of Parliement will have the opportunity to ask questions or to intervene in debates.

The Minister of Finance, who is sitting opposite, just asked me how I will find out what is on the minds of my constituents if we do not have more time away from this House. Well, I can answer the Minister of Finance that I do not need more time off to find out the views of my constituents on the various subjects on which I speak in this House. I have plenty of time under the current arrangements to be in my constituency, to meet with constituents in my constituency office, to organize public meetings, to send out questionnaires. There are many resources at our disposal.

I do know that it is often difficult to participate in debate in this House because the occasion is not provided under the rules of the House or because there is a shortage of time. What the government proposes to do is shorten further the time available for members of Parliament to participate in various debates such as that on the budget as I have just explained.

I want to end where I began my comments by referring to the recommendations of the McGrath report of 1985. The authors, all members of Parliament who were elected to this House in the 1984 general election, some new members and some experienced members, were all concerned with restoring confidence in the House of Commons. The key to it, they said, was to enhance the involvement of the private member of Parliament.

The Conservative government has come a long way since 1985 and is now in stark contrast to the recommendations of the McGrath report which indeed sought to enhance the involvement of the private member of Parliament and did so in a number of ways such as increased powers for committees, and rules which permitted private members' bills to come forward for debate in this House in a much more expeditious fashion. That was the spirit that prevailed in 1985, enhancing the role of the private member of Parliament.

Today, a scant six years later, the Conservative government is proposing changes to the rules of this House which will diminish the role of the private member of Parliament, and will indeed reduce and minimize the role of Parliament in our parliamentary system.

I must say that I find it obscene that we are even dealing with this subject this week. There are 1.5 million unemployed Canadians. Unemployment has reached levels which we have not seen since 1985. Canada is losing its ability to compete in the global economy. Last week the chairman of the Science Council of Canada wrote in an article published in *The Ottawa Citizen* that Canada does not have a science policy and that in the global economy in which we live, Canada is falling further and further behind.

• (1530)

I need hardly remind members that we are embroiled once again in a national unity crisis and that the opposition has been asking the government to include the House of Commons and all members of Parliement in the process of finding a solution.

Rather than debating these questions, we are debating a proposal by the Conservative government to diminish Parliament and to diminish the role of Parliament in our parliamentary system.

I would hope that government members, the Government House leader in particular, who is responsible for these proposals, will listen to the debate, listen to the carefully thought-out comments of members and that they will go back to the drawing board, withdraw these rules and come up with proposals which again will enhance the role of members of Parliament, as was recommended by the McGrath report six years ago, rather than seeking to diminish the role of members of Parliament and to diminish the role of Parliament together in our parliamentary system.

Mr. George S. Rideout (Moncton): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on an excellent address. Perhaps he could explain for us, as we listened to what he had to say, about the McGrath commission and the fact that that was only a few years ago.

What really has taken place to cause us to have to revisit these rule changes. We just really started to work with them, and we were making some progress so that some parliamentarians had an opportunity to try to represent their constituencies. We see again the heavy hand of the government with the abuse of closure, and the abuse of process here in the House over the last number of years, and now these rule changes moving in the same direction.

Can he identify anything that causes us to really look at changes over and above what McGrath had suggested to us?

Mr. Berger: Mr. Speaker, it is hard for me to read the mind of the government and to try and conclude, or try to figure out why these changes are being presented to us here today. All I can say to the hon. member is that it did not take a long time after 1985 for the enthusiasm for parliamentary reform to wane. I remember that in 1985 one of the changes was the establishment of much smaller committees where committees of six or seven members were struck. That was supposed to enable greater specialization by members, and it was supposed to permit the development of certain teamwork among members of Parliament from all sides.

Again, to give the specific example of a committee I am familiar with, the House established a committee on research, science and technology, because it was perceived, and indeed the Prime Minister had promised in the Speech from the Throne, I think in 1984 or 1985, to establish a specialized committee of this House to deal with questions of research, science and technology because they were considered to be so important for the country's future.

About two years later, a number of these small committees were put together in much larger committees. Research, science and technology disappeared and it was grouped together with Industry, Small Business, Northern and Regional Development. The specialization which just a year or two before had been regarded to be so important was thrown out the window.

I can only assume that the government really did not like to have specialized committees. They really did not like to have committees of the House getting to be too knowledgeable about various policy matters so that they could serve as a counterweight to the bureaucracy or to the decrees that come out of the Privy Council Office.

It is also interesting to speculate that the government could no longer find the members required to staff these committees. Indeed, that is the distinct impression that one gets today. With this government at, as I said in my remarks, an historic low in the opinion polls, the Conservative members really feel they have to spend more time back home attending to political organization rather than doing what they were supposed to do, which is to participate in the work of what the McGrath committee referred to as the central democratic institution.

Mr. Pat Nowlan (Annapolis Valley—Hants): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to participate in this debate, but some of the remarks I make may not make everyone on all sides of the House happy.

I had an intervention the other day when the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands, who is certainly one of the more active and conscientious members of the House and has certainly done a lot on procedure, started to look around the House and casually mention that there was no one around when the fundamental rule changes of 1969 came down the pike.

I happened to be here when the then House leader from the Liberal side, Mr. Macdonald, made the present government House leader seem like a Sunday School teacher at a Baptist picnic in terms of his very firm and determined approach to force through fundamental rule changes. One that I am going to concentrate on is the one that I wish the opposition had really got together on, instead of running the clock as we are running, although I am not suggesting motives because there have been some very good speeches here. This is the type of thing that should entertain members because it is our fundamental lifeblood and the bread and butter of the rules that make this place work.

I certainly subscribe to the comments from the opposition that on another day, in another way, this government has again done what it could have left undone by doing properly what it has done improperly by having rule changes vented in a committee and having a debate in a very intense and detailed way within a committee.

I know all the history here about the procedures and the consultations between House Leaders and the different people. They were trying to work out a program. That was fine as far as it went, but whatever they came up with should have been referred to a committee with a broader group of members to vet the proposals of House Leaders and all the staff who work with House leaders and then bring it before the House. If the debate went on and on and on, then the government would be in a better position to do what it is likely it will have to do here. There will be a little howl of protest or a loud howl of protest of using closure to force through rules, but the fact of the matter is, back in 1969, after, as the member for Kingston and the Islands quite correctly pointed out, there was closure. I think it was in the summer, July I think. I remember being around here and having pep rallies in the different corridors and behind the curtains just to keep the thing going.

There was fire in the opposition then against those fundamental rule changes. After 12 days, the government of the day brought in closure and we lived with all the apprehension that the opposition of the day, and I was one of them, said would happen to the state of Parliament. There was the rape of Parliament then and somehow the rape seemed to get over and Parliament stumbled along in its form until we came to the next main cycle of reform which was the McGrath reform, which we all know about and some of us participated in some of those committees. That brought in very fundamental rule changes that I do believe helped this institution. It was pointed out by other members that it certainly changed the whole rule book in terms of committees. Having been a chairman of one of the better committees and I think one of the more active, conscientious and constructive of the committees, the transport committee, I can say that with the new rules changes in the McGrath report there was the power and still is the power for committees to initiate procedures and initiate studies. They do not have to wait to get an order from the House. They were hamstrung and hand tied with every procedure the committees used to have to do before, until the McGrath report.

• (1540)

That was very good and the government of the day should be complimented on that. There is no doubt that I share the views of members basically on all sides. Certainly the government House leader in his opening statement, and I think the opposition leader too, talked about the deplorable state of Parliament and/or the politician. Let no one think that because one is wearing a particular party stripe one is going to avoid absolute disfavour in the public mind of that generic term the politician.

I don't care whether you are a Tory. I don't care whether you are a Grit. I don't care whether you are an NDP. I tell you, in terms of the three national parties, never for a variety of reasons has their opprobrium been lower in the public mind and frankly I do not know of any rule changes that are ever going to improve that situation.

My belief has been and still is that you can pervert or prostitute any procedural rule unless there is some good faith and respect between the parties involved. It is unfortunate what has happened in this forum over a period of years. It is not through the advent of any one government. I have been here for 25 years and I can say that I have seen a decline in the respect among members on all sides.

Yes, we have to have our floor fights and debate issues when we differ. There are exceptions—and I can see some right here in the Chamber today—where you can have your floor fights and debate with intensity, vigour and sometimes some logic, and yet you can still respect that member off the floor. Often there was more done off the floor in sort of agreements. They can talk about the old boys' club or name it what you will, but I can tell you that is when things really started to get done and helped the procedures of the House by the respect in a collective way that all members had. That is sorely missing, and rules changes are not going to change it.

Time moves along pretty fast here. In fact one of the rules changes which gives me concern is that we are going to be reduced to 10 minutes after a certain five-hour period, I gather. Ten minutes for me is just an introductory preamble in so many cases, so I don't really know how I am going to be hamstrung once those rules come into effect.

I have listened and everyone has spoken sincerely, but I really have been bothered to hear some of my colleagues talk about the state of Parliament and how this potential package of rule changes is going to be a further rape of Parliament. We are going to reduce the time for the Speech from the Throne and the time for the budget debate. Opposition days are not going to be quite as numerous.

Well, I am going to make a confession. I don't expect any member in the opposition or the government to make a similar confession. There were days when we were in opposition—and we had a pretty good opposition that knew what it was doing—and we had to fumble around in the latter stages of supply to get a proper topic to throw before the House, to fill the calendar, to have a debate.

I would venture to say, if members looked in their mirrors and did not have to confess publicly, that every one of them have sometimes wondered: what in the name of salvation are we debating this topic for, or why are we filling the calendar with this issue when in effect we could perhaps be doing more constructive things to help the nation?

I thought supply days would be the greatest thing since sliced bread. There are some good purposes for it. We have to have supply which, as everyone has said, is the whole reason we are here. There is no doubt that the whole element of accountability in supply of a massive government of no matter what stripe is very difficult for average members to get their teeth into. That is why I think committees are going to have to have perhaps a more powerful role so that they can analyse those estimates. Whether it is committee of the whole House which became a charade or even now with the present committee structure, there are many imperfections.

It is because there is not collegiality and the common respect of members prepared to put aside from time to time their partisan stripe that I think this place has been affected more than by any rule changes in the past or in the present.

I want to come to the package. I cannot go through it all because of the time limit, but I really want to stress one point. I know what is going on here. A lot of members want to speak. Perhaps they want to make sure the government invokes closure. I am going to surprise them, because I think I am correct. There is not going to be a big hullabaloo outside if the government invokes closure after so many days of debate on these rules. This is a very internal debate. It is not going to excite the public. It is not that there are not good things that should be said, but if there were ever an internal debate it is on House rules.

I for one, coming from the east, can certainly empathize and I think support the suggestion, admitting that there are less days of debate, of three weeks on and one week off. It has been kicked around for years and years in all procedure committees I have been exposed to. I think it is a very constructive idea.

I am not going to get involved in a personal way with other members who have made their comments, but it is very easy if you are sitting in the central part of Canada to get back to your ridings. I have a pretty good flight now, but it used to take eight hours and ten minutes, always trans-planing in Montreal, the old Viscount Vanguards, to get back east. Then the worst part was the drive on the old No. 1 Highway. Parts of it are still left, and I wonder how I ever drove on it for first five or six years until the highway was improved. Fortunately the air service has also improved.

We in the east have it relatively easy with direct flights, two in the morning and two at night, direct if you catch the right plane to Halifax and direct return. This has made a tremendous difference in terms of travel.

I still say that it is not just the mechanical paper ways we communicate with our constituents. I still think it is going to be a heck of a lot better if members get back in their ridings and talk to the people there.

I would venture to say that I think it is worth the experiment to try to put it in place. Perhaps members will come back and be a little more realistic and not quite as partisan after they have been with their people and find out that the public are sick and tired of rank partisanship day in and day out, especially on some of the larger issues which affect this country.

I think that is very constructive. Yes, it is going to change some of the time of debate in this House. The problem, I confess in sadness, is that very few people pay any attention to debates in the House anyway. Perhaps to shorten time, where we will have to have a better focus, will perhaps rehabilitate this forum which has to be the conscience of the land with all the problems the land has today.

There is no doubt there has been a deterioration. I don't think it is because I am getting older and was more impressed when I was younger. I think it is there and perhaps there should be some change in the rules. The rules are not going to do it by themselves, at all, no matter what we do. I have heard all the stories about the rape. This Parliament will survive.

A funny thing happened on the way to the circus. I say this to my friends in the opposition. The polls are bad for the government. They are horrible. They have never been worse. I am not going to get too political, but some leaders in the land say: "We will come out of this because we have been in this valley of travail before". The Tory party has never been at rock bottom. Perhaps this is the time. I give full credit to the government for trying to bring in some rules. If things are so horrible, perhaps some members on the opposition side will be in government benches and have an expedited procedure and process to get government laws through. If these things are as horrible as some members have said, certainly the new government of the day can bring in its own rule changes. These things aren't in stone forever.

I can say to the member for Kingston and the Islands because he was not around then that this is one of the reasons the McGrath report found favour with all sides of the House. At that time when no one party was way down at rock bottom, all parties were of a pretty shaky nature. There were times when each of the three main line parties thought they were going to be in government in the 1980 period.

I say to my friends in the opposition who use the general broad brush of rape of Parliament on everything in the package that they may be in the reins of power themselves and they may want some of these expeditious moves. If they are not working or are not going to work, they are going to be in a position to change them.

• (1550)

I am not going to go through them all because time is moving on, but I want to talk about television. I think that is one of the reasons this place has gone down the pike, although I agree with my friend from Crowfoot that modern television technology is there. I was on the committee that studied it in opposition. We did all our studies then and felt why should our constituents have to pay money to come to Ottawa to see the place in action when they can tune in the TV tube and see it in a certain way in homes. We have to recognize modern technology, but it definitely has affected this place.

Again, having had some experience in committees, I am quite apprehensive about the extension of television to committees. I am prepared to make a prediction. Committees are now basically doing pretty good work in a non-partisan way. I am apprehensive that when we get the old camera in the committees it is going to foul up and affect in an adverse way committee work.

Another funny thing happened on the way to the circus and some members have mentioned it, that the ham will monopolize the camera. That is why this place is in disrepute: perhaps there are too many hams here and the hams will be in the committee. Members may not appreciate that there is no doubt the penetrating eye of the television camera cuts through an awful lot of floss and gloss and, if it is not real and relevant, the camera shows it, the spectator sees it or the viewer sees it.

I just point out that perhaps it is a matter of typing me in terms of time. Even good old Carol Burnett and her comedy hour—she has had a rehabilitation and has come back in another way; it is a great half-hour now I think—only lasted for 10 years. Finally the old camera saw enough and people had a change.

I am very concerned about television in the committees. I am not too consistent in saying that I know it has to be here in the House and why not perhaps in the committees. I do think it will adversely affect committees. I think members have to be very careful as they appear before the screen, whether it is before a committee and/or here, because that penetrating eye can leave quite an impression. That is on television.

I am glad the parliamentary secretary to the House leader is here. I know the opposition has used the general broad brush of total Draconian, Fascist, rape of Parliament. Everyone is referring to the generalities of the calendar and all those things, some of which I have mentioned and some have some good points. However, I am very sad that the opposition instead of just forcing the government to use closure, which will be its natural right to do in time, in effect did not focus more on this debate to try to get some changes even at this late date. One element in the rule changes that is going to affect this place more adversely as far as individual members are concerned is the clause on unanimous consent and its disposition under this new projected rule.

It is interesting to me. I know there are not too many government members around today and I can understand why.

An hon. member: They are hanging their heads in shame.

Mr. Nowlan: No, I do not think so, but they are prepared not to fill the docket and they want the debate to conclude.

I have in front of me in my hand the memorandum the government House leader sent to the PC caucus, which did not come to me directly. It is dated March 26 and is a good summary of the rule changes. On the one that I just referred to, if I read this and had not been around here for a little while, I guarantee that nine-tenths of the government members do not appreciate the effect of this change on consent of the House. In the list there are other things mentioned: closure, time allocation, recorded divisions, quorum, and extension of sitting. On the consent of the House, it is written in the explanation, "on matters of House sittings and activities of committees 25 members rising during Routine Proceedings can prevent adoption, not applicable to changing other Standing Orders".

I do not think it was done intentionally, but that is almost one of the most misleading explanations of the potential effect of this change in the unanimous consent that I could ever believe. I am suggesting that I take exception to the Speaker's ruling yesterday when, on the point of order raised by the member for Kamloops on the unanimous consent part, the Speaker mentioned in his explanation that this is very restricted. I do not accept that, Mr. Speaker. This business of unanimous consent is not restricted. The suggested Standing Order says in paragraph 56(1)(b):

> For the purposes of this Standing Order, "routine motions" shall be understood to mean any motion, made upon Routine Proceedings, which may be required for the observance of the proprieties of the House, the maintenance of the authority, the management of its business, the arrangement of its proceedings, the establishing of the powers of its committees, the correctness of its records or the fixing of its sitting days or the times of its meeting or adjournment.

This is broad and powerful and in effect will remove any leverage—I guess that is the word to use—that individual members will have unless they can get 25 members to come up and say no. With this power in the hands of a government, a government is going to be able to get through its business in an unholy fast fashion.

There was a suggestion from the government House leader in his introductory remarks: "Oh, well, don't worry about this, members of the House of Commons. This can only be moved in Routine Proceedings and if someone says no it has to come back to Routine Proceedings".

Mr. Speaker, you and I know how this place works. I see you indicating that I have to conclude, and I will conclude. You can try Routine Proceedings on a Monday morning when not too many people are here, and then someone may say no to the motion. A motion can be broad. It could affect the workings of committees, special committees, the Meech Lake committee, any committee you want, and you may get a no because one member may feel very strongly about it.

I appreciate from a government point of view that there has been an abuse of no, perhaps because there are a lot of Independents in this House and there were a couple of times recently where no was given. You say no once and, when the person who said no leaves the Chamber, the government House leader can quite properly request unanimous consent to revert to Routine Proceedings. Then there will be consent and you get back to Routine Proceedings, as the order says, and you can move the motion to do anything. With this provision and without 25 members on guard all the time, you could put a GST bill through this House in less than two or three days, et cetera.

It is for that reason alone that I wish there was focus from the opposition. I am glad that members are debating this matter. It is the most invidious projected rule in this whole package as far as I am concerned. I think it will have a large adverse affect. Quite frankly it is basically and totally against the McGrath report which was for private members. As other members have said, it totally eliminates any power or authority of individual members. I am horrified that the Liberal amendment did not include it in its deletion. I really think this and this alone—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I regret the hon. member's time has expired.

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Mr. Speaker, I always like to hear from the hon. member for Annapolis Valley—Hants. He has been a great contributor to the parliamentary system for many years. I am proud to be able to say that he is a fellow Nova Scotian. He has represented the people in his area and the people in the rest of the province of Nova Scotia well over the years.

He certainly knows this place, I guess better than I because I am a newcomer here. I guess I share some of the frustrations that are evident many times when he gets up to speak in this place. There is a great frustration that I feel. I want to share it with him, and perhaps he can comment.

The people back in my riding in the great city of Dartmouth, which is not that far from the riding of the hon. member, are getting pretty fed up as well with the way that this place works. The hon. member made a comment that the television camera does not lie. I think that has been a great change in how people perceive this place.

It is fine for us to be debating here. It is important that we get a chance to debate these rule changes because they are important rule changes. They certainly do impact on the ability of individual members of Parliament to participate and represent their constituents in this place, the highest court of the land.

The hon. member raised one particular instance about the provision for unanimous consent, the change that that will mean in this place, and the potential abuse of that by a majority, by a government. As an individual member of Parliament I feel, as do my constituents many times, that this place is becoming increasingly irrelevant.

I know we are debating rules and changes to the rules and how they will affect the business of this House. I wonder how some of these rule changes will affect the respectability this place has lost, whether or not we can gain it back, and whether or not it really is making us even more irrelevant as individual members of Parliament.

The hon. member for Annapolis Valley—Hants who just spoke so eloquently knows full well that there are more reforms needed than just those that are in this package. One of the problems we have—and I would like the hon. member to comment on it—is that a lot of people watch us on television and the camera does not lie. They see us all going around blindly like sheep with rings through our noses.

• (1600)

If you remember, the government side comes in and says Tuesday is Thursday, and you are supposed to go with the party line. You will remember that on the opposition side, if they say that Tuesday is Tuesday, we will probably get up and say no, it is really Thursday.

One of the problems we have is not just reform of the rules of this place, but a true reform of the political system and how we allow our members to contribute in a positive way so that we can have better legislation for this country.

We work under a system of party discipline. It is not there to make this place work better but to preserve the leadership of the party. Perhaps the time has come to allow Canadians to tell members of Parliament about how we can be more relevant.

I would like the hon. member to comment on whether or not he believes there is a further need for reform of the caucus system and the party system so that members can get up—and I know he has done it many times and maybe that is why he is sitting as an independent Conservative—and speak and contribute in debate in a way that does not threaten the demise of the government if you are a government member, and does not threaten the authority of the Leader of the Opposition or the leader of the New Democratic Party or the members of those parties. Does he believe there is a further need for reform in a real way that would allow members to get up and contribute during debate in a spirit of co-operation. Also, it is a combative place here.

I would like him to comment on that because I think all the rule changes we are talking about here are wonderful. It is great that people have different ideas. I do not like most of the rule changes I see but I like some of them.

I would like the hon. member to comment on whether or not he would like to see further reforms so that, as individual members, we are more relevant in this place and we are more responsive and reflect the needs of our constituents.

Mr. Nowlan: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the remarks of my hon. friend from Dartmouth. My riding goes right up and actually goes right by the airport. We actually meet, believe it or not in one corner.

Obviously, this is about more than just reform of the rules. The question posed could have a very long answer, so I will try to be brief on this point. I guess I am a living example of the thrust of the question about reform. I have often felt like this and that is why I liked the McGrath report. In part, at least, it did come out with having less confidence votes. I mean, this business of having supply days, and it happened when we were in government and when we were in opposition, so nothing new has happened over on the government side. This is part of the frustration of the public. They have been disappointed because they thought that perhaps a new government was going to change its ways. When we were in the opposition we would say: "Please, government, do not make this a confidence vote." We put it right in our motions, the same as the NDP and sometimes the Liberals put it in the present opposition motions, "not a confidence vote". And yet, the government each time, to make sure members toe the party line, have made it a confidence vote and vote the party line.

I really believe that other than speeches from the throne, budget speeches and perhaps tax bills, every other subject matter bill should be a free line vote and not a confidence vote.

I am quite happy to sit here as an independent, and I do not have to toe the party line.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Another questioner. Another question and comment from the hon. member for Vancouver North.

Mr. Nowlan: I just want to conclude.

Mr. Chuck Cook (North Vancouver): Mr. Speaker, I admire the member from Annapolis Valley—Hants very much. The only thing is, every once in awhile he is full of it. When he talks about committees not being telecast, he does not know what he is saying. In every legislature where it has been done, it has improved the committee system, not destroyed it. It means, sir, that when a member walks into a committee and does not know what he is talking about, if that committee is being telecast, the world knows it.

The hon. member is also overlooking one other factor. People have a right to know, and not telecasting committees means denying the people the right to know.

I would like to hear the member explain to me why, and on what basis he can possibly deny the people the right to know, really what takes place in this place. Put television in the committees and then we will see who knows their stuff, who has done their homework and who has not. It gets rid of, with the greatest respect, bombastic oafs from sitting on committees.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I hope the hon. member can wind it up in a minute.

Mr. Nowlan: Mr. Speaker, I will try to wind it up. I always appreciate the intervention of my hon. friend from the west coast.

I do not believe the hon. member for North Vancouver was in the House when I was speaking about this. I do not know because, as I said, I have conflicting thoughts about this.

I do believe the public has a right to know. As I said in my opening remarks, I was a member of the committee that recommended that we have television in the House. Obviously, it has had some effect in the House, but I have apprehension about the committees. We are each entitled to our view.

The technology is there. I also said that the penetrating eye of the camera would cut through the bombasts and all the blarney. Perhaps it will produce.

Having been on a committee as long as my hon. friend, in fact I have been participating longer, I have found that committees do work pretty productively in a non-partisan way because they have not had the attention of the reporters. They certainly have not had the cameras until today.

I must confess that the Constitution committee in 1982 in Room 200 was televised. Of course, that was a very fundamental subject, but televising that committee was very educational for the public.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona): Mr. Speaker, just when I want to say I am glad to be able to have an opportunity to participate in a debate, I am not really. I wish we were not having this debate.

I wish we had been able to come to some understanding with respect to the changes that are needed in the Standing Orders, because I think that is the way the Standing Orders of the House of Commons should be changed: by unanimous consent and agreement between the parties. That is what happened in 1983 as a result of the committee chaired by now Senator Tom Lefebvre, and in 1985 as a result of the work done by the Special Committee on the Reform of the House of Commons which was headed by Jim McGrath, now the Lieutenant-Governor of Newfoundland.

I had the opportunity to work on both those committees. I want to reflect on the changes we have before us here, in light of the parliamentary reform process that I have seen unfold since I arrived here in 1979.

It is always hard to determine just where things began to unravel. Certainly, the Lefebvre committee had its origins in the unravelling which occurred in this Chamber as a result of the debate over, first of all, the constitutional changes, the unilateral patriation package in 1980, the National Energy Program and the behaviour of the opposition at that time. The Official Opposition at that time is the party which is now the government.

It was difficult for some of us the other day to listen to the hon. government House leader speak, presumably sincerely, about his concern about what had happened to Parliament when some of us know only too well, and remember even better, that it was that member who, among others, stormed the Chair and did that sort of thing.

Mr. Cooper: He did not. He was not there.

Mr. Blaikie: I am told that he was not there. It was certainly the case that members of the Conservative caucus at that time were very instrumental in beginning a process which led us to a sorry state then and which was reformed to some degree by the Lefebvre committee and improved upon by the McGrath committee.

I see what is happening here now as stepping back from some of those reforms. I know that the hon. member for Peace River was also on that committee. There are a number of McGrath alumnae in the House. There are a few of us left. He does not agree with me with respect to how this reform either deviates from or is consistent with the McGrath committee. I am going to give my views on how I see it, because I do think that it does take us back from the McGrath reforms.

First of all, with respect to the calendar, as I said the other day, there are good arguments on both sides. One argument is whether or not members should have a week in their ridings when the House is not sitting on a periodic basis, particularly for those who have long distances and for all of us who have had the experience of setting up things in the riding and then having to cancel them or to come back because of some event here. I can certainly see advantages in that. I do not think that should be the main focus of the debate. There are other things going on here which are more important.

• (1610)

The government, by moving to make the process for getting legislation through the House much more efficient, to use their description of what they are doing, has gone overboard. It is common among lawyers to say that hard cases make bad law. I think that the government, out of fear of what might be done by independents or the Bloc Quebecois or the Reform Party or whatever, has moved to change the unanimous consent provisions in a way that all of us will come to regret and which certainly goes against the spirit of the McGrath committee which set out to increase the power of private members. This certainly takes away the power of the private member or members, unless they number 25, to get in the way of the government steamroller, should the government want to use this provision to put legislation through in one heck of a hurry.

At the time we all agreed with the McGrath committee that delay is not necessarily a bad thing. Delay is one of the features and functions of parliamentary democracy. This is something that the public does not always understand. Oppositions, when they try to delay things, are not always just sort of puffing and huffing and blowing off steam. They are providing crucial political time for the public to mobilize against something which they may or may not regard as something they want to oppose. Oppositions provide that time. Sometimes we provide a few days and then we see that people are not interested and we say: "All right, time to move on". Sometimes when we provide a few days' delay, we find out that people are really angry when they hear what is happening, so we provide a few more days. Sometimes we provide weeks. That is how the system works. There is nothing wrong with that. It irritates governments, but that is one of the ways in which parliamentary democracy works.

The role the opposition can play is sometimes underestimated by the public. Sometimes we delay things and people are not interested, so be it. Other times that function of delay has been very, very critical. The government, by moving to even further expedite the legislative process, on top of what was done in 1969, 1983 and 1985 and not putting it in the context of a package in which the opposition receives other powers, I think leaves itself open to some of the charges that have been made against it which they find so offensive.

If they want to make this place more efficient, then at the same time they have to introduce more real power and real meaning into what we do here when we are here. That they have not done. If they were to do that, then it might be the case that the killing of time and the use of delay as a primary parliamentary function would not be so absolutely crucial to the role of opposition, if there was more meaningful input. But that they have not provided in this particular reform.

This reform, had we tried to go ahead and make a real package, could have dealt with some of the things that are really frustrating people here. That is the way that Question Period has deteriorated and the way that everything we do here seems to be very, very selectively filtered out to the public.

There was a lot of talk about TV. One member said that TV does not lie and others said that the TV shows up people for what they are. I think that TV does lie. I think that TV, as a medium, does lie in the sense that it does not completely reveal all that goes on here. Maybe TV does not lie if you are one of those people who may be watching now, who has the time to watch the parliamentary channel all the time. But if you only watch those things which make it into the news from Parliament, then the TV does lie about what goes on in Parliament.

The hon. member from Annapolis Valley—Hants said that people are sick to death of the partisan bickering. Well, it is no wonder. That is the only thing that makes it on the news. You could get up here day after day after day and ask substantive, non–partisan, meritorious questions and the only thing you would be guaranteed is a life of absolute obscurity. Nine times out of ten, the cheap shot, the partisan remark, the lowest form of political activity will be what is selected out for that 15 or 30 second sound byte on the news. I think that is part of the problem here and we need to examine that. So I have some of the anxieties that the member for Annapolis Valley—Hants has about TV in committees. Maybe it will have the meritorious effect that the member for Vancouver North spoke about, but maybe it will not not. I guess the only way we are going to find out is to bring it in.

I want to talk about the way in which these reforms go against what I think was the spirit in the recommendations of the McGrath committee report. Now McGrath is not sacred. There are things that we recommended that did not work out all that well. I do not stand here saying that this snapshot of parliamentary reform that was taken in 1985 should stand for all time and be unquestioned and always used as the benchmark against which we should judge everything else.

But one of the things that the McGrath report did was try, by its own admission and by the instruction given it by the government at that time, was to invest more power in the role of the private member, not just as a private member, but as private members gathered together in committee. I think this reform steps back from that in a number of ways.

It steps back, for instance, with respect to the control that the government wants to exercise on standing committees by having the parliamentary secretary sit on the standing committees.

The parliamentary secretary to the House leader will say: "It is not for control, it is for information, contact and communication, et cetera." Well, if those things were to be achieved that is fine, but the fact of the matter is that the parliamentary secretaries used to act like referees and coaches for the government side. The government wants to argue now that they will also be a source of expertise. Well, heaven help the government, in a caucus of 150 or 160 people, if it is only the parliamentary secretaries who know what they are talking about when it comes to a particular subject area represented by a committee. Surely the government should be able to find other members who are conversant with what is going on in that particular area.

I think that putting five or six committees into various envelopes and giving them only two rooms to meet in will limit the powers of committees on their own to say they are going to meet, they are going to do this and they are going to study this because there will come to be a brokering of time and of rooms which will enable the people in power to decide which committee is going to be working and which committee is not. That is an inevitable fact of life when you have that kind of allocation of resources with respect to committees.

Giving more power to the government to determine whether things will go to a standing committee or a legislative committee and limiting the rules of legislative committees to hearing only technical witnesses is a step back from the McGrath reform. If we cannot hear non-technical witnesses at second reading, when can we hear them. When can we hear the people who are concerned about a particular bill unless we have, built into the Standing Orders, a guaranteed provision for hearing those kinds of people some other time at some other stage of the process and yet that is not here.

So to simply say that because something is approved in principle it is now longer to be debate except in its technical dimensions, I think it is not just an abrogation of what the McGrath committee had in mind, it is an abrogation of the parliamentary tradition. Even before McGrath, although things had been passed in principle at second reading, when the standing committee had it people were there commenting on the principle and the technical details of the bill.

The member for Annapolis Valley—Hants will remember only too well travelling across the country with the standing committee. The second reading of the Crow bill had been passed, but people were still talking about whether it should have been passed at all. That is an appropriate role for the committee it seems to me, and that is being removed by this particular reform.

Finally, this reform gives more power to the Whips with respect to substituting on the committees. If I understand it correctly, people can still appoint alternates which they can designate as their substitutes, but they may also choose not to appoint alternates, in which case it would be the Whip of the various caucuses who

would decide, from a vastly increased number of members, who will substitute for those members who are unable to participate in a particular committee at a particular time. I predict that what will happen is you will find that government members will not name alternates. The government Whip can then name his own alternates from this large pool of backbenchers. That will have the effect of diluting rather than building up expertise on the committee. We will, in effect, have gone back to the old system where the Whip would have the power to simply flood the committee with people who did not know what they were talking about to be there for a crucial 15 minutes prior to a vote, vote down what the people are proposing who do know what they are talking about on the committee, and move on again.

• (1620)

I think that is another step away from the McGrath report.

We saw a further erosion a couple of weeks ago of what I thought we had established through the McGrath reform. It is not related to this package. Twice I rose in this House on a point of order complaining that the government was interpreting opposition day motions as matters of confidence. We went to great lengths—because free votes are one of the ways in which you increase the power of the private member—to get the language of confidence out of the Standing Orders with respect to opposition motions. And we took it out. It is not there anymore. Those motions which are votable are no longer described as confidence motions, they are simply described as motions that will come to a vote. That was deliberate.

Two weeks or so ago, just before the Easter break, I heard members getting up and saying: "Well, these are matters of confidence", and repeating the same old argument as if the McGrath committee had never met, never mind recommended it. It was at that point that I finally came to believe, because I resist believing these kinds of things, that the government is intent—I hope not deliberately, but it certainly is having this effect—of completely eroding the spirit of the McGrath committee.

They had a very simple motion before them to reaffirm medicare. It did not imply any criticism of anybody. We all could have voted for it, Mr. Speaker. The House of Commons could have expressed itself unanimously with respect to an important social program. Instead, we were treated to this very disappointing argumentation on the part of the government that this was, after all, a motion of confidence.

One of the crucial breakthroughs of the McGrath committee was that those opposition day motions procedurally were changed in such a way as to create the freedom for government backbenchers, and for that matter for members of other parties, to vote as they chose on those motions.

We have not seen that. It is not just the government's fault, it is the fault of our whole political culture which focuses on dissent as weakness rather than as a possible sign of strength. So we have not seen the kind of free thinking that we had envisaged at that point.

But to have the government get up and basically kill it by giving that interpretation of opposition day motions, I think was really unfortunate. It had not worked yet, but it might have worked. If the government holds to the position that it held two weeks ago about opposition day motions, it will never work.

With respect to committees once again, the government argues that it wants people to have this week in their ridings so that they can talk to their constituents, while at the same time it is changing the rules with respect to committees so the people will find it harder to talk to their members when they are on committees that are actually dealing with things, for instance, if they are on legislative committees.

There seems to me to be a contradiction here. Do you want members to be able to talk to people who are concerned about things? Then you should not just provide more time for them to meet with them in the coffee shops, the school auditoriums and the church basements. You should at least maintain what time there is for them to talk to members who are concerned about a particular bill and who are sitting on a committee which is looking at a bill that may concern people. They may want to talk to their member or to the members on the committee about it.

Again with respect to committees, I think part of what is happening here is that the government has had a hard time maintaining its membership on committees, that many times the government side is drastically under-represented on committees. I think one of the reasons for that, and this affects not just government members but everybody, is that the high expectations of the 1985 McGrath committee report that these new committees, founded on these new rules, would be listened to have foundered.

I look at the hon. member for Annapolis Valley-Hants and I remember when he was the chairman of the Standing Committee on Transport. When the Standing Committee on Transport unanimously recommended against the VIA cuts, they might as well have jumped off the Peace Tower because nobody paid any attention to the unanimous recommendation of a long-standing, well respected committee.

An hon. member: Was it the whole committee?

Mr. Blaikie: The whole committee recommended against the VIA cuts and the government paid no attention.

A committee unanimously recommended certain things with respect to food irradiation and the minister of health at the time, now the minister of energy, ignored them. The list goes on of times when committees felt that they were going to make a difference, and they made no difference.

The government does not pay any attention to what is going on in committees, unless it happens to expect that it is going to agree with it. I sat on the Standing Committee on External Affairs. We went to the Soviet Union and the Germanys, now Germany. We made a report with certain recommendations with respect to Canada's activity in NATO, et cetera. Several months after the report came out I met Canada's Ambassador to NATO. I said: "What did you think of our report"? He said: "What report?" He asked "What report" because there is no will on the part of the government or in any government department to take seriously the work of committees. Yet the very best work that goes on here often goes on in committee, as members have said, and they are not just blowing their own horns. A lot of good work does go on in committee.

That work does not seem to have any effect. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because more and more of the political process is captive to a smaller and smaller group of people who are advisers to the Prime Minister: the Prime Minister's pollster, the Prime Minister's image maker, the Prime Minister's adviser on this and that. We in effect have what Canadians are coming to realize and what I myself am coming to realize very reluctantly, a kind of four-year elected dictatorship of a very small number of people, and the rest of us here are just froth. We are just sort of icing on the cake. We just keep up the appearance of democracy until the next election.

An hon. member: That is right. That is the way it is.

Mr. Blaikie: We are all being used in that way to varying degrees whether we like it or not because the real decisions are being made somewhere else. They are not just being made in the Prime Minister's Office. Some of the decisions that affect what goes on in the Prime Minister's Office are being made in the corporate boardrooms of the country.

That is part of the over-all malaise it seems to me. I do not know the answer short of a general rebellion on the part of the people by which they demand authentic political processes, an authentic political debate and an authentic Parliament. I think that is the kind of alienation and anger on which new political phenomena like the Reform Party feed. I do not think that they are the answer, but they certainly feed on a legitimate anger about that.

Mr. Speaker, I see you giving me the high sign or the low sign, I am not sure. I could certainly go on about this. I think I have said why I think this reform goes against what we had in mind in the McGrath committee. I think there are members on the government side who at least must feel ambiguous about these reforms and see the argument I am making, even if they cannot agree with me.

I would hope that very soon we would get around to dealing with some of the really tough questions which the Lefebvre committee ignored, which the McGrath committee ignored and which this reform ignores and that is, how to deal with Question Period to make it more substantive and make it an opportunity for more members rather than fewer and fewer members. That is part of the problem around here. If you can never get on in the only forum that anyone ever pays attention to, then what is the point of being here? If no one is paying attention to debates and Question Period is the only place that anyone pays attention to, and fewer and fewer

people get to ask questions, then it is no wonder the people want to be in their ridings where they can at least have authentic conversations with people. So there is the problem of Question Period. Finally, and I say this to the hon. member for Peace River, there is the whole question of legislative planning, which is the real alternative to all this machiavellian stuff we have in this reform which enables the government to jam through bills as it pleases.

• (1630)

I will finish in a minute, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The hon. member's time is over–expired now by two minutes. I will let him have another 30 seconds to wind up.

Mr. Blaikie: What we need here is a real will to do legislative planning, to have people sit down and say: "This is what we are going to give to this bill and this is what we are going to give to that bill because this is important". That takes give and take on both sides. Then we will know when we are going to deal with them instead of always dealing with things on 15 seconds notice. No wonder people have a hard time paying attention or being substantive, when you never know from one day to the next or sometimes from one hour to the next what you will be dealing with.

I think the government could have done us a great service if it had come forward with a proposal as to how we could all put our heads together and plan our life here in a way that did not subject some of us to the will of others, but instead subjected the whole process to what collectively we thought might serve the interests of the Canadian people.

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member's discourse with great interest. He and I have had the privilege of working together on a number of parliamentary reform packages. I have always admired his work and his intellect and this time is no exception.

He began early in his remarks by indicating that he and I have had some discussions and that we do not agree on how we view this particular package. He speaks the truth. That is true.

I do want to comment on a couple of things. I am really pleased to hear him say that it is time for some reform in terms of Question Period. I hope by that he is meaning a real balance to those reforms in that we treat backbenchers on this side with, maybe not total equality, but at least giving us some opportunity to put questions.

For example, in this last week we have tried to have I think a total of eight members rise to ask questions. Out of that we got two in three days. I agree with him that we need some reforms there. I am glad to hear him say that. I want to pursue it.

The second thing he said should have been in this package was legislative planning. He should talk to his House leader. We have tried on several occasions in the two years I have been in this job to encourage just that, but it does not seem to be working. The will is not there and I hope that he would consider that.

I have a quick question for him on legislative committees. It seems to me that the McGrath task force indicated that it should be technical witnesses. I am wondering if he had forgotten that or whether he does not agree with what we had originally designed there, which is in place now.

Mr. Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, first of all, with respect to Question Period. The member should be careful to realize that when we talk about the reform of Question Period we are not only and perhaps not even, but I take the point, talking about providing more opportunities for government backbenchers. I would see more promise in that if I had seen more willingness on the part of the government to entertain real criticism within its own ranks or within its own caucus. But only two weeks ago I had to listen to arguments about why motions which were not procedurally motions of non–confidence were motions of confidence and why everybody had to vote against medicare because the government House leader thought this was a motion of confidence.

It does not give me a lot of confidence that if we had a reform of Question Period which provided government

members with more opportunities to ask questions that those questions would be real questions.

I think that we do have to reform Question Period. Perhaps we have to make it a little longer, I do not know. We certainly have to shorten up everything that goes on. I remember a time when there were all kinds of different questions asked here and backbenchers could do their job. They could get on and ask about something happening in their riding or their region. It is pointless now, I am sure, for a lot of members. They just do not have a chance. That is true, not just for government backbenchers.

That is true of opposition backbenchers as well. If they cannot go back to their people and say: "I raised this in the House of Commons", what are they to do? I think Question Period should be reformed.

Maybe we should look at more predictable ways of saying: "On this day, these kinds of questions will be asked." We have a ridiculous way in which everybody has to be briefed on every possible combination of questions every day. It must be horrible.

I think we could have some planning in the Question Period, but it has to be a package. It has to be something that corrects what is wrong with Question Period for that side of the House and for this side of the House. It cannot be something that is unilaterally imposed.

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I just want to make a comment.

I was watching the hon. member on television in my office, and he made a comment which I do not take exception to in the sense that I believe he made it in all honesty believing it to be true that I am one of the members who charged the Chair.

Very briefly, I would like to explain that particular incident when the Hon. Lloyd Francis was in the chair talking about the constitution. Indeed, there were members charging the Chair.

I was seated right about over there and came out of my chair to intercept a Liberal member who I thought was menacing my leader. That particular shot came on television and Bill Fox of *The Toronto Star* wrote up that "Andre was rushing the Chair".

In fact, I did not and some citizen of Toronto who happened to see that scene took exception to that article by Bill Fox in *The Toronto Star*. He took it to the Ontario Press Council and they said that yes, it was an article that was improper and inaccurate. Indeed, a correction appeared in *The Toronto Star* in a small column.

Unfortunately, by then every computer in the country that carries this kind of information had in it that Andre rushed the Chair. I do not know how to get it out of the darn computers.

What I did finally was to go into the Archives and get the videotape of that whole incident. I have it in my office, and to anybody who believes I rushed the Chair that day, I would say: "Come to my office. I will show you the whole videotape and you will see that in fact I did not do that."

I raise that because there is no reason that the hon. member should know anything else. It is in every computer. Any time anybody does a semi-biographical article on Yours Truly, they contain in it "who once rushed the Chair". I will probably go to my grave with that, but I did not want to miss this opportunity to straighten out at least one member, and hopefully any others in the House who may be under that illusion.

Mr. Blaikie: I did say when I was corrected by the hon. member for Peace River that I accepted the correction. I accept in the presence of the hon. member that I was mistaken as to which Liberal he rushed and for what reasons.

When I think of those days and of some of the things that went on, the hon. member will have to ask himself, even given this correction, why he always comes to mind.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): A very short question and a very short answer, please.

Mr. Pat Nowlan (Annapolis Valley—Hants): Mr. Speaker, it is really a question that the hon. member for Peace River asked. I had some others, but time is moving on.

I was surprised too about the comment on legislative committee versus standing committee, technical and not witnesses. Certainly, in the McGrath report, the legislative committees were not to have witnesses and/or travel. That was to be done by the standing committee on the issue. That is what I thought and that was the purport.

My real question which will have a short reply is: Having had the experience of the legislative committee and/or the standing committee,—this disappoints me and not that I am that upset with it but let us see how it works—I really cannot see this whole envelope thing. The hon. member pointed out some interesting thoughts of how I think there is going to be a breakdown and how it is going to work.

I, for one, am totally negative to the legislative committee and the standing committee. I think this is a duplication if ever, that puts more strain on government members. From the hon. member's practical experience, how does he assess the legislative committee and the necessity of it with a viable standing committee?

• (1640)

Mr. Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I tried to answer that by saying that my understanding of the McGrath committee recommendations was that if legislative committees were to concern themselves only and strictly with technical matters, this was to be part of an over-all package whereby certain policy principles or whatever would find the opportunity to be examined in other ways. That has happened. Standing committees have looked at things and then when a bill has finally appeared it has gone to a legislative committee, but it has also happened without that.

The concern is that the government will simply bring in a bill, the subject matter of which has not been previously studied by a standing committee, put it into the legislative committee and say "I am sorry, according to the rules we can only hear technical comments" and, bingo, the process is incomplete in that way and expedited in a way that we find offensive.

In all honesty I have to say that I do not have a great deal of experience on legislative committees because it just so happens that given my critic areas I have not sat on a lot of legislative committees. I was the external affairs critic for three years. There is not a lot of legislation in external affairs. Prior to that I was the environment critic. Just as the environmental legislation came along in the fall of 1987, I went to external affairs. I do not profess to have a lot of experience on legislative committees, but my sense from a distance is they have not worked out as well as we thought they would when we conceived them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): /I regret that questions and comments are now terminated.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to a government motion which, if it is ever passed, will have a negative impact on future debates in this House.

I would like to begin by saying that the abuse of the Standing Orders of the House of Commons by this government is nothing new. We, opposition members, are used to the government abusing the rules.

The government claims that the proposed changes will make the proceedings more relevant and increase the efficiency of the House. First of all, we must realize that this is being proposed by the very government that applied closure 13 times and time allocation to important bills over eight times since 1988. How can we seriously take a proposal to improve the efficiency of the House made by a government which, in the past, showed contempt for the Standing Orders of this House? The figures regarding the number of times closure was applied clearly illustrate this point.

Of more concern is the fact that the proposed changes are contrary to the fundamental principles of the British parliamentary system that we follow. I would like to quote a short paragraph from the *Précis of Procedure*, third edition to show how such proposals run counter to the principles of our parliamentary system. The first paragraph of section 13(A) reads as follows:

> A fundamental aspect of the principles on which the financial rpocedures of Parliament are based is that Parliament does not grant supply before the Opposition has had the opportunity to show why it should be refused.

Mr. Speaker, to show the Canadian people why supply should be granted or not, the Opposition has at its disposal days called "opposition days" or "allotted days". On these 25 days a year, the Opposition can show the Canadian people how the government is spending their money. But it is now proposed to considerably reduce the number of opposition days. Fewer opposition days would means fewer opportunities for the Opposition to question the government actions and spending.

The role of an opposition party in a parliamentary system is to make the process more democratic by forcing the government of the day to be accountable.

One reason Parliament exists is to give the people a choice in who will administer public funds.

But reducing the number of days devoted to considering spending or cuts proposed by the government attacks the very principle of our parliamentary system, if I go by the third edition of the *Precis of Procedure*.

A fundamental aspect of Parliament is to give the opposition an opportunity to show why appropriations should be refused, but this can be done less effectively if there are fewer days to do so, Mr. Speaker.

Unfortunately, opposition days are not the only victims of the government motion to change the procedure of this House.

The parliamentary calendar is also a victim of the government's proposals. The motion proposes reducing the sitting days of the House of Commons from 175, Mr. Speaker. According to the present calendar, we should sit for about 175 days, although the government does not always stick to the calendar. The reform would reduce it by 40 to 135 days. That is a reduction of 23 per cent in the number of sitting days.

In other words, it would increase by 21 per cent the number of days that government members could travel in their ridings. I have the present calendar here with me, according to the present Standing Orders 24(1) and 28 of the House, and for 1991, if we adhered to this calendar, which we have not, Mr. Speaker—we are in April 1991. If we had adhered to the calendar, in January 1991, we would have sat only three weeks; in February, the same, three weeks; in March, three and a half weeks; in April, three weeks. Only in May would we sit four and half weeks, and three and a half weeks in June. In September, we would sit three weeks, and in October, five weeks, in November, three weeks and in December, three weeks.

In most of the months that we sit—and it must be said that we do not sit at all in July and August—we sit on average three weeks a month when we follow the calendar, Mr. Speaker. So why these changes? If we are unable to follow a calendar that already gives members some time to go to their ridings and meet their constituents, if that is the real intention, and I doubt it, but even if it were really the government's intention, we already have the time needed to go to our ridings and hear from our constituents. So as you see, there are definitely other reasons for taking 40 sitting days from a calendar which only provides for 165 sitting days out of the 365 in a year.

There is another important fundamental principle of our system and it involves the role of Parliament. Its role is to make the government face its responsibilities. For the less we sit, the less the government is forced to face its responsibilities to the people.

The forum Canadians have to force their government to answer for its actions is Parliament. Mr. Speaker, this is an essential component of responsible government.

The Conservative Members ask for more time to visit their ridings, because as you know, Mr. Speaker, the popularity of the Conservative Party is at the lowest level since polls were taken in Canada. This government is the most unpopular of any since polls were first taken. We understand that very well. That is why I was just wondering whether the real reason is that they want to hear from their constituents or that they want to go back to their ridings and start campaigning two years before the next election because they have completely lost the confidence of the Canadian people.

• (1650)

So Mr. Speaker, let us call a spade a spade. This proposal is purely political. It does nothing to improve the effectiveness of the House of Commons. The Conservatives want to boost their popularity and are hiding behind the idea of improving how the House operates. It is hypocrisy.

Reducing the number of days the House sits would limit Canadians' power to force the government of the day to answer for its actions to the people. It must be said that the motion proposing changes to the Standing Orders includes several examples of the point I just made: limiting the power of Canadians to force the government to explain itself in Parliament. Reducing the number of sitting days in itself reduces the ability of elected members to question the government of the day.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed reduction of 40 days includes reductions in the days for debating the budget and the speech from the Throne, two extremely important subjects for all Canadians.

First, the government asks the opposition to give up two of the six days for debating the budget. As we know, the budget is one of the most important means at the government's disposal for revealing its economic and social policies. The budget statement tells the people the general economic policy that the government intends to pursue.

Mr. Speaker, that is how important the budget statement is. It is regrettable that the motion before this House proposes reducing the number of days to debate the government's general economic policy from six, as it is now, to four. We believe that four days of debate on the government's economic and social policy is not enough. The budget shows us not only the economic policy that the government intends to take but it also brings in tax changes that take effect immediately after it is presented. So the budget affects Canadians immediately after it is presented through the many tax changes in it. It deserves more than 3 per cent of the sitting days.

Mr. Speaker, in 1985, when the budget was presented and deindexed old age security pensions, by raising questions in the House and debating the budget we succeeded. That is how important Parliament's role is. It is at a time like this that we are reminded of the importance of Parliament and of being here to debate current issues. It is in this Parliament that we made the public aware of the unfairness of the government action. People came down here and demonstrated in support of the Opposition and the government had to do an about-face. As a result, we still have indexed old age security pensions. That is why it is important to debate the economic and social statement contained in the government budget and to have enough time to do it.

Once again, the government is restricting the capacity of the elected members to make it accountable to the people. A government that restricts the capacity of the Opposition to question its actions is a government incapable to defend itself, a government that has failed and that should step down.

This becomes even more obvious if we look at the effect of the reduction in the number of sitting days on the oral question period. As I said earlier, it is because of question period that the government had to change a social and economic policy, set out in the budget in 1985, which would have adversely affected senior citizens in Canada. So, it is important, because we must remember that cutting 40 sitting days takes away 40 question periods. Given the number of questions asked daily, the government may have 300 to 400 fewer questions to answer every year. Let us not forget either the number of ministers who had to resign because of questions asked during question period over the six and a half years this government have been in power.

So, not only does the government want to reduce the number of days when questions can be asked during question period, but it is also trying in a way to cover up its unreliability.

Another important point I would like to make has to do with the restructurating of the House of Commons committees. The motion before us calls for a structure in which the standing committees would be grouped into five envelopes, each of which would include several standings committees and two legislative committees. This new structure would report to and be administered by a new standing committee called Standing Committee on House Management. The proposed structure, Mr. Speaker, will require a high degree of co-operation from all the parties represented in this House. As you know, it will be difficult at times to have an inspiring atmosphere of cooperation and trust, considering the difficulties our country is now going through.

Members of Parliament are aware that, since last September, the normal workings of our committees are impaired. You can ask members of all three parties, and even independent members, how many committes have been sitting since September. There are always excuses and, under the control of the government majority, there are no sittings. For example, the government was forced to designate some chairmen because there had been some resignations, but the government did not want to replace them as this was providing an excuse for not sitting. So, that explains the situation we are now experiencing.

In order to create a climate of trust, I wish all members of Parliament will do their best to ensure that this type of event will not recur. To that end, Mr. Speaker, we will need a lot of co-operation—and that is my worst concern. I personally see two reasons why co-operation will be required for this committee restructuration. First, this new Committee on House Management will apparently have great powers and plenty of work. As a consequence of the government proposal, the Committee on House Management will have many responsibilities and we, the Liberal members, think there is a risk that it won't be efficient, precisely because of that heavy workload. That, does not match our definition of efficiency.

The government will have a hard time to convince Canadians that efficiency will be enhanced by overloading a committee with work. In my opinion, that is not logical. One has only to look at the tasks that will be given to this new committee to know that it will be overburdened and, consequently, inefficient. The committee will be responsible, among other things, for the management of committees, consideration of the administration of the House, administration of private members business and checking of all questions of procedure. These three functions alone are too much for one committee, a situation that will completely paralyse the business of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I refer to the old tradition of the House which says that the rules and composition of a committee must be established in an objective way. Presently, all committee dealings are regulated by Standing Orders 100 to 122. I would like to quote the *Précis of Procedure*, third edition, chapter 14: "The House of Commons establishes, in conformity with Standing Orders or, occasionally, with a special order of the House, a mandate defining expressly the extent of the committees' business."

• (1700)

Now, if there are technical problems with the operation and composition of the committees, the answer can be found in the Standing Orders. In short, the Standing Orders are neutral and are not controlled by any political party in particular.

It would seem that if this government's motion is adopted, the House Management Committee will have precedence over the Standing Orders for matters concerning the operation of the House Committees. There is nothing positive about that.

Standing Orders control the committees, as I have just emphasized, and, as we know, the Standing Orders are neutral and are not controlled by anybody, but are applied by you, Mr. Speaker. According to the government's proposal, the new management committee would control the committees. This Committee will be controlled by its members and, because of the make-up of the House, by the governement who holds a majority, which means that every operation, every structure of this committe will be controlled by the government. So, with our current system, everything is done in cooperation with the Chair who renders its decision—and we know, Mr. Speaker, you are neutral. We will loseout. Therefore once again, instead of helping us to have more civilized debates, we will have to follow party lines and quibbling will prevail over efficiency.

Mr. Speaker, I have the feeling—and it has been the case since September, as I have said earlier—that our standing committees do not work very well and I wonder whether, until the election, the government really intends to make them work. Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on House Management proposal could very well end up clogging the whole system.

That is why Liberals in the Official Opposition object to that proposal.

There is also the whole question of legislative committees. We are told that legislative committees could only hear technical testimonies. What is that supposed to mean, Mr. Speaker? And who is to decide that any given testimony should be considered technical? The government, obviously. Members in the opposition could very well hold a different opinion. Once more, the government majority is going to crush the minority.

You are signalling that my time is over. But I wanted to contribute to this important debate on a parliamentary system that we should strive to preserve. I hope that government backbenchers will remember our parliamentary tradition and vote with the opposition to defeat this motion.

Hon. Marcel Danis (Minister of State (Youth), Minister of State (Fitness and Amateur Sport) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to be able to address this House of Commons on the subject matter of motion number 30, which deals with changes to the rules of this House.

Mr. Speaker, we call our rules; Standing Orders. Canadian parliamentary law began, of course, in 1867 and, in the last 124 years,—

[*English*]

Mr. Simmons: Mr. Speaker, point of order. My colleague and friend from Saint-Léonard has just given a good speech. I understand the haste of the minister for youth to make his maiden speech in the Chamber, but I wonder if he could just relent for a moment because we did not get an opportunity to put some questions to my friend from Saint-Léonard. I understood the minister was rising on questions. Could we revert?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Yes, is there unanimous consent to revert to questions and comments? I did ask whether there was questions and comments. Is there agreement?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions or comments, the hon. member for York South—Weston.

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to commend my colleague from Montreal on his excellent submissions to the House. I would hope that his submissions will serve to convince hon. colleagues opposite of the unfortunate nature of the proposals that are before the House today.

I note that the hon. member for Saint-Léonard was elected to this House six and a half years ago in the general election of 1984. I also was first elected in that general election. The House will note that this hon. member has been a very active participant in the debates in this House, and in fact in all the workings of Parliament Hill.

Could the member indicate in his now lengthy experience in this House whether he believes that the present number of sitting days are adequate. Could he also tell me whether this Chamber itself is relevant to the workings of our parliamentary democracy? Could he advise the House whether in his personal view the people of Canada will accept the government's proposal that might suggest to some that members of Parliament are seeking to have one week's holiday for every three weeks worked. That is the concern among some of my constituents, that is the perception out there. Would the hon. member not agree with me that when this Chamber is not sitting, there is a perception out there in the public that members of Parliament are on holidays? Does any of his constituents share that particular concern?

Mr. Gagliano: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his generous words. My constituents in Saint-Léonard elected me for the second time in 1988. They elected me to come to this place to fight for their rights and to represent them. We see the situation that the country is in today. This country is on the verge of breaking up. We see thousands and thousands of not only Saint-Léonard constituents but Montrealers and Quebecers and Canadians all across the land are losing their jobs every day, businesses are closing, people are fed up the way the system is run.

Here this week, after taking an Easter break of 10 days—and I wonder how many Canadians take 10 days' break because of Easter—what are we debating? We are not debating how we are going to solve the crisis of how we are going to keep this country together. We are not debating how we are going to find jobs for Canadians who are losing jobs, or children that are starving. We are debating that we need 40 days extra to go to our ridings. That is what the government says, but I am wondering whether we will go to our ridings to listen to Canadians or try to take some days off or even try to sell some policy of the government that are not saleable.

That is what my constituents tell me. That is the message I tried to deliver in the 20 minutes I spoke. If we have enough time, I will make the point that the actual calendar, which is about 175 days, the government claims that we need a week a month to go to our ridings. We could have followed the actual calendar. We came back on February 25. What happened to the three weeks we were supposed to sit in January? We came back because of the war. Then we declared war and we went back home. On February 25 we had the budget. We had a couple of weeks of debate. Now we are debating because we want to go home and maybe we are going to come back in the middle of May.

How many Canadian workers have all this time off? We have all sorts of tools to help us in our work, for example, telephone calls, television, householders. We have a budget of over $150,000 to hire people to answer all of the problems that we have in the riding. We are elected to be in this place to present the legislation and solutions to have people working, to have a better place for our children and our grandchildren and keep this country together.

• (1710)

Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North): Mr. Speaker, I would like the previous speaker to comment on some of the things that I see in this legislation, particularly as it relates to discussions of budgets.

My only other experiences as an elected official prior to being elected to the House of Commons was on Surrey Council. There the council sat several times as a committee of the whole, probably in total six or seven days, looking at the budget.

I am on the health committee. We get to examine the budget for one hour because that is all the time the minister is coming before us. We would debate the budget in Surrey Council maybe over three or four council meetings; here it is now going to be restricted to four days.

What I see happening in these changes is that the government is trying to say that it can spend less time on a national budget, debating, looking and examining the expenditure of the country's money, than the Surrey Council will spend looking at a municipal budget.

So I would like the member's comments as to how he sees these new rules affecting our ability to look at the national budget.

Mr. Gagliano: Mr. Speaker, the budget is not simply a statement of figures. In the budget the government will show where it wants to take the country, where it stands on economic matters and social matters. It is very important that this House has all the time necessary, whether through committees or in the House here, to go item by item through the budget.

The member was telling us of his experience on a municipal council. I had my experience on a school board council. We had a budget of about $80 million and we used to take a week, close ourselves in and study the budget, and take it item by item. We used to prepare the budget. Here, we have a minister who gives us a speech which may be an hour, an hour and a half on national television, announcing that immediately people are affected by that.

We now have six days to debate the budget. The government wants to reduce that number to four, and then that is it.

An hon. member: That is it. And then they want to cut that back.

Mr. Gagliano: Yes, I agree with the member. I think we will have to have enough time, all the time necessary, because the budget is very important. That is where the government tells us what decisions it has made.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions and comments are now terminated. Debate, the hon. Deputy House Leader.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marcel Danis (Minister of State (Youth), Minister of State (Fitness and Amateur Sport) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to be able to address the House of Commons this afternoon on the subject of motion number 30, which deals with changes to the rules of this House. We call our rules Standing Orders. Canadian Parliamentary Law began, of course, in 1867 and, over the years, we have evolved a set of rules about how to behave, how to enact laws, how to govern and how to ask government to be accountable to the nation.

Mr. Speaker, our rules, our standing orders, were first put together by J.G. Bourinot, who was the clerk of this house for 22 years, from 1880 to 1902. He relied to a large degree, on precedent and practice which came from the British House of Commons.

Once we had a clear idea of our rules, we began, as Canadians, to outline our own way of proceeding in the House and the Senate. Some would now term us well organized, rational, clear in our use of language and procedures and, Mr. Speaker, concise. Others may apply different epithets to their descriptions of the way this House operates. Being a dynamic and ever–changing group of men and women we, as parliamentarians, exhibit dynamism and willingness to change, in the ways in which we make laws.

We have produced, over the last 124 years, a plethora of rules and procedures. These are motivated by politeness, by legal simplicity and by history.

Motion 30, debated now, is one of the occasional attempts to change and modernize how this House operates. We have 159 Standing Orders, many of which are sub–divided into several parts. A lot of words govern our lives in this Chamber. Many of these are more than 120 years old.

Let me read, as an example, the very last standing order, number 159, written in 1867.

> It is the duty of the officers of this House to complete and finish the work remaining at the close of the session.

This rule came about because employees of the House were only engaged for the few months when members were in Ottawa, having arrived on horse-back, by boat, or by train.

Life has become far more complicated. People across this nation now have instantaneous information, via television broadcasting, and the staffing requirements in the House in this modern electronic age mean that specialization and dedication are full time requirements.

[*English*]

Some may have the opinion that we would all be better off if we had never heard, say for three months, what actually transpired in the House of Commons. That, of course, is not possible. We cannot go back as we move away from the agrarian age through to today's electronic age of information towards the 21st century in eight and a half years. We see a need to change the rules.

[*Translation*]

Indeed, this package of rule changes is one which has taken over 18 months to negotiate among all parties. It was outdated before we even adopted it, because we did not cover all the changes to be covered. Standing Order 158 says that, if the sergeant at arms takes someone into custody, that person cannot be released until a fine of $4.00 is paid to the sergeant at arms. Again, a rule from the nineteenth century. We are gradually modernising our rules, and, with or without the cooperation of the members opposite, we will continue to bring this House into the modern age.

[*English*]

Mr. Bourinot began the process of codifying our rules. He was followed by others and today, we use, as our reference, the sixth edition of Beauchesne for our rules, precedents, examples and expectations. I cannot, for instance, call the hon. member opposite an ass or a donkey. These are unparliamentary terms. Members of the equine family, small size, may not get approval either. I cannot even compliment the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands on his dress. All these constraints are codified by our Standing Orders and Beauchesne.

[*Translation*]

Now let me come to the present set of proposals, Mr. Speaker. I would especially like to explain several of these proposed changes in detail.

As a first example, let me quote Standing Order 37(3). This rule relates to the provision of answers to questions by members. If a member is able to get on the priority list to be able to ask a question and the member is not happy with the answer, the member can appeal to the Speaker for an elaboration.

I won't read the entire rule, but the important proposal is the new sentence we want to add to 37(3). I will read this—

> Unless previously disposed of, the said notice shall be deemed withdrawn after the forty-fifth sitting day from the day of notice.

Mr. Speaker, with the present rule, a member could give notice today about unhappiness with an answer and ask the Speaker for it to be considered for a fuller answer. This process is called the late show and usually 3 requests are chosen, to be dealt with in the 30 minutes after the close of daily business.

• (1720)

Now, that sounds okay. But the reality is that these requests can languish on the list for a day, a week, a month or, Mr. Speaker, up to two years. This is absurd. The honourable member has probably completely forgotten about the request or the topic has become irrelevant. Obviously, the system needs changing.

The new proposal suggest that, if a late show question cannot be dealt with within 45 sitting days, and I emphasize that this is still more than 2 months, then the issue is dropped in favor of a more topical question.

[*English*]

That is quite a reasonable proposal, Mr. Speaker. This is only one of a negotiated 64 proposed changes. They were negotiated with the members of the opposition and our members, negotiated, examined and refined by procedural experts in the House. These have been examined in fine detail by platoons of lawyers, politicians and procedural clerks.

Of course, with those credentials, thousands of Canadians may say: "The devil with it, throw the lot of them out, the politicians and the lawyers." I am sure that no one here wants to discard the rules.

[*Translation*]

Of course, the opposition wants to discard these changes. The Liberals have proposed throwing out twenty one of these negotiated changes. The socialists over there on the left had many more that they wanted to throw out, and I say *wanted*, the past tense, Mr. Speaker, all, after negotiating and discussing and nodding and agreeing.

[*English*]

The only reason the NDP were late with their proposed throw-aways was because their House leader, the hon. member for Kamloops, forgot when he was supposed to make the amendment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, I really feel sorry for him because it is very embarrassing. Now, if he would agree to this package of changes, perhaps the simplified rules would be easier to understand and remember. We all know, Mr. Speaker, that memory begins to fade as we grow older. I know that the Minister of Justice finds the hon. member for Kamloops very young, but one would not know that, judging by his memory.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, while we are on a roll and while we are moving quickly, I look forward to a resolution of this debate and the adoption of these simple, rational rule changes. Why don't we agree to begin work on the next package of rule changes? The next package could be looked at in the coming weeks and discussed and negotiated and tinkered with and we could adopt them by the end of June.

Perhaps 18 months was too long for discussion and negotiation, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps that was too much like the 19th century. Let us be realistic. We are now eight and a half years away from the 21st century. Maybe we can speed this up a little and modernize even more in the next six weeks.

Mr. Speaker, let me give the House another example of one of the proposed changes. This proposed change, Mr. Speaker, has to do with the use of television. We all know that the majority of Canadians absorb news solely from television and not from newspapers, radio, magazines or even gossip—they rely on television. TV, whether we like it or not, is the major dispenser of news and information in our modern age.

[*English*]

The best way for Canadians to watch and judge their legislators is to watch the proceedings on television. Not many persons may watch the House of Commons debates.

Mr. Butland: Not right now. They would be making a mistake now.

Mr. Danis: Perhaps people prefer programs such as *Watching a Flower Grow*. Some may say that watching the House of Commons is preferable to hot needles placed under finger nails. At least we can give people the opportunity to choose for themselves whether they want to watch the House or not.

[*Translation*]

One of the proposed changes, Mr. Speaker, Number 56 of this motion, proposes adding a new rule to the Standing Orders of the House of Commons. It reads:

> 56. That the following new Standing Order be added after Standing Order 119:
>
> 119.1(1) Any committee wishing to use the facilities of the House of Commons for the broadcasting of its meetings shall first obtain the consent of the House.
>
> (2) The Standing Committee on House Management shall establish, by report to the House of Commons, experimental guidelines governing the broadcasting of committee meetings. After concurrence by the House in such a report, any committee may permit the presence of the electronic media at its meetings, subject to the said guidelines.

Mr. Speaker, this proposed rule would broaden the reforms of the House begun by the McGrath Committee in 1985. Members of the House of Commons who work hard in committees deserve the chance to be seen and heard by their electors. It is often a criticism of this House that at any one time only 10 to 20 members may be there during a debate on a bill.

At that same time, however, there may be as many as seven Standing committees meeting on Parliament Hill. These committees of from 8 to 15 members hear witnesses—ordinary Canadians with a point of view. They could be analyzing and discussing policies which impact on all Canadians; they could be planning for future legislation; and they could be questioning bureaucrats and senior officials on details of the operation of government. This is a major and vital part of the duties of a member of Parliament.

This proposed addition to the rules will allow the broadcasting of committee proceedings. Now, not everyone, Mr. Speaker, likes this proposed rule. It would show who is in attendance at committees. It may show that good questions could get swamped by asinine showmanship.

Like the committee members themselves, all Canadians would have the chance to be involved in the legislative process. We can choose to be responsible and efficient. We are elected to be efficient, Mr. Speaker, and we are equal to that task.

Bring television into the process of the House. Then the television media persons would have the choice of showing clips of the work of members who do not normally qualify for consideration. You can sit at home and watch your member at work.

[*English*]

This is visible democracy, Mr. Speaker. It is accountability. It is seen to be responsible.

Some of the hon. members opposite may be rubbing their hands together in glee with the anticipation of a further chance for a quasi-Question Period. Indeed, some government members may not like this proposed change either. It may show a tie askew, a hair out of place, a look of bewilderment as a bureaucrat drones on about some esoteric point of legislation.

[*Translation*]

I don't think that will happen. I think that the reality of hard work, of knowledge, of dedication, of sincerity and indeed co-operation among members will show through.

Mr. Speaker, these proposals include various changes to the rules on Private Members' Business. I do not want to go into detail on these specifically, but I do think that some general comments are needed.

As a former Deputy Speaker and now as a minister, I know very well that members can produce relevant and well-thought out pieces of legislation. Some of these proposed laws eventually wind through the lengthy process now in place and become law. I cite as an example Bill C-223, in the name of the New Democratic Party member for Churchill, which concerns a day of mourning for persons killed or injured in the workplace. I cite also Bill C-239, changing the name of the riding of the Liberal member for the electoral district of Saint-Laurent. And the third example, Mr. Speaker, is the well-prepared Bill C-258 from the hon. member for Etobicoke, which established the Centennial Flame Research Award to publicize the contributions of persons with disabilities to Canadian public life.

I cite these as three examples of private members' legislation which received royal assent and are now Canadian law. But, and this is a big but, at this moment, more than 150 bills remain on the Order Paper, along with more than 700 motions of private members.

• (1730)

Mr. Speaker, something must be done. It is a lottery, a game of chance. It is what ordinary members know as the dreaded time to choose. Will my motion be chosen? Will my bill ever be debated through all stages, through to becoming law? The answer, sadly, is that there is very little hope of this happening in the limited time available. So we propose sitting longer in the day. We propose smoothing out some aspects of Private Members' Business. What we have before us are proposals that have been discussed and negotiated and talked over and changed and modified.

We must do two things, Mr. Speaker. First, complete this debate and vote on these changes.

Second, begin the next round of negotiations to have a second package of changes to the Standing Orders for June.

Given the statements made in the speeches by the House leaders of the New Democratic Party and the Official Opposition, pursuant to Standing Order 57, I give notice that at the next sitting of the House, immediately before the calling of the Order of the Day for resuming the debate on Government Motion 30 conerning amendments to the Standing Orders of the House and on any amendment thereto, I shall move that the debate not be further adjourned.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the minister's speech. I will reserve my comments on the closure he has given notice of until another time. It may or may not happen.

What I wanted to talk about are two of the changes he mentioned in his speech. First, he discussed the question of Private Members' Business and he indicated how the private members' rules changes had been developed through lengthy discussion. I agree with him. That discussion took place in a standing committee of this House where, in my view, all of these rules should have been discussed.

My first question to him is, why is he unwilling to refer this motion to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections where the matter could be viewed, opinions from interested parties heard and a report made to the House in due course? As he knows, every private members' rule is verbatim from the report of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections that was adopted in June 1990.

The second question has to do with televising the standing committees. He talks about the new rule and what a fine thing this is. He must be aware that Motion No. 11, on the government's list of orders on the Order Paper, is a motion moved by me, seconded by one of his own members, the hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona, moving concurrence in the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections. That report provided detailed rules for the televising of committees of this House. If it had been adopted by the House and if the government had called it for debate, it would have solved the problem he has proposed in the order and, in fact, would have guaranteed the right of committees to have cameras in the committee sessions, which is not guaranteed under the rule changes the government is proposing today.

It is clear that the government will, in fact, control the televising of committees in a very authoritarian way, typical of this authoritarian government.

I wonder if the minister could tell us why it is he has refused to deal with the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections which was an all-party committee, an all-party report, recommending televising of committees in a comprehensive way, instead of doing it in this piecemeal fashion in the Standing Orders.

His speech was sweetness and light. To someone who had just tuned in and watched that, one would think that the rule changes proposed were going to bring about the *annus mirabilis*. I can tell him that I think he could benefit from having studied the committee reports and refer these rules to committee in order to assist in their implementation.

Mr. Danis: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his comments.

He put a number of questions. The first one was: Why was this rules package not referred to committee?

• (1735)

The hon. member, the member for Kamloops and the parliamentary secretary for the House Leader are very well aware, as are the Whips, of the difficulties caused by the opposition parties with regard to the committee structure that we have had in this House for a few months. The hon. member would know that this rules package has been on the table, negotiated, for approximately 18 months. Every single one of those rule changes, all 64 of them, have been negotiated with both opposition parties. There has been plenty of time to deal with those.

Mr. Milliken: No public input.

Mr. Danis: The member says there has been no public input. The hon. member represents by himself probably over 100,000 people. The hon. member who asked the question is very well versed in House procedure. I know that he was a participant in the negotiations that were held with mainly the parliamentary secretary to the House leader, so he was there—correct me if I am wrong—negotiated and dealt with the 64 points.

That is not the original package. The original package was changed by the government House leader at the request of the the Official Opposition. Some things were taken out at the request of the New Democratic Party. This is the package we believe to be a fair and honest package that we have proposed to the House. The member for Kingston and the Islands, who is an expert in procedure and has been for a number of years, even before he was in this House, if he could vote on a free vote, I am positive that the hon. member would support our package.

Mr. John Harvard (Winnipeg St. James): Mr. Speaker, I want to put a couple of things on the record.

If television coverage of House committees comes, I will welcome that. But I hope that this government will not be authoritarian and will allow the media to decide which committee meeting will be covered. If we give that decision to politicians on the government side or on any side, we are looking for trouble.

Right now, when the newspapers want to cover a particular story in committee, they make the decision. We do not do that. There should be no difference when it comes to television coverage.

I also want to say that I am concerned about these changes because I think their main thrust is to limit debate. One of my concerns is that these changes are going to backfire from this point of view; they will increase public cynicism. Take, for example, the proposal of three weeks on and one week off. There will be a lot of Canadians who will identify the one week off as some kind of a break, some kind of a holiday. You and I know that that is not going to be true. But I am afraid it is going to contribute to cynicism. It is going to contribute to that very jaundiced, negative view that people have of this particular House.

I would like to ask the hon. minister a question. It has to do with these proposed rules changes and with the failure to deal with legislative planning.

As someone who was elected for the first time in 1988, I find it offensive the way the House works when it comes to planning legislation. I know the Liberals did it when they were in power and the Tories do it now that they are in power: Never give the opposition one extra moment to prepare; drop something on their desks 15 minutes before it happens, an hour before it happens, maybe sometimes a day, sometimes two. To me, that is not planning, and that is not a way to run a House. It is not a way to run Parliament.

My question of the hon. minister is this: Does he not recognize that this was a failure and that there has to be a lot more work done to allow for legislative planning?

• (1740)

Mr. Danis: I agree with my hon. friend that there should be more time for planning legislation. I just wish that he could attend some of the weekly meetings we have with the House leaders, the deputy House leaders, and the whips to see how hard the government House leader tries to get the co-operation of the opposition to do exactly what the hon. member suggests.

My reply to the hon. member would be to talk to his House leader. We are certainly ready to co-operate. We have tried many times, but we have been unable to do so and certainly not through lack of co-operation on the part of the government House leader. We know how flexible the government House leader is. He has been trying to co-operate.

The hon. member made two other comments. I am glad that he supports our rule changes which will have the effect of more TV coverage in committees. I certainly thank him for that. He has made negative comments with regard to the three weeks and one week. He knows as well as I do that when we consider the total number of hours they will be the same.

However, if I could speak for myself on that issue, I represent a riding in the province of Quebec which was one of the seven ridings that voted yes in the Quebec referendum on separation. There were only seven in the whole province. I also have MNAs who all represent the Parti Quebecois. They are trying to win their election and ensure that Quebec separates. The people in Quebec City sit, at most, six months a year from Tuesday afternoon—

Mr. Prud'homme: Four months.

Mr. Danis: The hon. member for Saint—Denis mentions four months. It is about that but certainly not more than six months a year. They sit from Tuesday at noon until Thursday at noon. The rest of the time they are in their ridings trying to make sure that Quebec separates. In the meantime under our system I have to be here five days a week all the time, from Labour Day to the end of June. I support the three weeks and one week. It will at least give me one week in the month where I can fight for Canada in my riding.

That is what I want to do, and that is why I support the change.

Hon. Roger C. Simmons (Burin—St. George's): Mr. Speaker, I have a few words to say on this subject we are debating. Just to remind the House and those who may be watching, we are debating some pretty far-reaching changes to the way we do our business here and the extent to which we will be able to do our business once the government rams this through.

There are a few specific points I want to make, but before doing so let me reflect on what my friend, the minister of fitness and amateur sport, has been saying. More to the point, let me reflect on the signal which he sent today. I thought it was, I say to him, a fairly sad day for him. Here is a fellow who has the reputation of being quite a brilliant lawyer, a man who in his former capacity as Deputy Speaker was one of the guardians of this place, one of the guardians of Parliament, of the rights of Parliament, and of the rights of private members. Here today he had really come full circle, with the spectacle of his standing there and saying something that he clearly does not believe. He read it well, but his heart was clearly not in it. The proof of the pudding, I say to my friend from Kamloops, the House leader for the third party here, was the minister's fairly nasty aspersions aimed at the member for Kamloops. That is not the minister of fitness and amateur sport. That is not the former Deputy Speaker whom we have all come to know and to like. We understand. We do not condone, but we understand that the man is not in his element today. He has been shoved a piece of paper and he has been told to stand and read it, or else. He does not believe what he said. Certainly he does not believe that we ought to have less opportunity to hold a government accountable, one of the principles that in his former capacity as Deputy Speaker he not only espoused but defended.

• (1745)

I am particularly disappointed in his performance today. On reflection, I say to him this is one night he should watch the rerun. He should really, before the night is out, sit back and watch when they play back today's proceedings of the House on television. He might want to come in tomorrow and not only apologize to the House, but to himself for that unseemly performance a few minutes ago.

If we were looking for some evidence that maybe the government is not stating up front what its real agenda is, or if we were looking for some proof that maybe there is something here that does not meet the eye or that on first blush does not look to be the case, it seems to me the proof of it is in the minister's final act before he sat down.

Here is what I mean. We hear the government spokesmen, the people on that side of the House, defend this in particular terms. They defend it as an improvement. That is the first argument. This is an improvement over what are the existing rules of Parliament. That is one of their arguments.

These people defend it in terms of more accountability and more opportunity to do the work that we are sent here to do. They defend it as a good idea that ought to stand up under scrutiny. They do all that, but then we watched what the minister did in his final act just a moment ago before he concluded his speech and sat down.

What did he say after a couple of days of debate? This is just the third day of debate on this issue. We have had a total of five or six hours altogether on an issue which will impact on the rights and abilities of every member of this Parliament, all 295 of us. It is an issue that will infringe on the ability of all 27 million Canadians to petition this place to have their issues raised in this place. An issue that important ought first of all to be debated more than four, five or six hours. That is all we have been debating it.

The minister espouses the importance of accountability in Parliament, says that we must do it right here and that the ideas he promotes on behalf of the government can stand up to scrutiny. He has done in his final act today something which puts the lie to everything he and his colleagues have said. He said that we have to rush this through, that we have to bring in closure and that is what he did in his final act: he gave notice of closure.

He said in unvarnished and unquoted terms to us and to the people of Canada: "Enough is enough. Tomorrow we are going to shut this place down. Tomorrow this debate is going to be over". That is in effect what he said in his last sentence or two.

He is the same man who in all his other mouthfuls in that 20-minute speech had been saying that we ought to be accountable, that we ought to scrutinize this. "This is such a brilliant idea", he is saying, "it will stand the scrutiny and the light of day". Having done that, he rushes in and says: "Enough light of day. Let's ram this through. Let's let the government use its majority as it did on the goods and services tax, on the free trade agreement, and on so many issues that are unpopular across this country". It just moves in its majority and rams it through.

That the minister who did that should be a former Speaker and should be a man who holds Parliament normally in such high regard is a particular disappointment for me, I say to him, and I believe for all members of this Chamber.

If there are some ideas here worth debating, let us take the time to debate them. I realize that appeal will probably fall on deaf ears too because the government has set things in motion. According to the minister's notice of motion, come tomorrow we will be punching our last few hours and having our last kick at the cat, as it were, in terms of saying what we believe is wrong with this. In the interest of having my opportunity to say what is wrong with it, let me move on.

• (1750)

By way of background, it was my privilege to have been a part of the committee that preceded the McGrath committee after the 1984 election. I was part of the earlier committee of which His Honour, the now Lieutenant–Governor of Newfoundland, was also a member. The minister of energy, the Deputy Prime Minister, and the gentleman who is now the Governor General were members. The former member and now senator Tom Lefebvre was the chairman. The member for Peace River was a member. The gentleman from Winnipeg Transcona was a member and, as I say, I was a member. I think there were 18 of us altogether who over a two–year period in 1982–1983 did under the chairmanship of Tom Lefebvre, a very thorough job of revamping and reviewing the rules of the House to ensure they would better serve the people who sent us here.

Indeed the committee did its job so well that after the government changed in 1984 and the new administration under the present Prime Minister took over it essentially restruck the committee. Given that the government had changed, it obviously made a government member chairman in the person of Mr. McGrath. It restruck the committee with almost all the same members and the committee in short order, in a matter of several months, brought in under Mr. McGrath's leadership essentially the same package of recommendations that the former committee under the chairmanship of the now Senator Lefebvre had worked on for a couple of years.

What does that tell us? First of all it tells us that the job had been well done. It also tells us that the job had the acquiescence or the support of two different parties which subsequently formed the government: one before 1984 and one after 1984. It goes without saying that it also had the support of the third party, the NDP, that had a couple of members on both the committee prior to 1984 and the one after 1984.

For the first time in literally decades we had an all–party consensus on a number of far–reaching measures which would not only streamline this place but make it more accountable and give more power to the private members. In general it would streamline the place in a way that would redound to the benefit of the people across this country who sent us here. That is the background.

The sad truth is that today, less than five or six years after those proposals were put through under the sponsorship of the present administration, we now see a wholesale gutting procedure. You can call it nothing else. You can put the best face on it you want to. You can sit there and tell me that you have come up with a good package, but I know the difference.

I know that the member for Peace River, the deputy government House leader, who was on that committee in 1982, 1983 and again in 1985 made a very worth–while contribution. Indeed, if we were to go back and check the minutes we would find a number of places where the very procedures he is now scuttling are ideas that he promoted. I remember particular occasions where he was the mover of motions to bring about some of the changes that he now is party to undoing.

If we are concerned as individual politicians why it is people out there have a certain cynicism about us at times, is it any wonder when they see a gentleman like the gentleman from Peace River do a Jekyll and Hyde on this one and when they see the minister of fitness and amateur sport do what he did just now, he a former guardian of this place as the Deputy Speaker.

I have listened during the last two or three days to the debate. I have heard Tory MPs say with great passion how they want to get back to their electorate. They want to go home. They want to go to their constituencies. They want to go back and actually talk to their electors. They are actually admitting in public that they want to talk to Canadians.

That alone ought to be reason enough for us to embrace this whole thing so fast, before they change their minds, because we now have an army of men and women numbering more than 100 over there who actually had a road to Damascus experience.

• (1755)

They actually want to talk to the people they have been running away from for the last couple of years, to people out there who want to talk to them about the GST, to tell them what they feel about the GST, to people who wanted to tell them what was on their minds about closing rural post offices but could not find them. They were not answering their telephones or their letters. These people could not have their petitions raised in the House of Commons. People would send petitions over there and not get a response. So they sent them to us and we would raise them on behalf of the people of St. John's East, Peace River, Calgary and all these other places across the country. These were people who were disenfranchised, in effect, people whose members had abandoned them for the last two years. Now, thanks be to goodness, miracles never cease to happen. Those same people over there have had their road to Damascus experience. They have seen the light and now want to go home and talk to the same people who heretofore they kept running away from on GST, on fisheries issues, and on so many other issues.

I see that for now my time is up. I thank you for your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, and will have a little more to say another day.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. member. At another moment of course he will have the right to continue. However, now I am called upon to report to the House on a matter that was raised on Monday.

On Monday, April 8, 1991, the hon. member for Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing rose on a point of order concerning Government Motion No. 30, the motion dealing with the proposed changes to the Standing Orders of the House.

The hon. member argued cogently that this motion contains many distinct propositions. He then went on to ask the Chair "to divide Motion No. 30 into five distinct motions and to permit each to be debated, amended and voted on separately".

The hon. government House leader, the hon. member for Kamloops and the hon. member for Calgary West contributed to the brief discussion that ensued. The Chair took the matter under advisement and undertook to return to the House as soon as possible. I am now prepared to rule on the matter.

Government Motion No. 30 now being debated consists of 64 separate proposals, as well as paragraphs relating to its coming into force. I have carefully considered the motion and the arguments put forward by hon. members. I have equally carefully reviewed the weight of precedent and practice with regard to the Chair's discretionary power in such a situation.

Although it is clear that the Speaker has the authority to divide complicated questions, it is equally true that this power has only very rarely been exercised. In this situation, I have been guided by the cautionary note sounded by Speaker Lamoureux in his ruling of March 23, 1966:

> It is only in exceptional circumstances and when there is little doubt about it that the Speaker can intervene and, of his own initiative, amend the resolution proposed by an hon. member.

Therefore, after serious reflection, I undertook discussions with the leadership of the three parties. Following those consultations, I wish to inform the House that the Chair proposes to deal with Government Motion No. 30 in this manner. All proposals will be debated together but they will be voted upon in three groupings, those groupings being: proposals relating to private members' business, namely those numbered 38 through 45 and 60 through 64; proposals relating to committees, namely those numbered 46 through 59; and all other proposals, namely those numbered 1 through 37, as well as those separate un-numbered paragraphs relating to the terms and conditions of the coming into force of the motion.

With regard to the amendment of the hon. House leader of the Official Opposition, a division on that question will precede the divisions on the groupings I have just outlined.

In summary, then, there will be a single debate on Motion No. 30 and the House will vote on the motion in the following manner: (1) a vote on the amendment of Mr. Dingwall, (2) a vote on the proposals relating to Private Members' Business, (3) a vote on the proposals relating to committees, (4) a vote on all other proposals including the paragraphs relating to the coming into force of the motion.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to all hon. members for their contribution to the Chair's consideration of this question. Your co-operation does great credit to this place and obviously obviates the necessity of the Chair to make unilateral interventions that might be of some difficulty in terms of precedents to both sides at some later date. I thank hon. members.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands on a point of order.

Mr. Milliken: Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to clarify the situation. If the vote on the amendment that is now before the House were to take place early tomorrow, is it then possible to move other amendments to the motion that has been proposed? If so, I presume that Your Honour is allowing that to take place and the amendments would not necessarily have to follow the groupings that Your Honour has divided for the purposes of the vote. In other words, any amendment would be disposed of first.

Mr. Speaker: If I understand the hon. member's question correctly, I think that the answer is in accord with the hon. member's suggestion. I would however ask the hon. member to discuss the matter with me, perhaps just after adjournment, or with one of our table officers just to be sure that we completely understand the issue.

I think that I do understand it and I do not think that there is a problem, if I can put it that way.

It being six o'clock p.m., this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at eleven o'clock a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24 (1).

The House adjourned at 6.01 p.m.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, April 11, 1991

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

ORDER IN COUNCIL APPOINTMENT

TABLING AND REFERENCE

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table, in both official languages, an Order in Council appointment which was made by the government.

Pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 110(1) it is deemed referred to the appropriate standing committee.

[*Editor's Note: See today's Votes and Proceedings.*]

* * *

PETITIONS

VIA RAIL

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, very briefly, I have the honour and privilege to present a petition signed by 40 or so Canadians primarily from the city of Edmonton, who are all supporters of rail passenger services. They call on Parliament to support the NDP's plan to restore VIA Rail services cut on January 15, 1990.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Shall all questions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

MOTION THAT DEBATE BE NOT FURTHER ADJOURNED

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I move:

> That the debate on Government Motion No. 30 concerning amendments to the Standing Orders of the House and on any amendments proposed thereto shall not be further adjourned.

• (1110)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Call in the members.

The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:

(*Division No. 414*)

YEAS

Members

Anderson	Andre
Atkinson	Beatty
Belsher	Bird
Bjornson	Blais
Blenkarn	Bosley
Bouchard (Roberval)	Boyer

Brightwell
Campbell (Vancouver Centre)
Chadwick
Clark (Yellowhead)
Clifford
Collins
Cooper
Corbett
Darling
de Cotret
Desjardins
Dobbie
Duplessis
Ferland
Fretz
Gibeau
Gustafson
Harvey (Chicoutimi)
Hicks
Hogue
Horner
Hughes
James
Johnson
Koury
Layton
Loiselle
MacDonald (Rosedale)
MacKay
Marin
Masse
McCreath
McKnight
Merrithew
Monteith
Oberle
Plourde
Pronovost
Reimer
Richardson
Saint-Julien
Scott (Hamilton—Wentworth)
Siddon
Sparrow
Tardif
Thompson
Tremblay (Lotbinière)
Valcourt
Vankoughnet
Vien
Weiner
Wilbee
Winegard

Cadieux
Cardiff
Champagne (Champlain)
Clark (Brandon—Souris)
Cole
Cook
Corbeil
Danis
DeBlois
Della Noce
Dick
Dorin
Fee
Fontaine
Friesen
Gray (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine)
Halliday
Hawkes
Hockin
Holtmann
Horning
Jacques
Jelinek
Jourdenais
Langlois
Lewis
Lopez
MacDougall (Timiskaming)
Malone
Martin (Lincoln)
Mazankowski
McDermid
McLean
Mitges
Mulroney
O'Kurley
Porter
Redway
Ricard
Robitaille
Schneider
Shields
Soetens
Stevenson
Thacker
Thorkelson
Turner (Halton—Peel)
Van de Walle
Vézina
Vincent
White
Wilson (Etobicoke Centre)
Worthy—118

NAYS

Members

Allmand
Angus
Baker
Berger
Black
Boudria
Butland
Catterall
Copps
Ferguson
Foster
Gaffney
Gray (Windsor West)

Anawak
Assad
Benjamin
Bevilacqua
Blackburn (Brant)
Breaugh
Caccia
Chrétien
Edmonston
Flis
Funk
Gagliano
Grey (Beaver River)

Harb
Jordan
Keyes
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kristiansen
Langdon (Essex—Windsor)
Lee
MacLaren
MacWilliam
Marchi
McGuire
Milliken
Ouellet
Parent
Proud
Riis
Rompkey
Stupich
Waddell
Whittaker

Hopkins
Karpoff
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)
Kindy
Langan (Mission—Coquitlam)
Laporte
MacDonald (Dartmouth)
MacLellan
Manley
Marleau
Mifflin
Nunziata
Pagtakhan
Pickard
Prud'homme
Rodriguez
Speller
Vanclief
Wappel
Wood—66

• (1150)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I declare the motion carried.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, I seek your clarification on a point of order. I refer to Beauchesne's fifth edition, citation 335 on the *sub judice* convention. It says:

> Members are expected to refrain from discussing matters that are before the courts—It is a voluntary restraint imposed by the House upon itself in the interest of justice and fair play.

It goes on to say in citation 338 (3) that the convention applies to motions. As we sit, the issue of closure is before the Alberta Court of Appeal. The Ontario Attorney General has asked this court to rule that the use of closure is unconstitutional and in violation of section 18 of the Constitution Act.

I seek some guidance since this is before the courts, the whole matter of what we have just done. Is it appropriate that we proceed when closure is still before the courts, in recognition of the *sub judice* convention?

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make two comments.

First, I think it was very clear from the Speaker's ruling of just 24 or 48 hours ago—I have forgotten the exact time—that one of the prime prerogatives or privileges of this House of Commons is to make and enact its own rules. It was a very important ruling in relationship to the particular issue we have before us,

and it is a ruling which I think applies in this particular case.

Second, the NDP House leader should be very careful in raising a point of order such as this one today when he will know that his own colleagues and kissing cousins in the Ontario House moved closure last night.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I would just like to thank the hon. member for Kamloops for raising that and the parliamentary secretary. The *sub judice* convention only applies in criminal cases and when a trial has begun in civil cases. I express regrets that we must carry on.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if it is another point of order, but I ruse just for clarification.

The parliamentary secretary to the government House leader was inaccurate. Closure was not introduced in the Ontario House at all. He had better do his homework.

AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS

The House resumed from Wednesday, April 10, consideration of the motion of Mr. Andre (p. 19027) and amendment of Mr. Dingwall (p. 19156).

Mr. Derek Blackburn (Brant): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to participate in the debate today on what I consider to be an extremely serious matter.

It seems that this government's public relations expertise has just fallen to rock bottom. Here we are debating rule changes in this assembly that would create a better atmosphere in the House and would attempt, at least in part, to re-establish the one element upon which parliamentary government depends in order to be successful.

That element of course is the element of trust. Here we have this morning, just two and a half days into a very serious debate, the government bringing down closure and not allowing those members who wish to speak in this debate the time to make their presentations.

This Chamber will be shut down on the debate tomorrow at 1 a.m. It is not a very good principle to set, in my view, at a time when we are debating changes to the Standing Orders.

I have listened for the last couple of days, both in the House and in my office via television, to the various speeches that have been made. I must say that a lot of very excellent ideas have been put forward.

The speakers who have preceded me have attempted to use a band-aid approach on a very serious wound or have tried to treat a disease when in my view the animal, that is the House of Commons, is dead in terms of its being a democratic and viable legislative body.

For the life of me I cannot understand or appreciate any element of the work we do here as ordinary members of Parliament to have any bearing or relationship whatever on the legislative process.

The reasons for this are many, not the least of which is that we are saddled with an archaic institution that still insists on allowing the executive branch of government not only to be part of the legislative branch but in fact to dominate the legislative branch and indeed to control it. Nothing could be more absurd than that kind of situation.

In order to reinforce or to maintain that control the government of the day, whether it is the present one or all the previous ones, uses the ancient institution known as confidence. In order for the government to survive we have allowed the myth to continue in this Parliament that says: "If the government loses the confidence of the House, it must resign."

Yet, in practice this myth in terms of confidence has not been applied and has not been used in this Chamber for I do not know how many decades. Really, it is a hollow myth, a hollow threat, that every Prime Minister and every cabinet uses in order to maintain solidarity in the ranks of the government of the day.

In the meantime it deprives—I am speaking now of confidence—us as members of Parliament to act as legislators. All we do is debate, discuss and vote. If you are in the opposition, you almost always vote against the government. If you are on the government benches, you almost always vote with the government. If you decide to bolt the party line on a given vote and you are a member on the government side, you make absolutely certain that your vote will not bring down the government and that there are enough government members in order to maintain its majority in the House.

• (1200)

I preface my speech this morning with this general overview on confidence and the fact that we are not really a legislative body of government any longer but strictly a rubber stamp. We are in the midst of change in this country. Whether we like it or not this country is changing radically. At this point in time we do not even know with any degree of certainty whether we are going to have a country in two years' time that includes, for example, the province of Quebec. We do not know if Quebec secedes whether we are going to be part of the west, or whether the maritimes are going to remain within the old Dominion, as it was once called, or the Commonwealth.

Mr. Speaker, this change obviously is coming to the House of Commons as well. Members of Parliament are feeling more and more frustrated. I notice a malaise in this Chamber every day. Next month I celebrate my twentieth anniversary in this House.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Blackburn (Brant): Thank you very kindly. I was elected on May 31, 1971 in a by-election. My opponents back home said: "Oh, well, by-elections are by-elections; you win one and when the general election comes along you will be defeated". I don't know why I have been re-elected so many times, but I know I am not the only one in this Chamber to experience this.

I have been here long enough to know that when I sense this malaise developing in this House—that has been here for several years in fact—one of the reasons for it is because we do not feel as though we are part of a legitimate legislative process. We do not write laws. We are not directly responsible to our constituents for the laws that we vote for or against in this Chamber. When was the last time anyone wrote a bill on this side of the House, or a backbencher on the other side of the House, that actually became the law of the land?

Members say: "Oh, well, committees have been reformed, you can go to committees". What are committees? Committees are just a reflection of this Chamber. Why does the government find find it so difficult to maintain its membership in committees on a day to day basis, and therefore wants more time off? It is not so much that members would rather spend their time in their constituencies—certainly that is one reason—but the other reason, I am convinced, because I feel it on this side of the House, is a sense of uselessness. It is a sense that you can produce the best report that committee has ever produced, and all it does is gather dust on the shelf.

It is not just the fault of this government. I have seen it with many governments. In all likelihood it would happen—I am quite quite sure it would happen—if my party was in power at this time under our present rules.

The first point I want to make is that I do not like the idea of the executive branch being part of the legislative branch. I think it should be separate. It should be appointed by a Prime Minister who is directly elected by the people. Cabinet should be responsible to him and not to the House. Its duties and responsibilities should be limited, as in the States, as in France, as in West Germany or Germany as it is now called, to simply writing policy and giving policy directions for the legislative branch to legislate for. We should be the framers of bills in this House, and that should be our only job.

Well, how do we do it? It should be done in committees. Committees, should draft bills, or subcommittees of committees should be the real drafters. That is where lobbyists will be heard, that is where technocrats will be heard; that is where individual Canadians and the groups they represent, powerful and less powerful, will be heard. They come to the subcommittees and present their briefs on a given policy. From there, the subcommittee, with its drafters, drafts a bill. The bill then goes to the full committee which examines that bill thoroughly—and I mean thoroughly. That is where the work is done.

Then the bill is presented to the House by the chair of that committee and the subcommittee, the two chairs.

Then we debate the merits. Throw the whips out. They are not needed. Are we not intelligent enough to know after several months of intense scrutiny whether a bill is a good bill for our constituents, for the constituents in Newfoundland as well as northern Ontario, the interior of B.C.? Do we not know as well as the technocrats who draft the bills now whether those bills are going to be accepted?

In a democracy, as I understand it, we should not be telling the people what we think is good for them based on the expertise on the treasury benches and their executive assistants and their deputy ministers and all the other experts. The people of this country should be telling us what they think is good for them. We should be, after listening to them, drafting the legislation and debating it here in this House, not with the threat of confidence hanging over us, that some political party's

platform is going to go down the tube if the bill is defeated, but debate it here on its merits as we see fit.

I will give you an example. I am an abolitionist. I am opposed to capital punishment on many grounds, but I know that if a bill came to this Chamber, under what I am suggesting is the proper legislative approach, that it will in all likelihood pass. I would still vote against it, but when I went home I would have to assume total responsibility for the position I took.

I could not say it was party policy. I could not say that the New Democrats, generally speaking, across the country, as I understand it, are opposed to capital punishment. I would have to say: "I am sorry, Derek Blackburn, your member of Parliament, is opposed to capital punishment. Even though I know that the will of the nation was expressed in that vote, I went against the will of the nation and the majority. I am prepared at this point in time with the upcoming election to take my chances." That to me is real democracy. That is one example. There are many, many other examples we could use.

I am quite certain that I would not be happy with the outcome of the vote, but I would have to accept it just as our citizens today are anything but happy with the way we legislate up here on many occasions and they are getting tired of sitting back and saying: "Hey look, I don't like what you are doing, but I guess there is nothing I can do about it."

My friends opposite know and we know on this side of the House that the citizens of this country are saying we are tired of not being listened to. We are tired of exercising democracy every four years by going to the ballot box and then it is gone. Nobody is listening to what we think is right. Nobody is listening up there in Ottawa to what we think the country should be doing or where it should be going.

One very large reason for this is because we are not legislators anymore. I am quite convinced that on any given day of any given year regardless of what party is in power, about 20 people run this country. We have executive democracy. We have allowed this country to go from absolute monarchy over the centuries to an absolute prime ministership as long as there is a majority sitting on the government side.

If I feel frustrated sitting on this side, I am only imagining how I would feel if I was sitting over there. I am not trying to be mean when I say that. There must be complete and utter frustration on both sides of this House because I feel it day in and day out.

I want to give you an example. I went across the street the other day to one of our Parliament Hill offices to have a fairly simple bill—there is a series of private members' bills, that I want to introduce some time in the next session, but the one that I discussed with the woman across the street, the law officer, was a fairly simple one. She said it will take at least two months and possibly four before she would have it for me. I was absolutely shocked. I thought maybe a couple of weeks. I said: "Well, what's the problem?" She said: "I am the only one at the present time employed to draft private members' public bills. There is one other vacancy in the office, but it hasn't been filled." I said: "I wonder how many law officers are employed by the Crown to draft government bills." She said: "a little over 1,700."

• (1210)

That gives us a very realistic aspect of what is wrong in this House. We have 1,700 law officers of the Crown—give or take 100—whose primary responsibility it is to draft legislation for the government. We have one law officer to take care of all the private members' public bills needs in this Chamber. That really should be a question of privilege. I think it is a legitimate question of privilege because that prevents me from carrying out a legitimate function of my office. I will leave it at that for the time being.

Another aspect of what is wrong around here is that committees have no power and no clout. We cannot threaten senior civil servants. When I say that we cannot threaten I mean that we cannot order senior civil servants to do what we think is right.

I went to a meeting of the Standing Committee on National Defence on estimates—I am no longer a permanent member of that committee—a couple of weeks ago. Estimates of $13.2 billion this year for defence, I believe. I had seven minutes in which to

question the Associate Minister of National Defence, on $13.2 billion.

After she had finished her opening remarks, the committee of seven members, I think, had about one hour and ten minutes in which to question that minister, who comes before the committee once a year on estimates. Could you imagine this sham, this charade happening in the United States, in the United Kingdom, or in Germany?

We could begin reforms in this House if we had a real supply power in this House to withhold supply. In the German system the Minister of Finance brings in a budget, the budget goes to a budgetary committee of the lower House, that committee has 30 days in which to revise, add to, or subtract from in order to achieve a majority vote in the House. If it does not receive a majority vote, the budget is dead. It does not go back to the Minister of Finance, but is re-written by another committee of the lower House. That original budgetary committee is dissolved. It has no political debts and owes no favours to anyone. When its duty is done it is finished.

Mr. Speaker, I have only 20 minutes today and I think most of my time is gone, if I am not mistaken. I simply wish to sum up by saying that unless we, as members of Parliament take hold of this institution and shake out the cobwebs and get rid of these archaic, irrelevant Standing Orders—and I do not care whether our speeches are five minutes or 50 minutes long, that is not the issue—. The issue is that this should be a legislative body, where bills are truly initiated. The Executive has no business being part of the legislative process.

We could have an Executive outside this House with 10 Cabinet ministers for policy direction and the formulation of policy. The bills should be initiated in subcommittees and committees, be passed in this House, and not be based stringently on partisan political lines. The people of this country are fed up with partisanship. They are fed up with us scoring brownie points in debate here. All we are is a pale reflection or imitation of the Oxford Union 50 years ago. My God, if that is not an indictment of this body as a legislative body, I do not know what is.

We have to change our ways or our ways are going to be changed for us. We are going to lose what minuscule influence on the legislative process we now have. Then I am confident and convinced that the yelling, the screaming, the lack of decorum, and the way we act like chimpanzees—and I am sorry to insult chimpanzees when I say that—because Question Period is a jungle and a zoo, would disappear or certainly dissipate. After all, when you have no power and no influence and no clout and are paid $100,000 a year, what is left to do but to get up and scream, shout and holler. I am disgusted.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Debate. The hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge River.

I would like to inform the House that, under Standing Order 57, there are no questions or comments from now until 1 a.m.

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to continue the debate on the rule changes now before Parliament. They have been proposed in a way and are now are in the process of being imposed, I think, now that the government has invoked closure.

The rule changes here do not follow the same procedure as a piece of legislation would follow in the House of Commons. When the rules change this time it will happen on one reading, so to speak. That approach is very different from a bill, because these pieces of legislation are reviewed two or three times at committee and in the House before finally being approved.

I heard the remarks of the last hon. member and I enjoyed them. However, I would like to separate myself from the portions of the remarks that apologised for some of the rough edges in our democracy. I think democracy should have a few rough edges. We have rules that reflect some of those rough edges.

I recently noted that the member for Gander—Grand Falls pointed out that the reasons why the benches down here in the House are not capable of being moved up closer or rearranged is because we have to have two sword lengths between the front benches. That is a manifestation of the reality that things can become a bit rough and tumble once in a while in a democracy. I would not want to see it tidied up so much that we could not have some real aggressive debate.

In any event, I want to point out at the outset that I and my colleagues are not opposed to changes in the rules. I know it is fair to say that we are not even opposed to each and every one of the rule changes proposed here.

There are some reasonably evolved, logically written, new rule changes that will improve the functions of this House. We are not opposed to rule changes that will make committees of the House more permanent or better targeted in their use of resources. The proposed rule change that would abandon the bell ringing when two votes are scheduled at the same time is so terribly logical that one would wonder why the bells were capable of being rung twice in the first place.

Having said that, I want to point out another item. The object of changing these rules is Parliament, not government, and that is a very important distinction. Parliament, oversees and generates the legislation and oversees government. That oversight function is something I want to mention later in my remarks.

Throughout all this I suppose we should not forget the Senate, which also has a legislative and oversight function.

In our House we have two structures that carry on this oversight function and the legislative function. One is this House of Commons and the other is our committees. In dealing with these proposed rule changes we have to assess the impact of these changes on the House, on committees, on the effectiveness of the legislative function, and on the oversight function.

The area I want to address more particularly today is the oversight function of committees. I have to note, sadly, that as we address these rule changes we appear to have abandoned consensus as a necessary part of the rule change process. Why is that consensus important? I would hope that all members would agree that it is important. It is because each of us in this House were elected as equals and we sit here as equals with the same goals. We are all in the same boat as members of Parliament.

• (1220)

There are some basic principles that do not always get articulated that lie at the root of this structure here in Parliament and why we have rules here. For example, what if the government proposed to reduce the number of sitting days from the current approximately 175 down to, let us say, 10? We know that our Charter of Rights requires that Parliament sit a minimum once per year, I believe it is. Let us say the government proposed 10 sitting days per year. There really is not any other legal obstacle to the government doing that. I am not suggesting that the government would, but in the current rule changes the sittings are reduced from approximately 175 days down to about 135.

Those principles that underlie the rules in this place are a lot older than this House itself. I just want to articulate a few of them because I have not heard them read too often in the House. Most of us read them, but we have not memorized them. They are of course contained in Beauchesne and probably contained in other parliamentary documents going back years, but they are the rules. I quote:

> The principles that lie at the base of English parliamentary law, have always been kept steadily in view by the Canadian Parliament; these are: To protect a minority and restrain the improvidence or tyranny of a majority; to secure the transaction of public business in an orderly manner; to enable every Member to express his opinion within limits necessary to preserve decorum and prevent an unnecessary waste of time; to give abundant opportunity for the consideration of every measure, and to prevent any legislative action being taken upon sudden impulse.

There are some buzz words that I know members on the government side like to hear, like rules that would prevent waste of time. There are words in there that I in opposition like to hear, words that would give me all the time I need to discuss and debate rule changes and legislation.

I know I have 20 minutes here and I accept that limit. I accept my limit and I am going to use most of it here. However, those principles are very important. I think that the government has abandoned some of those principles in proceeding the way it has with the rule changes, not just in imposing closure but in the way it has decided to proceed without consensus.

We have three functions here that permit our parliamentary democracy and our democratic country to carry on. They are the legislative, executive and judicial functions. That is pretty basic high school political science. Let us not forget that we in this country and others before us, our forefathers, had to fight for the legislative parliamentary function. We had to fight for it and our fathers died for that.

It happened not that long ago in Upper Canada and in Lower Canada, historically referred to as the Papineau and the Mackenzie rebellions of approximately 1837. Those were important events. In that sequence of historical events our forefathers had to pick up guns and went out to fight the King's Privy Councillors who were called the Family Compact and they were through the Governor imposing rules and laws here on the people of what was then Lower Canada and Upper Canada.

They had to go out and fight, and a number gave up their lives. Some were hanged later for treason for fighting for that parliamentary right, that legislative function that we have here now. This Parliament is charged, I assume, with carrying out that continuing legislative and oversight function. That is our job. I get a little nervous here when I see the Queen's Privy Councillor standing in this House moving closure on rules governing Parliament. Somehow, that is a conflict. I almost want to say it is a point of order. I almost want to say it is a matter of privilege. Somehow it is inappropriate for a Queen's Privy Councillor, a member of the executive branch, to stand in this House in the face of all the rights and freedoms we fought for and move closure to impose new rules which impair or run up against those principles I read earlier.

In many respects, as I think about that, I see the government ministers treating the legislative function of Parliament as a branch of government. I have heard that stated in this House before. How could one see it otherwise when in order to accomplish the executive function that the Queen's Privy Councillors have, the minister finds it necessary to come to this House and change its rules and to impose them on this House and to use closure in doing that.

That is why consensus is important. That is why I regret that it is not there.

I submit that we in this country cannot permit the executive branch of government to make the rules for Parliament. They did not let it happen at the time of the Magna Carta, they did not let it happen in 1756, and we should not be letting it happen now. We should not be permitting the incursions of executive authority that have occurred. I accept that they have occurred over the years. It has been a slow process. To the extent that they have occurred, they are impairing the functions of this House.

In any event, we have to make our own rules in this place and we have to do it based on the principle that we protect the minority from the tyranny of the majority. That is why consensus is important.

I ask who is speaking for Parliament in this debate. If anyone hears from the other side, and every person on the other side of this House is a member and a player and a voter in this House, that we have to change the rules because government needs these rule changes to get legislation through, or our party or caucus in this House needs these changes, I say do not listen to them. It is not the government that needs the rules. It is Parliament that needs the rules. I suggest that I am seeing too much of a tilt here in favour of what government needs and not what Parliament needs.

In doing a bit of preparation for my remarks, today I stumbled on a little discussion on the state of affairs in the Australian parliament. It is a little outdated, a little simplistic, but the writer noted as follows:

> In discussing Parliament, it is necessary to separate its key constitutional position from the rather subsidiary role which it now performs.

He is saying that in theory it has a pretty good looking role.

> Constitutionally, Parliament is the linchpin of the democratic system, a great debating forum in which legislation is discussed and amended, in which policies are debated and criticized, and in which the actions of the government are overseen.

Sadly, he goes on to explain why that is really not what is going on now, and he says:

> The government, through its majority, can restrict debating time and force the rapid passage of legislation. Members of Parliament have few staff or research facilities. The "committee" stage of legislative procedure, in which a bill can be examined clause by clause, has proved ineffective as a means of scrutinizing the huge volume of legislation.

Then he goes on. That was a sorry state of affairs. I almost felt a little sorry for them there in Australia. I do not think things are quite that bad in the Canadian Parliament, but I am nervous. We are close.

• (1230)

I was elected in 1988. Since I have been here I have had a feeling that Parliament is not fulfilling all of the functions that it should be. While I am still a rookie, and

maybe there is more going on around here than has caught my eye, I feel that there is not enough going on.

Among the three branches of the democratic system, we have the legislative, the executive and the judicial branch. Parliament is the one that we, the people, had to fight for and put in place, not the judicial and not the executive. We had to fight to fight for, build and create Parliament. Any rule change that is going to impair parliamentary function is an error and should not be passed.

In a funny kind of way, as we all should be working to protect Parliament, maybe we should be a little frustrated by these evolutionary changes in Parliament that have diminished its role. If you look over your shoulder and look out on the street and read the editorials, maybe you see just a little bit of the fire and of the impetus that gave rise to the rebellions in the last century. Not that we are close to that now, but the people can get angry. I think that a little bit of that is happening right now.

I would like to address more specifically a couple of the rule changes as they relate to the committee oversight function. An example is item No. 52 governing Standing Order 113. Here the government has suggested that witnesses who come before a legislative committee to review legislation after second reading should only be called on technical matters. Where did that term come from? I do not think anybody knows where that term came from. As I search for a rationale or a logic for the term "technical matters", as a lawyer I become a little bit curious about that. It does not come from tradition. I have not seen it as a precedent and I have not even seen a definition, but it means something like dotting the *i's* and crossing the *t's*. Somehow that is a most inappropriate restriction to put on a legislative committee. If you have a change in a bill governing tax credits to seniors, surely you have to ask seniors what they think about the bill or how the bill will impact on them and not restrict that group to whether or not the government lawyers have dotted the *i's* and crossed the *t's*. There is much more than that.

I am going to move on quickly to a second area that was brought to my attention by the chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Scrutiny of Regulations. There is an apparent omission in item No. 53 governing the selection of alternates who would sit on committees. The new rules apparently require that the alternates be selected from the envelope involved. Unfortunately, that particular standing committee, the Joint Standing Committee on Scrutiny of Regulations, is not in any of the envelopes. It is a joint committee and, therefore, the restriction on selecting alternates from an envelope has no place.

In discussion with the parliamentary secretary to the House leader, there was an understanding that alternates for that committee could be selected from the entire opposition caucus or the government caucus, as the case may be. I want that to be on the record.

Another of the proposed changes deals with the reduction of sitting days from 175 days to approximately 135. I have already discussed the principles that should provide ample time for debate of issues, but how does that change affect committees?

I suggest that by squeezing more government business into fewer days, this rule change will take away sitting days from committees. That may result in committees abandoning some of their oversight work. That oversight work is extremely important. One of the committees I sit on, the Standing Committee on Justice and the Solicitor General, is about to look at estimates involving the expenditures of sums greater than this country has ever spent before. We are advised it will take 13 days just to skate through it.

As I look at the possible parliamentary calendar here, with a possible adjournment foisted upon us, or planned by the government, I am getting a little nervous that we will not have an opportunity to look at those estimates. This is at a time when our government is spending its brains out. The public assumes that Parliament is exercising some scrutiny or oversight on spending. I can tell them that we will be lucky to get a half dozen committee meetings in scrutinizing this expenditure in the Justice and Solicitor General area. So I am a little nervous about that and I hope that members opposite will take that into consideration.

Just because we reduced the sitting days to 135 does not mean, of course, that Parliament cannot sit longer. It is quite possible that the government and all members would decide to sit for greater than 135 days. But I do not like the principle of squeezing the sitting days of Parliament to a minimum. If it serves government, that is

great, but, as I pointed out earlier, if it does not serve Parliament, it is wrong.

What about some rule changes that would assist Parliament? There are many of those currently being discussed. They have not made their way on to the Order Paper.

I want to conclude by saying that the absence of consensus here is a serious mistake by government members, if they proceed without it. A good rule should sell itself in this House because it subscribes to logic and common sense. If it does not, it should not be passed without consensus.

Those are my remarks, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Jack Whittaker (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt): Mr. Speaker, prior to being elected to this place in 1988 I, through the course of my lifetime, had followed Canadian politics and Canadian history to a extent. Through the course of my readings I read biographies of John A. Macdonald, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Tommy Douglas, Mackenzie King, to name some of them. Through the course of each one of these biographies I came to look on this place, the House of Commons, as a place where the elected members could come and present arguments of their constituents, arguments of groups they were interested in, and in fact their own arguments, before the House of Commons.

I had the impression, perhaps wrongly, that these remarks were important. They were part of our history. Often we look back to speeches of various people within the House of Commons and we hear quoted past remarks of our great politicians.

These politicians have moulded what we have today in Canada, what we as Canadians are proud of in being Canadians.

• (1240)

It has changed the way this country has operated, with the effect of its social programs and its social safety net that is unlike anything else in North America and certainly second to none, I would suggest, in the world.

This was part of the parliamentary process, the process of debate, the cut and thrust. I agree that as times change rules and regulations must change. In law it is the growing tree analogy: as the tree grows so must the branches tend to reach out and encompass or take in the changes of changing society.

The changes that should be brought in are changes, particularly in a parliamentary process, that assist the vast majority of people in Canada to be heard in Parliament, to have their input put before the House of Commons. In looking through these books of history I saw the job of a parliamentarian, the job of an elected member of Parliament: to listen, to sift out and to bring back to Parliament the views and ideas of his or her constituents and to be able to present those to the governing party, if you were in opposition; to your cabinet, if you were a backbench member of the governing party; or, as a cabinet minister, to your cabinet colleagues and to your caucus.

What I have seen since I have been here has shattered some of those illusions I had. What I have seen since I came to this place in 1988 was not free flowing debate, a free flowing exchange of ideas, a free flowing exchange of constituents' ideas and the ability of constituents to have their say through their elected member of Parliament. What I have seen is what has happened here again today: a constant cutting off of the flow of debate by the rules that were set up to streamline the system somewhat, rules that were set up to ensure that legislation ultimately and eventually did get passed.

In the case before Parliament today in the Standing Orders, I believe this is the fourth day of debate on a very important matter not only to parliamentarians, but to all people of Canada.

As I recall, from 1913 through to the election of November 1988 closure was used 21 times in total over those 75 years of Parliament. Since I have been in Parliament, counting today closure has been used 14 times in just 2.5 years. In one case, as I recall, closure was even used in anticipation on an agricultural bill that the opposition might want to debate further. That was a case where although the opposition would have liked to have seen some expansion of the legislation, neither of the two major opposition parties was against the legislation in principle. In fact they were going to put up only a couple of speakers and then let the matter go to a vote.

The government in its arrogance simply ignored discussions with the opposition and invoked closure. The matter was passed on a voice vote without the necessity, but Parliament was not meant to have these matters pushed through or rammed through without proper discussion, with proper airing or without the adequate ability of the 26.5 million Canadians being given the opportunity to look these bills over, give them some

thought, to ruminate on them, and to talk to their members of Parliament, their elected representatives, to give their feelings so that the member could come back here and in a speech to the House or in a representation on committee could have input on behalf of his or her constituents.

That has not happened. If we go through the free trade debate in late December 1988, we see that we had closure at every stage of that bill. The goods and services tax, perhaps one of the most unpopular tax bills in Canadian history, is opposed, the polls show, by 85 per cent of the people of Canada. Yet we had this government bringing in closure at every stage of the bill, to the extent that on third reading my leader, who would have been the first speaker for the New Democratic Party at third reading, was not even provided the opportunity of making her remarks on the record.

This is an example of a government with a majority that thumbs its nose not only at the opposition but at the people of Canada. It says: "We were given a majority to Govern and we are going to govern regardless of what the people of Canada think or want". The government also says: "We have been given a majority. We know what is best for the people of Canada. That is what we are going to do and we want to do it in the fastest possible manner without giving people an adequate opportunity to properly digest what we are doing".

The goods and services tax was an example where a schedule was set out and be darned if they were not going to keep to that schedule regardless of the fact that people wanted more information, regardless of the fact that bureaucrats were having trouble keeping up with the legislation and keeping up with the changes as the problems were pointed out in the legislation.

What we have before us are changes to the Standing Orders. Perhaps the majority of people in Canada do not understand exactly what they are; they were just brought before us in late March. They show once again an erosion of the democratic process, an erosion of what I have talked about in history as my belief of what this place is supposed to be about: democracy and the opportunity for people of Canada to have a way.

We do not live in a dictatorship, although I am sure that is what our Prime Minister would prefer us to have because then he would not have to listen to the opposition at all. When I look at these changing standing order rules, I have become somewhat concerned that my voice as an opposition member of Parliament is being cut off.

The people of my riding are not going to be given an adequate opportunity to be heard through me in Parliament because of some of these restructuring changes.

It is interesting, in looking at a recent article in *The Ottawa Citizen* this morning by Frank Howard, that he refers back to when this government first took office in 1984. Having spent a long time in opposition, it was very aware of the difficulties of the opposition and the need to give opposition members a voice and to make them feel that they were responding to their constituents' needs and wishes. I would like to quote from that article. Mr. Howard said:

> The McGrath reforms gave committees more freedom to initiative inquiries to call witnesses.
>
> They were brought in after the Tories had been out of power for most of the previous two decades and still felt sympathy for the ordinary members of Parliament.

• (1250)

He quotes McGrath and says:

> I wanted to put in place a system where being a member of Parliament would be seen to be an end to itself and not a means to an end.

Mr. Howard goes on to say:

> Too often, MPs felt like nobodys in Ottawa, unless they became cabinet ministers or parliamentary secretaries.

I for one want to have input on behalf of my constituents while I am elected member of Parliament. I want to have opportunity to speak here in the House and to be able to put my case to the House of Commons in a 20–minute speech. I want my party to be able to have the same amount of time as the other two parties in so far as the leaders are concerned. I would like to have the ability to have input from my constituents into committees such as was originally set up by the committee structure and improved by the McGrath commission.

What are these changes? One that I think is totally devastating to opposition and very repugnant is the proposal to reduce the numbers of debate on the throne speech down to six from eight. This gives the opportunity to all members of the House, the government members as well as opposition members, to have some input into the plans of the government for the future. It is the first opportunity at each new session of Parliament for members of Parliament to analyse what is the government's proposal for that next sitting. It is the opportunity for the member to get on record, on behalf of himself and his constituents, in the discussions of where this country should go into the future.

The next suggestion is to cut down again the numbers of debate on the budget from six to four. Once again the budget debate provides the opportunity for all members of Parliament to speak on future government projections for the following year, where the money is proposed to be spent and where the money has been spent. When we cut that down and speak in numbers, six to four days, it does not seem all that bad; but when we think about the number of people involved, it substantially cuts down the opportunities of those members to speak.

Turning to the proposal to cut down speeches from 20 minutes to 10 minutes, I think most people in this House know that in 10 minutes you really only have the opportunity of putting forth your preamble and maybe getting to some salient points; but you have very little opportunity in 10 minutes to flesh out your arguments. However, 20 minutes with a 10-minute question and answer period give the member an opportunity of adequately expressing once again his constituents' ideas, his ideas, as well as putting forth perhaps some platforms of groups from whom he has heard within his riding or within his critic area, if he is an opposition member, or within his interest groups, if he is a backbencher of government.

What happens if we also cut down the question and answer period? I personally know that is a section of the debates which I treasure and treasure dearly. It gives me the opportunity of sitting in the House, listening to members' speeches and responding to those speeches with more ideas from my riding or more ideas from my past knowledge or from the history of Canada to try to bring out from other members some of their thoughts. It allows us again an extra thrust that we do not get.

Further, the one thing that upsets me as any, I suppose, is the thought that although I can see the government's point of view and the government backbenchers' point of view in wanting to have scheduled one-week periods in which to work in their ridings—and I do not deny that that on the surface is an excellent idea—it is very difficult, particularly from the perspective of one who lives in the interior of the province of British Columbia, to travel back and forth trying to get into your riding on a regular basis to do the job or the second part of the job that you as a member of Parliament are expected to do: the job in the riding of looking after the case work and looking after the public relations aspects of this job.

The down side of that is the fact that it will cut substantially the number of days that this government is held accountable to Parliament.

As I understand it, the proposal is to drop from a 175-day year to 135-day year. Although with the addition of hours the parliamentarians will spend approximately the same time in Parliament, they will not be given the opportunity of those additional days to pose questions to ministers of the Crown. They will not have the opportunity of requesting things from the minister. They will not be able to put forward their suggestions and their questions to the press, to the media.

All in all I would suggest, again as I started out, that this is a cutting back of democracy. People want change, but they want change to a more democratic society, a more democratic Parliament. These Standing Orders are a further whittling away of that democracy and cannot proceed as such.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): It being one o'clock, I do now leave the chair until two o'clock this day.

The House took recess at 1 p.m.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 31

[*English*]

THE DISABLED

Ms. Beth Phinney (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, despite advances in recent years in services to disabled persons, there are still many areas of federal legislation that must be amended in order to address their rights. While appearing recently before the Standing Committee on Human Rights and the Status of Disabled Persons, representatives from various disabled groups repeated their demand for some form of omnibus legislation to address these concerns.

I call on this government to introduce omnibus legislation to include, among other things, amendments to the Canada Elections Act to ensure the accessibility of polling stations, amendments to the Immigration Act to eliminate discrimination on the basis of disability, and amendments to the Access to Information Act to allow disabled persons equal access to information.

Disabled persons are tired of having their interests put "under consideration". It is time for this government to finally take action that will really help our 3.2 million Canadians who are disabled.

* * *

MEDICARE

Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North): Mr. Speaker, what next for medicare, our most valued national program?

In February, the Minister of Finance froze federal contributions to health. Since then we have had four provincial budgets which have brought about the lay-off of 300 nurses and closure of hospital beds in Newfoundland, a 16 per cent increase in health premiums in Alberta, a freeze on nurses' salaries in New Brunswick, and the determination by Quebec to proceed with user fees.

Yet the minister of health has repeatedly said he will enforce the Canada Health Act to ensure that national standards for medicare are met.

Will he restore universal medicare in Newfoundland and give the residents of Port-aux-Basques back their hospital? Will he restore accessibility to the middle-income families in Alberta who cannot afford medical premiums? Will he prevent the imposition of user fees on the poor in Quebec? Will the minister enforce national medicare standards and will he indicate to the provinces where they will obtain the funding to meet these standards?

* * *

CITIZENSHIP

Mr. J.W. Bud Bird (Fredericton—York—Sunbury): Mr. Speaker, there are few words used throughout the world which convey the vision of freedom and democracy more clearly than these two words, "Canadian citizenship". It is often said, for example, that a Canadian passport is the most prized document in the international community.

Among Canadians here at home there frequently seems an apathy about the values of our own citizenship, almost as though we have lost our meaning of country, our sense of pride in it, and our sense of patriotism for it.

Surely this is a state of mind that we must revitalize for ourselves and for future generations of Canadians. Surely the common denominator of Canadian citizenship must be reinforced as the mantle under which the rich potential of our bilingual and multicultural heritage can be attained and fulfilled. That is a current challenge for each of us, more important now than ever before.

Otherwise, without such a primary and premium commitment to the unifying spirit and deeper meaning of Canadian citizenship we shall be little more than a collection of separate languages and cultures existing together on Canadian soil. I believe Canada is much more than that and I am confident most Canadians believe so to.

* * *

REFUGEES

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean): Mr. Speaker, today, I and other members of the human rights committee met with the president and other representatives of Canada's Kurdish community about the genocide in Iraq which has killed 60,000 to 80,000 of their Kurdish friends and relatives.

Although Canada has responded with financial aid, to date no Canadian supplies have reached the Kurds. Canada needs to take concrete action to end this human tragedy and speak up for the Kurdish people. They suggested than an urgent appeal to the UN and President Bush would end the killings, that Hussein be ordered to cease immediately the genocide of the Kurds in the whole of Iraq, that Turkey and Iran be requested to open their borders immediately, that the UN conven-

tion on genocide authorize its signatories, including Canada, to take action on ongoing acts of genocide.

Canada should immediately exercise this right.

* * *

INDUSTRY

Mr. Steve Butland (Sault Ste. Marie): Mr. Speaker, industry downsizing, closures, and possible bankruptcies are now commonplace in this country. This can leave thousands of workers and their communities at economic risk, particularly single industry towns.

Employee ownership and/or buyouts are becoming very prevalent in the United States through employee stock ownership. These ownerships are made possible through legislated tax policies. Canada has no such positive tax policy, which encourage workers to have direct ownership, operation and generally control of their own economic destiny.

I am heartened to learn that this concept has been placed on the agenda for the finance committee and I thank them, in particular my colleague from Essex—Windsor.

Social democracy can thrive if given the opportunity. Through appropriate practical incentives, people can directly participate in their own employment future.

I trust all parties, given the present economic climate, will support any forthcoming initiatives.

* * *

NOISE POLLUTION

Mr. Harry Chadwick (Bramalea—Gore—Malton): Mr. Speaker, our homes are our sanctuary from the outside world, but there are times when that peace is disturbed by traffic and other annoyances of the urban environment. To minimize the impact, governments take precautions.

Recently, in new subdivisions in Etobicoke, noise barriers have been erected to protect the subdivision from arterial road noise. It is significant that a level of government has recognized the effects of noise on one's right to a certain quality of life.

In the future, I am sure that residents will forget the noise from nearby roads because their minds will be occupied elsewhere, by the take-off and landings of aircraft from additional runways at nearby Pearson International. No doubt residents will be wondering about those noise barriers and no doubt thoughts may drift to the inevitable question; if governments recognize the effects of noise on our communities, why do they allow subdivisions to be built so close to airports?

* * *

REFUGEES

Mr. Bill Vankoughnet (Hastings—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington): Mr. Speaker, it is important that we continue to focus our attention on the plight of the Kurdish minority of Iraq. Canadians are distressed and concerned by the loss of life and suffering which is affecting these people, particularly the innocent children.

Since April 5, 1991, Canada has contributed over $7 million to international organizations in support of Kurdish refugees. Canadians urge the Government of Canada to continue working with the Secretary-General of the United Nations to assist the Kurds in establishing peace and security in their homeland.

The Government of Canada should be commended on its efforts so far. Also Canada should encourage the governments of the coalition forces to transfer defence savings from a shorter than expected war to more humanitarian aid for the Kurds and other Iraqi civilians now suffering from civil conflicts.

* * *

CANADA POST

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, Canada Post is playing fast and lose with the truth again. In 1987 Canada Post announced its "rural conversion" program, a euphemism for the "shutting down post offices" program.

Canada Post did however promise that post offices would only be closed when there was a "natural opportunity" which occurs when the postmaster dies or resigns.

Now Canada Post is shutting down the post office in Glen Robertson in my riding. The postmistress is not retiring and, as far as I know, she is not dead and has no intention of quitting. She has been told that after five years of being an acting postmaster she is no longer required.

According to the new truth, acting postmasters do not count under the natural opportunity rule of the Orwellian offices at Canada Post.

The minister responsible for Canada Post should seize the natural opportunity to perform a conversion on the authors of newspeak. The savings could then be used to give back the post office to the people of Glen Robertson, Ontario in my riding.

* * *

[*Translation*]

RE-EMPLOYMENT PROJECTS

Mr. Jacques Vien (Laurentides): Mr. Speaker, last Friday I took part in a press conference to point out the achievements of a re-employment project by 3LM Consultants Inc. It is one of the first re-employment projects in Quebec. Under the Job Entry Program, the federal government contributed $94,380 to finance this project. With this funding from our government, 20 people in my riding who receive unemployment insurance can obtain training and experience to return to the job market.

Mr. Speaker, that is a good example of the effective employment policies brought in by our government with Bill C-21. Our programs meet the needs of the labour market and create interesting, steady jobs adapted to the requirements of our economy.

* * *

• (1410)

TAXI INDUSTRY

Mr. Marcel Prud'homme (Saint-Denis): Mr. Speaker, the taxi drivers serving Dorval Airport are angry, Pierre Bellemare tells us in an article in *La Presse* of April 11, today.

The representative of these drivers, Mr. Lucien Roy, tells us that each driver will have to pay 84 per cent more plus GST every year to Montreal International Airport in Dorval. These drivers say that income is down by 46 per cent. These costs are rising at a frightening rate, says the spokesman for taxi drivers at this airport. They are asking Transport Minister Doug Lewis to intervene and find a solution to this conflict.

[*English*]

It is the same thing in Toronto where the concerns of the Independent Limousine Owner-Driver's Association and the Airport Taxi Cab Association have fallen upon the minister's deaf ears.

I am pleased that our transport critic, the member for York West has intervened on their behalf. But if the minister will not go half way to meet the drivers, he may have to walk home the next time he wants a drive.

Mr. Speaker, the fee was $1,000 a year to work eight hours a day. It is now over $4,000, and that just to operate their cab. Also, the new flat fee is $6,000 for the limo drivers, which represents a 400 per cent increase.

I hope the minister will read by representation and act accordingly.

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EXECUTIVE SALARIES

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, the bits of information we have on Canadian business executives' pay must come from U.S. disclosure rules. This is unfortunate, for many of these earnings are obscene and must fall under public scrutiny.

For instance, the President of Aginco-Eagle Mines gets $5 million when he gets his pink slip.

Or Victor Rice, the man who dwarfed Massey Ferguson and moved it south of the border at the expense of Canadian taxpayers and workers. This job killer has a severance pay that amounts to four times his annual earnings of $2.6 million—over $10 million. That is 10 per cent of the 1990 company's profits, hijacked by an executive supposedly at the service of his shareholders.

They call it a "golden parachute". Imagine, a "golden parachute".

Mr. Speaker, I cannot see any parachutes opening on the labour side of the economic landscape. I see only workers falling to earth with lead parachutes, not golden parachutes.

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[*Translation*]

THE DISABLED

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative minister from Pierrefonds—Dollard and Secretary of State of Canada has given a grant to the Val-d'Or disabled people's club for a project related to an independent living centre in Val-d'Or.

An independent living centre promotes and encourages the gradual process whereby disabled people take responsibility for the development and management of personal and community resources. It must be open to meet the needs of all disabled people, regardless of handicap or age.

Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the valuable work done by Anne-Marie Desmarais, Bernard Michaud and all those involved. The proposed activities will help meet the objectives of the Disabled Persons Participation Program in the Val-d'Or region.

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ANCESTRAL LANGUAGE TRAINING

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard): Mr. Speaker, for many Canadians, the teaching of ancestral languages is essential for safeguarding and preserving their cultural heritage. Unfortunately, with the stroke of a pen, the government has told Canadians that this program will no longer exist.

Since then, the Picai Organization has circulated a petition in my riding, which has a large Italian community, and in the greater Montreal area. This petition asks the government to restore the funds necessary for heritage language teaching. My colleague from Laval-Est and I received this petition containing 22,000 signatures and will send it to the Minister responsible for Multiculturalism today.

I say to this Conservative Government, that if it really believes in multiculturalism, it will maintain the programs needed to promote it and ensure that Canada remains a multicultural country.

* * *

[*English*]

NATIONAL UNITY

Hon. Alan Redway (Don Valley East): Mr. Speaker, should one part of Canada have the unilateral right to separate?

If the answer is yes, doesn't it also mean that a region, district or county has the right to separate from a province, a city from a region and a neighbourhood from a city? What mechanism do we use to negotiate such a separation and how do we settle our differences if we cannot agree on the terms of separation?

If the answer is no, what compromises should we make to eliminate or reduce the grievances that have brought some Canadians to the point of wanting to separate or should they just have to lump it?

The answers to these questions are not easy for any of us, because in the very concept of separation we have a tiger by the tail.

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WELFARE

Mr. Ross Stevenson (Durham): Mr. Speaker, *Financial Post* columnist Diane Francis has pointed out that in Ontario anyone earning less than $45,000 a year could be better off on welfare.

An unemployed couple with two children could receive the tax-free equivalent of that income through welfare payments, clothing, medical and other allowances. Such information is one reason why working people who pay taxes are so frustrated today.

The 17 per cent welfare increase adopted in January by Ontario's NDP government will be welcomed by those in genuine need. Unfortunately, there are some who abuse this program. These abusers are not just cheating government but dipping into the pockets of all others who pay taxes.

I call on all three levels of government to ensure our welfare programs not only are adequate but affordable and targeted to those in genuine need.

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL CITIZENSHIP WEEK

Mr. Denis Pronovost (Saint-Maurice): Mr. Speaker, we are celebrating National Citizenship Week for the fifth consecutive year to remind us that Canadian citizenship concerns us all. It is more than a mere formality to obtain the right to vote or a passport. Bearing that in mind, Mr. Speaker, I would call upon the Bloc Quebecois members in this House to stop working at destroying our country, Canada, and to start working with us at rebuilding this country, Canada, on a sounder basis to ensure a brighter future to all Quebecers within Canada.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*Translation*]

TRADE

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the United States have challenged the decision regarding Canadian pork rendered by the binational panel on Free Trade. In the speech he gave yesterday in New York City, the Minister for International Trade stated that, if the U.S. appeal goes through it will be very harmful to the Free Trade Agreement and the participation of Canada in negotiations with Mexico and the United States. So, I would like the Prime Minister to tell me if his minister was stating government policy when he said in New York that the Free Trade Agreement would be seriously affected?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the exact words of the minister were:

[*English*]

"In the event that this extraordinary challenge was successful, it would be very harmful to the United States-Canada Free Trade Agreement and to any support for that agreement in Canada", Mr. Crosbie said: "Naturally, that will affect whether or not Canada enters into any other free trade agreements".

[*Translation*]

That is the minister's position and that is also the government's position. We take very seriously the Americans' decision to invoke an extraordinary provision in a regular case. This provision was negotiated for a very precise purpose, and the Canadian government does not agree at all with the decision of the American administration to invoke this extraordinary provision in this case. Such a decision dilutes the impact of an important decision-making process. We will watch and follow this very closely and vigorously.

[*English*]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Minister for International Trade was not the only one to say that the free trade agreement will be called into question if the American appeal goes through. A week ago Simon Reisman, the chief negotiator of the free trade agreement said, and I quote: "If there is some way to undermine and attack (the binational panel), then I would say we have to have a fresh look at the whole agreement. That is how important it is".

• (1420)

Given that both the minister and the chief negotiator say that the trade agreement is open to abuse, will the Prime Minister admit that this deal is flawed and do something to correct these flaws rapidly?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I know where the previous leader of the Liberal Party stood with regard to the free trade agreement. We are still waiting to hear whether the new Leader is in favour of or against the free trade agreement. We still have not heard.

The dispute settlement mechanism is an important part of the free trade agreement. Indeed, I think it is probably fair to say that the Government of Canada certainly would not have entered into a free trade agreement if there were not an impartial way to resolve disputes.

Among the negotiated provisions was this reference to an extraordinary provision. It was clear that this extraordinary provision was to be invoked only in the most exceptional circumstances by either of the parties. Fraud on the part of one of the judges is one of the kinds of exceptional circumstance.

We believe that the utilization of this particular clause in regard to the favourable decision to Canada on pork was an abuse of the process. Canada had won that case fair and square. This was an abuse of the process by the Americans, and that is the message I conveyed to the President of the United States. It is the message the

Government of Canada is conveying to the administration of the United States.

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we have always said, that this was not a good deal and that it should be renegotiated.

We have proof today that on the first occasion the Americans have, they will abuse the process.

Does the Prime Minister agree that we should first clarify the kind of deal we have with the Americans before we enter into a deal with the Americans and Mexico? We do not know exactly whether we have a deal or not with the United States.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I see the member for Edmonton applauding. He was one of the supporters of the free trade agreement.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Mulroney: He voted for it and he ran on it. We know he was in favour of it. We suspect his leader was in favour of it, and maybe one day he will let us know.

Mr. Chrétien: We will renegotiate the deal.

Mr. Mulroney: Now he says: "Renegotiate the deal."

He says the deal is okay, but he wants it renegotiated. We have a deal. It is not going to be renegotiated. We want it respected, and the Government of Canada is going to make sure it is respected.

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Etobicoke North): Mr. Speaker, in 1988, the Prime Minister said the dispute settlement mechanism in the free trade agreement was a "genuine shield against new U.S. protectionism, whether from Congress or from the administration".

As the Leader of the Opposition has noted, the Minister for International Trade in New York yesterday said that the U.S. challenge to the bi-national panel's decision "is a response to protectionist pressures from Congress" and that "this move attempts to put politics back in trade."

Will the Prime Minister now acknowledge what the Liberal Party has claimed all along, that the existing free trade agreement does not in effect "shield" Canada from congressional protectionist interests and pressures? Is the Prime Minister saying that if the extraordinary judicial committee decides against Canada's interest that we should rethink the free trade agreement? Is that what he said just a moment ago?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend is a spiritual supporter of the free trade agreement.

He knows full well that I said no such thing. I did indicate that the dispute settlement mechanism is indeed a shield against protectionism. It is not a guarantee against vexatious political behaviour. We believe that this is an abuse of the process. I have conveyed that personally to the President and we have conveyed it to the administration. We are going to deal with this matter.

We do not take the position, unlike some people, that when we run into trouble we are going to take our marbles and go home. That is not the way we conduct foreign policy and that is not the way—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mulroney: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to quarrel right away with my friend from Newfoundland about that statement. But with regard to the position of my hon. friend, obviously we are going to defend very vigorously the interests of Canada. We already won the pork case. The pork case was initiated before the free trade agreement. The problem was there before the free trade agreement. We won on two occasions the requirements of the pork decision. Now there is an abuse of process by the Americans against which we protest very vigorously. I believe the Canadian position will prevail.

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Etobicoke North): The Prime Minister knows perfectly well that the government accepted this process. It accepted it as an integral part of its acceptance of the free trade agreement. The government accepted it. It knew what it was accepting. It knew that this process could be triggered.

The extraordinary judicial panel in effect determines, with the Canadian government's agreement, whether or not the bi-national panel's decision conforms with U.S. law. In taking this step, the United States is not only

undermining the dispute settlement mechanism, but it has again demonstrated that Canada did not in fact win secure access to the U.S. markets via the free trade agreement.

I now ask the Prime Minister this: How is any of this different from what was the case before the free trade agreement? Why did Canada cede sovereignty in the free trade agreement when clearly it did not win reciprocal action from the United States?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, let us just go back. My hon. friend said that the Liberal Party would blame every sparrow that fell on the free trade agreement. That is exactly what he is in the process of doing.

In a trade agreement which regulates $200 billion worth of bilateral trade—the largest trading partnership in the world between two countries—the free trade agreement is a very important civilising instrument in regard to the problems that that kind of trade normally engenders, free trade agreement or no free trade agreement. It is a major step forward in that process of protecting Canadian interests.

The dispute settlement mechanism was the first such mechanism ever concluded between the United States and another sovereign nation. No one suggested that it was perfect, even though everyone acknowledged that it was a major accomplishment.

With regard to the provision that my hon. friend raises, it was never intended for this kind of use because the circumstances were clearly considered by both negotiators. Its use in these circumstances is an abuse, and the fact that it has been abused once—and it is an important provision—by the Americans does not justify in our mind destroying an historic accomplishment like the free trade agreement. We will not throw out the baby with the bath water simply because the Liberals ask.

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, this Prime Minister went across this country assuring Canadians from coast to coast that we had achieved secure access to the United States market.

I want to ask this Prime Minister now how he can stand up in the House of Commons and say this is a serious abuse, say that this is, as his Minister for International Trade put it, something that contravenes the intent of the FTA, without drawing some implications out of that. In other words, is this government going to do more than just talk about abuse? Is it actually going to do something? If so, what precisely is it going to do?

• (1430)

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend knows full well that with regard to any bilateral document, any important document concluded either between individuals or between sovereign nations, depending on the interpretation that a body of adjudication could give, the letter killeth and the spirit giveth life. Any time that spirit is deformed and distorted, an important document can be affected in an unfavourable way.

This is what has happened. The provisions are good. They are not perfect, but the dispute settlement mechanism is widely acknowledged to be a very important one. Canada proceeded pursuant to the rules and we won at every step of the road. At that point in time, the decision ought to have been final. The Americans chose to abuse the process by taking it an extra step. They are going to lose by taking that extra step because the provisions of the free trade agreement require that this matter be resolved in Canada's interests.

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said some very important things in that comment. He said that what is taking place on the part of the United States is unfair, an abuse. He has also said, and I hope I am not reading too much into his words, that there is an implication that an abuse of this sort puts at threat the free trade deal.

I want to ask the Prime Minister the question I put to him before: What precisely is this government prepared to do if in fact we see that the hopes of the Prime Minister do not come to fruition? What guarantee can he give us that in fact this abuse, which he identifies, is not going to turn out to be a successful abuse that hurts our pork producers right across this country?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend began by saying that he hoped he did not read more than was said into my statement, and then proceeded to do precisely that. I said no such thing. I said at no time that a failure to win in a given case would mean that we were going to proceed to revoke an important trade agreement.

I said that in my judgment the utilization of the invocation of this clause in these circumstances by the American government is an abuse of the process. It was an abuse of the process and this view is an important one on behalf of Canadians and has been conveyed to our American interlocutors on this.

We are going to follow the rule of law and we are going to advance at this stage all of the Canadian arguments that have successfully been advanced and deployed thus far.

My hon. friend then raises hypothetical questions about what if, what if, and what if. We began this believing we were right to proceed this way to defend the interests of Canadian pork producers. We did that. We won. We did it again and we won then. We believe that by following that same course, we are going to win again.

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, what precisely this government is going to do is to go from one trade deal, which it is questioning for abuse, to a further trade deal with the United States and Mexico.

We know that a report has been prepared with respect to labour legislation comparing Mexico, the United States and Canada. It is a report by Labour Canada. It was supposed to be tabled today. I want to ask the Prime Minister why it is that this important document has not been tabled in this House today.

What is holding back this government from telling Canadians about this important study? Why is it holding it back?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, it is an unfortunate characteristic of the New Democratic Party to attribute the worst motives to everyone with whom they disagree. That is why they are trying to justify on trade grounds a position that at base is simply, in the worst sense of the word, anti-Mexican. That is why they are trying to justify on trade grounds a position that is at base opposed to everything they say they stand for in terms of international development and encouragement of the Third World. That is a despicable position for any political party.

The report will be tabled later today.

DE HAVILLAND

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. I have in hand a copy of a study sent personally to the Prime Minister on February 5 which outlined the potential job devastation, not only for de Havilland, Toronto's largest industrial employer, but for companies across the country that supply de Havilland, the devastation that a foreign government takeover of the company could cause.

The study outlines that suppliers across the country account for $169 million in revenues, specifically $2.5 million in Alberta, $2 million in Atlantic Canada, $6.5 million in British Columbia, $11 million in Manitoba, $82 million in the province of Quebec and $65 million in the province of Ontario.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister why, having received this information personally two months ago, did he insist in the House yesterday that he was not going to reverse the takeover of de Havilland?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, I will repeat what I said yesterday, that the application will have to go first to Investment Canada.

I would like to underline something that the member says. It is usual for her to make a presentation about effects may happen in two or three years. They are not there. What is there today is a company which Boeing proposes to sell to a consortium of European companies. It will have to be assessed very seriously by Investment Canada. The company in 1986 had 4,400 workers and today there are 4,900 people working in the company. We are trying to consider the way that we will deal with that in the future.

I ask the member to not just throw around figures which are not there. They are possible in her view, but for God's sake, could we have the truth, the real truth, here today.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, it is shameful, because the Industry Minister himself received the same study on February 5. I will tell him what that study says. Suppliers in the province of Quebec alone account for 48.7 per cent, for a total income of $82 million, most of that in Montreal.

But the Industry Minister knows that Montreal is the unemployment capital of Canada, as was said today. I would like to ask him this question: In these two months, why has he not faced up to his responsibilities and refused the sale of a company which will be very costly across Canada, which will cost Montreal, Toronto and all of Canada very dearly? Why has he not refused it?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, even if the hon. member for Hamilton East shouts untruths in French or in English, it does not change the facts.

Again, what she is referring to, a study from two months ago, deals with a hypothetical sale because it was proposed to Investment Canada at some point but has not yet happened. Let them try to frighten people, Mr. Speaker, but not in the constant and illogical way that the member for Hamilton East is always doing in this House. I ask her to show the maturity that goes with the position she holds as deputy leader of a political party. She is absolutely unable to give people the straight facts.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, those are Liberal projections, but we had them for 20 years and that was enough.

• (1440)

[*English*]

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Prime Minister. It too concerns the sale of de Havilland.

Yesterday the Prime Minister boasted:

> Canada needs foreign investment and we are going to invite foreign investment and create national investment.

Will the Prime Minister level with Canadians and demonstrate exactly where that foreign investment is when his government practically gave away de Havilland in 1986 and now the French–Italian consortium will be paying big dollars not to Canada but to a giant American corporation, Boeing, based in Seattle, Washington?

How does that transaction benefit Canadians and Canadian workers?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, if my friend wants to listen to me, I will repeat what I said before.

In 1986 Boeing Canada bought a company for about $890 million which at the time faced big difficulties. Today this government put in about $90 million for 500 more jobs than it had at the time. The company spent about $700 million or $800 million on de Havilland since 1986.

It is what I call a good investment. I know that the Liberal Party is against foreign investors. I prefer the message I gave abroad about Canada and the way we want to see money in this country from all countries in the world, rather than the way you did it and almost killed the economy of this country.

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, Liberals are not against foreign investment.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Marchi: Liberals are against foreign takeovers. Canadians expect this government to stand up for Canada for a change. That is what we are for.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Marchi: It is not the foreign investment; it is foreign takeovers.

I return to the minister. The Prime Minister laughs and continues to read householders while Rome burns, but this is his prerogative.

Given that de Havilland is the largest industrial employer in Toronto and that millions of dollars of contract work to Canadian firms are tendered each year across the country, can the Prime Minister or the minister guarantee that if the new deal were to go through present levels of employment will be maintained, research and development will be continued in Canada, the plant will continue to build a full and complete aircraft and Canadian suppliers will be maintained?

Will he give us this reassurance on behalf of Canada and not some Boeing corporation in Seattle, Washington.

An hon. member: Seattle, Washington.

Mr. Speaker: I have to point out that that becomes a very hypothetical question. The minister may want to deal with it.

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, first I want to say that de Havilland is not a Canadian owned company. It is already

American. It was sold. If I understood well, the member said that we are trying to sell out the Canadian ownership. It is not a matter of Canadian ownership anyway.

No reasonable manager would give that kind of a guarantee before having first seen the business plan of the company, what the company intends to do in terms of the future. The company already expressed the views that maybe it could invest $1 billion in the new company. I think that is the reasonable way.

I am sure that my friend, if he wants to be objective, will admit that the best way is to refer the case to Investment Canada, which will as it did— do you have something against Italians?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of Industry, Science and Technology, and I would ask him to be careful.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. McCurdy: The minister has said that he will not accept a consortium purchase of de Havilland if it proves to be harmful. The consortium has already indicated that it plans to replace de Havilland's new 100-seater aircraft with its own, to leave de Havilland with some research and development and parts assembly, and to eliminate up to 3,000 direct jobs in Toronto and some 20,000 indirect jobs, most of which are in Quebec.

Is that harmful? Is that acceptable? Or, does the minister plan to act?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I answered exactly the same question the member asks today.

The deal has not yet been presented to Investment Canada. It will be done in due course. Investment Canada will deal with high-tech companies that have a lot of requests and different considerations and will take into account deals which will be acceptable to us.

I refer my friend to a deal which during the campaign the NDP Government of Ontario said it would refuse. It was the one with Consumers Gas. When Mr. Rae came to power he accepted the deal because it was a good deal.

I believe that we should have the same attitude about de Havilland, keeping in mind, I am proud to say, that Investment Canada did a wonderful job and will continue to do so.

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Mr. Speaker, to most of us the evidence is clear: Investment Canada has done no job at all.

It is reported that the consortium is asking for between $500 million and $1 billion spread over 10 years in order to support research which is basically connected to the consortium's new 100-seater aircraft to replace the new Dash-8 400 series. That new airplane, by the way, will be assembled in Germany and the rest of it fragmented among four or five other countries.

My question for the minister is simple. Would it not make more sense to use that money to obtain an equity position, a golden share, which would ensure that not only the R and D is done in Canada but the new 400 series will be produced and assembled in Canada so that workers will benefit and Canada will benefit from having at least one plane left that is produced in this country?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, the member, as his party normally does, is always in advance of any decision.

But what happens with that kind of approach? I believe, as I said yesterday, that we work and Investment Canada works with the presentation of an application by the company and any other application made regarding the deal with de Havilland. Investment Canada has already considered two applications, and it could do that again.

I ask my friend to be reasonable for once and to wait for the way we will work. He will see, as usual, that we work very well.

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SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Réginald Bélair (Cochrane—Superior): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. As he is well aware, the Minister for International Trade has

been collecting data on the memorandum of understanding on softwood lumber for more than four years.

On March 4, the same minister was quoted as stating that he was ready to go to Washington before the end of March to negotiate the termination of the memorandum.

• (1450)

Given that a promise was given, can the Prime Minister indicate to this House and to Canadian lumber manufacturers if indeed the Minister for International Trade has met with his American counterparts and, if not, why not?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, understandably the hon. member takes a very active interest in this issue. He would know that the Minister for International Trade, on behalf of this government, has been consulting actively with the provinces of Canada regarding the position that we would put to the United States to change a situation which is unacceptable to Canada.

Our position is that it is going to be necessary for us to have the agreement and the co–operation of the principal provinces affected by this matter.

There is no announcement that I have to make at this stage on behalf of the Minister for International Trade, except to say that those deliberations in Canada are proceeding and that I think the position Canada intends to take regarding this question with the United States is known to the House.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réginald Bélair (Cochrane—Superior): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the same minister. The softwood lumber industry in Canada is paralyzed by the 17 per cent rise in the Canadian dollar and the 15 per cent export surtax, making a total surcharge of 32 per cent. A hundred thousand jobs have already been lost in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, because this government created the problem, why is it refusing to solve it to help workers in Northern Ontario and throughout Canada?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I believe that it is well known to all members who have followed this situation that this problem was not created by the Government of Canada but rather by the practices of some provinces. A problem arose and the government had to deal with it. Arrangements have been made with the United States. The present circumstances are not acceptable for us. That is why we began consultations with the provinces and it is also why we are seeking the support of the provinces most interested in the issue, so that when the Government of Canada makes representations to the Americans, it will be with the support of the great majority of the interests affected here in Canada.

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[*English*]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Mr. Speaker, today Statistics Canada released the latest casualty list of this government's economic policies.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Department store sales are down by over $1.5 billion since December 1990. The combination of the GST and this government's kamikaze economic policies has led to the worst collapse in the retail sector in over 30 years.

How many more retail stores will have to go belly–up or how many more people will have to be thrown on the unemployment line before the Prime Minister comes to his senses and abandons his obscene economic policies?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, as I have said on a number of occasions, we expect that the economy is going to stabilize by mid–year and that we will see a growth in the second half of the year. That is not an opinion that is exclusively held by the Government of Canada. The Royal Bank of Canada, the Conference Board and other economists have stated the same opinion.

There is a slowness in the economy right now, and we do not like to see that. We do see the policies we have been following, particularly the drop in interest rates we have seen continue today of about 4.25 percentage points since the peak last May. That is giving some life to the housing industry. We are going to see this carried through into other sectors of the economy, and it is that which will bring about that recovery.

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Mr. Speaker, only this government would have the nerve to call a 42 per cent decrease in retail sales a sign of economic recovery.

My question is again for the Prime Minister. So far this year bankruptcies are up over 63 per cent. With the news of a one-half billion dollar decrease in retail sales between January and February, there should be no question that those bankruptcies will continue to rise unabated through spring and summer.

Since the Prime Minister and the government refuse to stop this assault on the economy, will they at least give some relief to the casualties by introducing in this House today reformed bankruptcy legislation to offer some protection to those Canadian businesses that are suffering so badly?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I think my hon. friends is very well aware of the considerable work that my colleague, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, has been doing in bringing about the introduction of the bankruptcy legislation. I would hope at some stage in the fairly near future he will be able to do so.

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DECENTRALIZATION

Mr. Larry Schneider (Regina—Wascana): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister.

I am encouraged with the logical relocation of the National Energy Board to Calgary. I am also encouraged by this government's quick action to fill the void in Summerside and similarly in Portage la Prairie.

Coming from Regina, I have seen not only a comparative lack of federal presence in the capital city but have also experienced the ravaging of federal jobs under a previous government, the majority of these jobs going east of our province.

The Conference Board of Canada states that Saskatchewan's economy contributes 3.7 per cent to Canada's Gross National Product, while the federal government spends only 0.8 per cent of its budget in Saskatchewan.

Can the Prime Minister give my community this government's assurances that the government intends to continue with a policy of logical decentralization?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member from Regina for a very important question.

In point of fact there is general recognition that the decision of the government to locate the Western Diversification Office in Edmonton has resulted, for example, by bringing the decision-making process closer to western Canada in the creation of some 26,700 new jobs in western Canada.

The decision by the government, for example, to locate the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency in Moncton has been described by Premier Frank McKenna as the most important contribution to regional development in the history of Confederation.

We believe that there is an important role for decentralization in Canada. Obviously the case made with such eloquence by the member from Regina would undoubtedly cause the government to examine Regina very carefully as a sight for any future moves of decision-making bodies west.

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HEALTH

Ms. Joy Langan (Mission—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the the Minister of National Health and Welfare. He is finally sufficiently concerned enough for the safety of Canadian women to send an official to Washington to check out the recent U.S. Food and Drug Administration report on the carcinogenic threat of the Meme breast implant to women in Canada.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member is putting a question which is clearly of very great importance to all hon. members in the House, and I would ask hon. members to listen to her question carefully.

Ms. Langan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is the minister now willing to suspend the use of the Meme until he has a definitive report? He should be willing to err on the side of Canadian women rather than on the side of manufacturers of implants.

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will be aware that yesterday she rose in the House of Commons based on a clipping from a newspaper and demanded that we withdraw the implant. My response to her was to request, if she had not yet seen the report, to wait until we have had a chance to look at the report and to analyse

the results of the report instead of having a hanging first and having the trial later.

Our official has met in Washington with officials of the FDA. He was the only person there who was not an official within the FDA. We have done a preliminary analysis of the FDA report which shows essentially the same data as we found with studies that were done by the Department of National Health and Welfare and the University of Ottawa earlier.

Ms. Joy Langan (Mission—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, that would suggest to me that the FDA's report has collaborated those two reports that this minister continues to ignore.

At the same time as we have this kind of information from the FDA, the minister and his department are still circulating documents to Canadians saying that these implants are safe. I would ask the minister to withdraw these documents immediately.

• (1500)

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, possibly the hon. member is not aware of the two studies that were done, one by my own department and one by the University of Ottawa.

They found that no American threat was posed by the Meme breast implant. If the hon. member would like a full briefing with regard to either of those studies—they are on the public record—we would be prepared to make this information available to the hon. member or to any other hon. member in the House.

The key concern here is very simple. Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the hon. member who asked the question might listen.

The key concern is simply this. Our responsibility on all sides of this House is to protect the health and safety of Canadians. If, based on scientific information, there is any reason to justify the withdrawal of a medical device from the market, the government will do so. However, that action has to be based on scientific evidence.

TRADE

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade.

Next month Canadian farmers will be facing a flood of low quality U.S. grain coming into the country, costing Canadian producers millions of dollars. At the same time, the United States is using its Export Enhancement Program to steal Canadian markets overseas and to drive down world prices.

In view of the fact that it is violating the spirit of the FTA with regard to the Export Enhancement Program, is the minister prepared to hold up the access to Canadian markets of U.S. grains until the United States starts meeting its obligations under the free trade deal with regard to export subsidies?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is being somewhat premature in his conclusion.

The preliminary data has just been exchanged between the two countries. It is still being worked upon. Unless he has some news that I do not have, there has been no decision made. We will have to await the calculations, and then see what happens. There has been no indication that the Canadian border would be open to American wheat at this particular time.

* * *

INDIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. Denis Pronovost (St. Maurice): Mr. Speaker, more than five weeks ago, Justice Rouleau handed down his decision recognizing federal government authority to hold a referendum on the governance question at Kanesatake.

[*Translation*]

Can the Minister of Indian Affairs tell us today whether he is prepared to announce the holding of a referendum for the people of Kanesatake very soon?

Point of Order

[*English*]

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for St. Maurice has raised a very timely question.

As hon. members know, for several years there has been a serious problem of band governance within the Mohawk community at Kanesatake, where there has been instability and internal disagreement ever since the change in band custom election was introduced in 1969.

I am examining the judgment of Mr. Justice Rouleau of the Quebec Federal Court. I am inclined to favour the holding of a plebiscite very shortly on this question, to be conducted by an independent, impartial agency.

I will have a decision and more details early next week.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PRIVILEGE

OFFICE OF THE MEMBERS FOR RICHELIEU—SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

Mr. Speaker: I would like to make a brief clarification further to the statement by the hon. member for Richelieu in the House yesterday and his question of privilege raised on Monday this week.

I first wish to inform the House of the successful meeting I had today with the hon. member and with some officials who participated in moving his office. At that meeting, the hon. member said he was completely convinced that at no time were his rights and privileges as a member violated. It was recognized that such situations are exceptional and unique and it was regrettable if it caused him some concern.

Once again, I wish to thank the hon. member for his confidence and co-operation in this affair. The hon. member for Richelieu has the floor.

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu): Mr. Speaker, in turn, I would like to thank you for having met with me in your chamber and for stating publicly that I had found myself in an unfortunate situation. I also wish to reassure the hon. members and my constituents about the confidentiality of the files that were moved from my office. I have received assurances from your legal adviser, who monitored the move, that it was done under police surveillance and that none of my files were tampered with. I have decided, with your permission, to stay in the office you have assigned me—or rather imposed upon me—because, for the same reasons that led me to object to having my office moved in the first place or to be asked to move, I think it would not be right to spend another $10,000 in this time of restraint to move me back to my old office. I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your co-operation in this matter and for kindly accepting to see me so promptly.

In closing, however, I must once again denounce the decision of the Progressive Conservative Party Whip to give in to the whim of some 30 conservative members by moving their office at a cost of about a quarter-of-a-million dollar. The Canadian people will make them pay for that at the next election. Thank you.

* * *

[*English*]

POINT OF ORDER

REPORT BY LABOUR CANADA

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. In the House today, reference was made to a report by Labour Canada. I want to advise the House that that report is in the process of being delivered to the chairman of the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade, and also to the members for Etobicoke North and Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, who are the respective critics for their parties.

[*Translation*]

OFFICE OF THE MEMBER FOR RICHELIEU

Mr. Vincent Della Noce (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to the member for Richelieu. He has just quoted some figures to which I strongly object. It does not cost $10,000 to move his three machines and a few files. I was among those moved and I know it did cost $150. I would not want the people to think that we spent $10,000. Moreover, Mr. Speaker, I would not want them to think that we just moved for the fun of it. I moved ouy of necessity and to help this House.

[*English*]

REPORT BY LABOUR CANADA

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order that the Secretary of State for External Affairs just raised, can I take his comments to mean that the report now is a public document and that people are free to comment? Are copies available to all members, other than those he referred to specifically?

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Mr. Speaker, they certainly will be. It is intended to be a public document. This was intended to be a process as undertaken by the government, to make that document public today.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

WEEKLY STATEMENT

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard): Mr. Speaker, being Thursday, I would like the government House leader—I think I can guess what he is going to say—in keeping with the practices of this House, to tell us what the order of business is for tomorrow.

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, it really depends on when tomorrow starts, at midnight or 10 a.m. tomorrow. We will dispose of Motion 30 some time today or tomorrow; this sitting, let me put it that way, and then it would be my intention to call the adjournment motion for tomorrow. I guess any future will depend on what happens with the adjournment motion.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Andre (p.19027) and amendment of Mr. Dingwall (p. 19156).

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, this debate, even under the best political circumstances in normal political times, I submit to you would be a difficult one. As the history of Parliament shows, parliamentary rule changes are always a topic that is received with great suspicion by whichever party is in the opposition, quite rightly and understandably so. It is the role of the opposition in the British parliamentary system to keep the government honest and to play the basic role of a watchdog on the activities, the actions and the decisions of the government of the day.

• (1510)

Unfortunately, this task is made more difficult for two reasons; first is the nature of the proposal the government is advancing, which has been dealt with by colleagues and which I will deal with in a moment and second, because of the low popularity and the low esteem in which the government finds itself across the country in the opinion of Canadians.

The credibility of the government is at the present, as is shown by a variety of recent polls, extremely low. The credibility of the leader of this government is even worse. What accompanies this phenomenon is the fact that the popularity in the polls of this government is way behind that of the other two major parties. Political analysts are informing us that in the history of taking public opinion polls, the Prime Minister's popularity, at 16 per cent, has never been as low as it is at the present time.

One could even venture to forecast that if an election were called and held 60 days from today, the government party would be extremely lucky if it were to play the role of the official opposition as a result of such an election. Most likely, it would be in third position at best. This is because of the considerable erosion in popularity the Conservative Party is undergoing, as witnessed both in the west as well as in Quebec. Therefore, I submit to you that this government lacks the moral authority that accompanies credibility.

In asking that a package of new rules be accepted and adopted by this House, the government is really asking the impossible. It is requesting the acceptance of a package whose substance is very controversial and it lacks the needed authority to assert its viewpoint. It only has the numbers when it comes to a vote. That is the use of force, rather than the use of reason in parliamentary terms.

It is against this rather depressing political snapshot that I just gave the House that we are debating today the merits and the disadvantages of this package.

One must conclude from the absence of speakers on the government side today that even backbenchers of the governing party find it extremely difficult to defend this package. Not one has risen today in defence of this proposal. We are witnessing a profound lack of confidence on the part of the benches on the government side. That says more than anything else.

In all fairness, one has to say by way of a general comment that the government's package does contain a number of potentially helpful proposals and most of them, I submit to you, flow from existing practices. It would be building on existing practices that would lead to some of the changes that we have supported by way of an intervention made a couple of days ago by the Whip of the Official Opposition in this House.

The positive side of this package is poisoned by the over-all thrust of the suggested new timetable, which prevents the opposition from holding the government accountable in the manner that it ought to be in a modern parliamentary system.

As we have heard from other speakers, it is being proposed that we reduce by one-quarter the number of sitting days. This may appear to the average Canadian to be a matter of debatable significance, if we were not to add very quickly the fact that by reducing from some 175 to 135 the number of sitting days, Canadians, through the media and other channels, are denied the information that is generated through Question Period and the scrums following Question Period. We all know from experience that it is through that process of daily questions and answers that an assessment is made of government decisions, programs and intentions that relate to the public interest.

In that respect, therefore, a reduction by one-quarter of the number of sitting days is more than just a statistic, it is more than just a general number; it has a significance that, once translated into political terms, assumes a certain importance.

This leads me to comment also on the fact that this reduction in sitting days in the House of Commons seems to be motivated by an over-all attitude to the parliamentary democratic process which is rather stringent, discipline-oriented and, at times, I regret to say, rather repressive. I do not want to sound like a professional opposition member because we think that we will be, with the support of the Canadian voter, replacing the government. Therefore, we have to make speeches, keeping in mind the importance of governing in a parliamentary system.

But I would like to draw to the attention of the House that in the life of this Parliament, namely since the November 1988 election, the time allocation motions, in other words, motions of a kind that have restricted or placed a limit to debate in this House, have been invoked eight times. The number of times in which closure—which is really a guillotine—on debate has been invoked nine times, Mr. Speaker.

These numbers have significance if they are compared to a benchmark. I would like to draw the attention of the House to the fact that in the Trudeau government years—the last major change in parliamentary rules that I can recall before the McGrath commission—between 1970-71 to 1984, closure was invoked three times over a period of 14 years. Here, by contrast, closure has been invoked nine times over a period of nine years. Do we not detect a pattern of management of Parliament that is pretty severe and pretty restrictive in resorting to such extreme measures?

The question, of course, is why? It is a subject that we could perhaps debate on another occasion in analysing why closure has been invoked nine times in two years.

• (1520)

Evidently it is the nature of the measures this government has imposed on Canadians through Parliament that has made this type of strategy frequently necessary; namely, the resorting to closure. I submit that this is very regrettable.

The reduction of sitting days also means that Parliament is no longer being seen as the place where political leadership on the part of all the parties involved ought to be expressed, particularly in difficult times of the kind we are experiencing and witnessing today. We seem to be led by a notion, expressed through this package by the government, that Parliament is really not a place where credible thoughts can be expressed, where politicians have a role to play, and where the intellectual capacity of the elected members can come to the fore in a thoughtful and constructive approach to the issues of our times.

The message is in reverse and says that the number of sittings should be reduced and the members should be sent home and be kept away because, in the opinion of this government, Parliament is somehow becoming less and less relevant. That is at a time when Canadians obviously look for leadership from their politically

elected members and it is a very distressing trend and a very distressing and disturbing pattern.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Caccia: We on this side of the House do not believe there is a bankruptcy of ideas on the part of elected representatives. But the proposed changes are evidently a reflection on the government's assessment of its own capacity to produce that type of leadership through its own members. In that sense it is a very serious indictment.

Let me analyse for a moment the idea of having members in their riding longer every month, i.e., for one week. This scheme is one that could be described as the steam-engine era scheme, coming from the time when travel was very slow and electronic facilities of the kind we know today did not exist. Fifty years ago, it took two or three days to reach one's riding. You certainly did not have a fax in your office or the telephone facilities and other ways of communicating quickly with your electors, constituents and the like. Neither did you have the capacity to travel back and forth by jet.

So we have a package that seems to be conceived and developed with a steam-engine era in mind during the time of the jet engine and of the electronic era. Mr. Speaker, one wonders, therefore, what kind of historical context this government has in mind when it proposes this kind of parliamentary reform. Has it packaged the product of the 1990s for our consideration? Or is it a product of the 1920s?

Inevitably, even with the highest degree of charity we are capable of receiving from the opposition side sometimes, we have to conclude that this government is using a thought process in advancing these proposals that belongs to the steam-engine era rather than to the jet-engine era in which we live today.

Therefore, something is discordant, anachronistic, and out of sync, to put it in very simple terms.

A new system of committees, the so-called five envelopes, deserves a moment of attention, Mr. Speaker. One can understand that the government would want to re-organize committees in a manner that is more rational and reflects new values and new political policy priorities.

In that sense, I would applaud the government for having attempted to do so, but one aspect in that new scheme must be criticized and I hope the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment will perhaps take it into account; namely, the manner in which the envelope, which now comes under the heading of natural resources, has been conceived. Because you find the environment as a servant to natural resources in that envelope.

I or you or everyone would have thought, and even the parliamentary secretary, that environment would have perhaps been the heading of that envelope, under which all those natural resources would then have come.

Considering the far-reaching statements and declarations the Prime Minister of Canada has made on the environment, sustainable development, and other matters at home and abroad over the last six years, we do not see a carrying-through of the declarations that have been made in abstract terms, which do not find practical expression in the new committee organization. In other words, the environment is relegated to being just another horse, in competition with other interests, rather than being the over-all envelope that takes under its wings, so to speak, the various natural resources considered under that particular envelope.

I would suggest to you, in conclusion, the following thought. It seems to me that when we are elected we campaign and people vote to send their member to Ottawa. That is the idea on which an election is run to find who people will send to Ottawa. The package that is before us for debate and for a vote today does not contain proposals that would increase our accountability through the House of Commons, that would increase our parliamentary effectiveness in this Chamber, or that increase our effectiveness as legislators and our legislative role in committees. Unfortunately, the package seems to weaken these three specific roles. Therefore, the proposals will weaken us individually and collectively with respect to our electors and to the public interest, which we are supposed to protect, promote and enhance on behalf of our electors.

Secondly, as a corollary to that observation, I submit to you that Canadians expect or would expect a different kind of reform at this time in history. One that would turn us into better parliamentarians rather than political campaigners in our respective ridings, that would im-

prove our ability to examine and improve the quality of legislation put before us, that would improve our ability to understand budgetary processes and the ways of better investing the tax dollars, ways of translating into programs and policies the ideas transmitted to us in a variety of ways by our constituents through this very place at the centre.

Mr. Speaker, I submit to you that we are elected to be active at the centre of this nation, namely on the Hill, in the capital of Canada, not in our respective ridings in the diffused manner being proposed by this package, because that is the essence or the quintessence of the purpose for which we are elected. This package not only disregards this basic fundamental point, it actually weakens the role of the parliamentarian. It is for this reason that, although we would like to be positive about parliamentary reform because it is in the interest of Canadian that parliamentary reform be a continuous process, we have to vote against this measure for a very clear reason, linked to the interest of the population of Canada.

• (1530)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): There are no questions or comments to the hon. member, I regret. I will recognize the hon. member for Hillsborough.

* * *

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I have the honour to inform the House that messages have been received from the Senate informing the House that the Senate has passed the following bills without amendment: Bill C-97, an act to provide borrowing authority, and Bill C-98, an act authorizing agreement between the Government of Canada and the provinces to provide for protection for the income of producers of agricultural products and to enable the Government of Canada to take additional measures for that purpose.

[*Translation*]

ROYAL ASSENT

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Rideau Hall
Ottawa

April 11, 1991

Mr. Speaker,

I have the honour to inform you that the Hon. William Alexander Stevenson, Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of Canada, in his capacity as Deputy Governor General, will proceed to the Senate Chamber today, the 11th day of April, 1991, at 4.00 p.m., for the purpose of giving Royal Assent to certain Bills.

Yours sincerely,
Judith A. LaRocque
Secretary to the Governor General

* * *

[*English*]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Andre (p. 19027) and amendment of Mr. Dingwall (p. 19156).

Mr. George Proud (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, I rise to participate in this debate dealing with the proposal to change the rules of the House of Commons. It is with foreboding that I do so.

My sense of unease is not brought on by the technical nature of the subject matter. I will admit, of course, that there are those who are much better versed than I in parliamentary procedure. But my trepidation stems from a belief that these changes are symptomatic of a more basic problem; a breakdown in the parliamentary system, brought on by a lack of understanding of the underlying principle of the separation of powers and of accountability.

Let us look at what is happening in this country. Provinces are increasingly demanding responsibility for legislation that the Constitution has assigned to the Parliament of Canada. Constitutional reform, once a

retirement program for lawyers, has lately become a bitterly divisive issue. Western Canadians and Atlantic Canadians are increasingly demanding a reform of the other place. Certainly, British Columbia organizations are looking to California, seeing what is going on there, and demanding that the public initiate referenda.

I ask myself why this is happening? Why are so many demands to change the basic structures of our nation surfacing at the same time? The answer is simple. The public senses that the parliamentary system in Canada is breaking down and out of frustration are demanding action in their own ways and with their own ideas.

This is not a partisan issue. It does not surprise me that the system is breaking down. The British parliamentary system has been a battleground to fight the tyranny of autocratic governments since King John convened the very first one in 1213. Not a century has gone by without a major constitutional restructuring. In fact, the first signs of parliamentary authority were found only when Parliament took up arms against King Charles I and literally removed the head of government.

We are fond of saying that ours is the oldest parliamentary system on the planet.

We are fond of referring to the mother Parliament in London and to the millennium of history that gave rise to constitutional monarchy, and we are fond of showing that even the United States has based its system on the British system.

This is a re-write of history.

It was only under King William and Queen Mary that Parliament began to win supremacy over the government and only under Queen Anne that the Royal veto was eliminated. In short, it was only in the 18th century that the British parliamentary system began to emerge.

It is worth considering why the British parliamentary system emerged. Parliament had won supremacy over legislation and taxation through a bloody civil war. That civil war had resulted in the Hanoverians replacing the Stuarts on the throne. King George I required legislation and taxation in order to run the government. His claim on the throne was being questioned by the people and King George I was faced with a situation that might have made him more unpopular than our Prime Minister is today.

With hindsight, King George appears to have been the first modern politician. It was he who set the precedent of appointing ministers from the House of Commons. He realized that, by putting the most influential members of the House of Commons on the government payroll, he could have them fight for his legislation and moneys on the floor of the Chamber. Furthermore, the public would see these popular figures supporting the new monarch and thereby give him legitimacy.

A cynic would claim that the entire British parliamentary system is based on conflict of interests and would probably claim that today's rule changes are also part of this conflict of interest.

The government House leader states that these rule changes are necessary for members of Parliament to fulfil their duties. Some of these members are bored. They sit there day after day, having little or no say in debate.

I have heard journalists speculate that these rule changes are necessary to deal with the independents in the House, that the Conservative government is hoping for a minority in the next Parliament and wants to change the rules to ensure that legislation will pass through a multi-party legislature. I do not agree. I take the government at its word.

I am sure the primary motivation for the government is concern for the way Conservative members are occupying their time. The opposition benches are now riddled with members who occupy their time by participating in debate on the government's legislation.

By definition, the government does not want members to participate in debate. Let's face it, in the current parliamentary system, Conservative members do not want to participate in debate. If they speak against the government they will have to criticize the Prime Minister. If they oppose him they will be opposing the man who must sign their nomination papers, who will appear on their election literature, and who 80 per cent of the voters will think of when they see the ballot. Thanks to King George I, most of these MPs are in a conflict of interest situation.

The government's solution, which we are debating today, is to lessen the number of hours that Parliament sits. This is to permit, in the government's words, backbench members to have more time to be in their constituencies.

I am a member who recognizes the importance of being in the constituency and I spend virtually every weekend and every break we have in my constituency. The sole reason for this is to obtain advice and input from my constituents on important matters facing Parlia-

ment. I do this so that I can consider the bills that represent my constituents' best interests in this House.

The cutbacks in opposition days have reduced the number of issues that the opposition can raise. Therefore, the constituent voice will be greatly silenced.

I cannot support these rule changes. Parliament has a purpose and that purpose is to consider legislation. The government House leader is fond of saying that he was elected to govern. But he was not elected to govern. He was appointed to government and his appointment has put his colleagues in a conflict of interest situation. I urge them to rise above partisan politics and self-interest and vote against the motion.

There are issues that are fundamental to democracy: Are the rights of individuals paramount to the rights of the majority? Can the non-elected executive branch over-ride the elected legislature?

The issue of reform in the other place is not that different from the issue we are talking about today. The reason the public wants the other place reformed is because, first and foremost, the system is not working. They want the Senate to be elected to make these people accountable; they want it to be equal to be a check on the House of Commons; and they want an effective check on the executive branch.

• (1540)

I do not expect the government to suddenly realize, after listening to my speech, that the executive branch is different from the legislative branch. After all, just as King George I realized 100 years ago, a government can rule unimpeded by controlling the legislative branch.

I do hope that the members opposite will recognize that they are not the government. They have been summoned to this Parliament as legislators to consider government business that was set forth in the Speech from the Throne. The significance of the introduction of the pro forma bill following the first speech was to tell the government that we reserve the right to consider whatever matter we wish, not just the government's agenda.

I recognize that the members opposite may, out of ideology and personal interest, support much of what the government does. This item today, however, is not a partisan issue and not a government issue. It is an issue of interest solely to the legislative branch.

My honourable colleague, the member of Parliament for Ottawa-Vanier, one of the most distinguished parliamentarians around, has already pointed out to the House of Commons that rules should be initiated by a committee of the Commons. They certainly should not be initiated by the executive branch. This is an issue fundamental to our democracy and I beseech my colleagues to not let the non-elected government over-ride our elected House of Commons.

Regardless of political party, we must continue the fight of the first Parliament of 1213. We must protect Parliament from the tyranny of an autocratic government; otherwise, the Canadian parliamentary system has no future.

We would do well to realize that the only source of legitimacy the parliamentary system has left in the public eye lies in the democratic processes of this House. If the House Leader can change the rules to his political advantage this House would no longer be parliamentarian and he would have tampered with one of Canada's most fundamental institutions.

I say do not allow this government to force the public to lose their confidence in our parliamentary system.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Charles A. Langlois (Manicouagan): Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege today to take a few minutes in the House to comment on the project submitted by the government to change the hours of sitting and work schedules of the House. I would also like to give you and the House the viewpoint of a member who represents a riding that is very far from Ottawa and also very large; it extends over nearly 750 miles of shoreline on the north side of the Gulf of St. Lawrence; it contains three large communities—Port Cartier, Sept Iles and Havre Saint-Pierre—within a distance of about 150 miles and 20 or so villages, some with fewer than 500 people, on another 550 miles of coast.

Mr. Speaker, my home is in Sept Iles and when I arrive in my riding, if I want to go to the eastern most part of it, the Blanc-Sablon region, I still have 550 miles to go, which means a day of flying to get there and another day to return.

I would also like to draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, and the attention of the House to the fact that the riding of Manicouagan also includes the Ungava Bay region, with Inuit villages located 600 or 700 miles north of Montreal and Sept Iles.

This is to tell you that for a member who represents a riding like that, a developing riding, a riding with countless needs, a riding where in some places we have to start from scratch, the present schedule of the House makes the member's work extremely difficult.

I would like to point out to the House that our constituents elected us not only to spend many hours in the House of Commons making laws, although that is important work; they elected us to be able to talk to us, to be able to spend time with us elected members, to be able to express to us their concerns and familiarize us with their needs and to work with them to set up services; to work with them in dealing with federal government bodies to prepare projects for improving conditions, improving federal government services in our regions.

I touched briefly on how one gets around my riding. I would also mention that the communities in two thirds of my riding are not connected by road. Some places in my riding are accessible by boat only in summer, or by plane, and in winter, when the boat service is discontinued, these villages in my riding are accessible only by plane.

I would also like to point out to the House, that the villages throughout the eastern part of my riding are not connected by road. So if I as member of Parliament for Manicouagan want to visit those villages, meet the people and spend time with them, in many cases, most of the time, I have to go by snowmobile, or by boat in summer.

Mr. Speaker, you will understand that for a member from a remote region, whose riding is extremely large, it is extremely difficult to travel there. Spending whole weeks here, week after week, day after day, while the House sits is very inconvenient and obviously makes doing our job as members of Parliament extremely difficult.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the changes that the government proposes to the schedule of the House make very important improvements. Sitting for three consecutive weeks and then being able to go to our ridings for one week, for me in any case, for a member from a remote region who has to represent a very large riding, for me—I will be able to work much more effectively and productively for my constituents, the citizens of my riding. During the three weeks that the House sits, when the members are required to be in Ottawa, during those three weeks, we will be able to work effectively, both in the House and in committees.

So, Mr. Speaker, being here three weeks at a time will enable us to deal directly and strictly with the business of the House, the standing committees and the legislative committees and concentrate our work and effort on the proceedings of the House, the committees, on the process of making, amending and reviewing legislation.

During the fourth week, we can return to our ridings, take time to meet our constituents, attend their meetings, arrange to meet them, help them prepare projects, help them in their dealings with various federal government bodies.

I would also like to give some thought to the future. It might be said that it is fairly easy for me to travel from Ottawa to Sept Îles or from Sept Îles to Ottawa every week because air travel that way is easy. It is true about commuting between Ottawa and Sept-Îles. But in a foreseeable future, someone from the Lower South Shore could be elected to represent the riding of Manicouagan in Ottawa. Imagine for a moment, Mr. Speaker, what it would be like for a person living in Natashquan, having been elected as member for Manicouagan, to leave Ottawa Friday afternoon on the 4 p.m. flight to Quebec City, then catch a plane to Sept-Îles and, Saturday morning, get up and travel to Natashquan, and to have to be back in Ottawa by Monday to attend the House proceedings.

You will understand, it would make it almost impossible for anyone from that part of the riding to efficiently fulfill his or her obligations as member of Parliament in the best interest of his or her constituents.

In that sense, Mr. Speaker, the proposed schedule is certainly making the job more attractive for people who live in small communities allowing greater flexibility and making the organization of their work schedule easier. This could encourage people from small localities to run

for office and fully participate in the democratic process, the electoral process of this country.

The way the business of the House is scheduled at present, it is very difficult and, therefore, less interesting for people living in remote areas to run in a federal election.

• (1550)

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I heard the member for Kingston and the Islands make an extremely and outrageously partisan speech in which he mentioned that while Tory members were in the opposition they were free to go back and forth between Ottawa and their constituency, whatever the business of the House was. I found that remark, coming from an experienced parliamentarian like the member for Kingston and the Islands, not only extremely out of place, but also untrue.

I think that if we go back a few years, we will find that Tory members who sat as the opposition in this House formed a group of faithful parliamentarians who followed the democratic process, who followed the parliamentary and legislative process very seriously. Indeed, I am inclined to believe, Mr. Speaker, at the sight of today's opposition benches, that what the member for Kingston and the Islands said yesterday is true of the Liberals who are now in the opposition. Because, Mr. Speaker, we must realize that that is probably what they are doing now. There is no doubt they come and go as they please. Even when motions to amend a bill are introduced and come to a vote, we see members take part in the debate and then leave without caring to be present and vote when the vote is called.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, I found irrelevant and astonishing to say the least, the remarks of my friend from Kingston and the Islands.

So I wanted to tell you, Mr. Speaker, and to tell the House and the Canadian citizens that when the opposition claims that the Progressist Conservative Party, the governement, present these changes to the rules of the House only for electoral purposes, it is completely erroneous, completely false. These changes will help to modernize the way the House conducts its business and to bring it up to date. I can understand why some Liberal opposition members are against these changes. I understand. I can understand them since they have been here for so many years, it is hard for them to accept changes that would make our parliamentary work, our debates more up to date, more efficient, and that would leave the members free to spend more time with their constituents.

Some are blaming us for not consulting our constituents, and are criticizing the government for submitting legislation to the House without having consulted the people. For my part, Mr. Speaker, I think the proposed changes will precisely allow members of Parliament to go back regularly in their ridings and meet their constituents, let them know the government's policies and hear their comments on policies and legislation being drafted.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, I close my remarks by telling you that I will vote against the amendments introduced by the opposition parties and that I entirely support the government's proposal suggesting changes to the rules of the House and of committees.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I regret there are no questions or comments. The hon. member for Hamilton East has the floor, on debate.

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At a time when Canadians are looking for real leadership in Parliament, I think it is disastrous that we are sitting here debating a motion that would cut 25 per cent from the heart of Parliament.

The Prime Minister and the Government House Leader claim they want parliamentarians to be more accountable to the people. Mr. Speaker, we also want Parliament to be more accountable to Canadians and want the Government of Canada to be accountable to Canadians, as we held the Prime Minister to account today, asking him why, when he had evidence in his hands two months ago about the devastation a foreign government take-over of de Havilland would have, he was blindly going ahead with the take-over. We held the government to account on the farcical statement of the minister of industry that he would leave it all up to Investment Canada.

Since the birth of Investment Canada there have been approximately 914 applications for foreign take-overs and do you know what the government's batting record is, for Canadians? It is 914 to 0. The government has

never turned down a foreign take-over on the grounds that it might be against the interest of Canadians.

How accountable was the Prime Minister last summer when the barricades were up at Oka and he could not be found anywhere in the country? How accountable was the Prime Minister during the Christmas period when he was about to take us into a war, yet would not allow Parliament to speak?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): A point of order.

Mr. Charles A. Langlois (Manicouagan): Mr. Speaker, may I simply remind my colleague from Hamilton East that this debate is on changes to the working procedures of Parliament. It is not a trial on accountability of the government. I would insist the member come back to the real debate and stop politicking on this issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The hon. member is a long-time member. She knows relevancy when there is relevancy and I would hope that she would get back to her—.

The hon. member for Hamilton East has the floor.

Ms. Copps: I would argue most strenuously that the intent of the changes to the Standing Orders is to tear the heart out of Parliament.

Mr. Langlois: You know that is not true.

Ms. Copps: The member says it is not true. Sitting days of the House would be cut from 175 days to 135 days. There would be 40 days in which the government cannot be held to account during Question Period.

Canadians already feel that parliamentarians are overpaid and underworked and now the government is about to embark on a plan to cut the workload of this House by 25 per cent. The member says the cut is not relevant. I would say it is relevant that, when the government and the Prime Minister lead us into a war, we have a chance to debate the issue in Parliament. Surely that is the whole reason we were elected: to come to Parliament and to hold the Prime Minister and the government to account. We were elected to hold them to account for the fact that in every part of this country Canadians are asking this Prime Minister for an economic plan to bring jobs back.

We are talking about 1,400,000 Canadians who want to work, but who, because of the policies of this government, have no jobs. There is one place where those Canadians invest their trust in their members of Parliament to come and plead their case before the Canadian people. I dare say that the Prime Minister and the Minister of Industry will take their boot straps to the case of de Havilland and will pass that case along as another foreign take-over, like the 914 take-overs they have already passed, but we should have a right to question them in this place.

This government's portrayal of these decisions as reform is nothing less than a fraud. It is a fraud to say to Canadians that, by permitting the Prime Minister to hide behind the defences of the Langevin Block, we will get to the real issues facing this country. It is a fraud for the Prime Minister to say that by cutting our sitting days from 175 to 135 we will have accountability for the people of Canada. It is a fraud for the government to claim that it is making this change to assist in the democratisation of Parliament.

The government has a well-constructed plan to shut Parliament down so that the Prime Minister can continue in the presidential style to which he has become accustomed. He does not like Parliament. He would like to be like Ronald Reagan and George Bush. They do not have to come in and be accountable on a daily basis and the Prime Minister likes their system. He wants to move toward their system, where the presidential style does not call on the accountability of Cabinet, it does not even call on the accountability of Parliament. This is the first time in the history of the Canadian Parliament that rule changes are being brought in by closure.

• (1600)

This government is not interested in real debate. It is no wonder that reformers, or so-called reformers, are having an impact on Canadians when they say they want to democratize the system. They look at the Prime Minister and they see what kind of government he has run behind closed doors for the last six years. They see the role of Parliament being stripped away bit by bit because members on all sides of the House are losing the opportunity to state the case for their people.

My party will not stand idly by and watch the Prime Minister destroy another Canadian institution. We saw what he did with the trade agreement. The results of that were evident in the House today. In fact, we now not only have the Minister for International Trade, but the chief Canadian architect of the agreement and now

finally, the Prime Minister, admitting that the Americans are breaking the spirit of the free trade agreement.

Well, surprise, surprise. What the Prime Minister does not realize is that as we speak, Canadians are crying out for the government to bring leadership out from behind the back doors and out to the front doors and to the floor of Parliament and to the floor of the union halls and meeting rooms across the country, but it is not going to happen by closing down Parliament.

[*Translation*]

I imagine the hon. member is interested in the background. If he is, he should know that it is the first time in the history of our country and of many governments that a government applies closure to ram through bad rules that will silence members in this House.

The Prime Minister claims to be modernizing Parliament.

Mr. Prud'homme: He wants to close it down.

Mme Copps: Mr. Speaker, he is not modernizing Parliament. This is a fraud, a sham. The fact of matter is that he would rather have a presidential system, with no question period. He wants to be like President Reagan and not have to be accountable. He does not want to come here and answer the real—

The hon. member is whining. I made the point in this House today that Montreal has become Canada's unemployment capital. We also know that, on many occasions, the policies of this government have brought the Canadian economy down. We know, for instance, that the mind of this government is already made up to dispose of de Havilland and to give Boeing the go ahead to sell the business to the governments of France and Italy. This will certainly cause many job losses in Montreal.

Figures have even shown that nearly half of the raw materials used by de Havilland come from Montreal and Quebec. When I raised the matter in the House, the so-called Minister of Industry said these were wroug figures, pure liberal fabrication.

Do you know what the source of these figures is, Mr. Speaker? These figures showing that 50 per cent of the raw materials used by de Havilland come from Montreal and Quebec were obtained from the Boeing company. They did not originate from the Liberal Party or the Opposition but from the Boeing company, and this is one of the reasons why we must have a question period, to expose the fraud and this government's lack of industrial policies.

I want to be in this House and do my duty and speak on behalf of the people who are unemployed in my riding and in Montreal, because, as you can see, not one conservative member has the courage to rise to speak about the failure of the economic policies of this government. They sit quietly, as if this was going to be the greatest parliamentary reform, when then know full well that, in fact, this means the closing down of Parliament.

Since this government came to power, the Prime Minister has attached our systems, our institutions, the economic and social fabric of this country on many occasions and now he is closing down the last place where we could really speak out for the ordinary people.

Mr. Langlois: That is incredible!

Ms. Copps: The hon. member shakes his head and says it is incredible. I think there may be a lack of respect for Parliament, because if there is one place where the unemployed of Montreal will be able to air their problems, it is here, in Parliament. When the hon. member claims that by cutting Parliament's discussion time by 25 per cent, we will help democracy, I would like him to tell me how that can be done.

Mr. Speaker, when Parliament was not sitting, when we were about to go to war and the Prime Minister remained behind closed curtains in the Langevin Block, without having the courage to recall Parliament on such a fundamental question as war, did the member speak up for the right of Parliament? Did the member get up to say there is one place where a decision should be made on this matter of going to war and it is not in Sherbrooke or in Montreal but here in the Parliament of Canada?

It is true that Canadians are becoming increasingly cynical because they see the Prime Minister and Cabinet ministers ignore Parliament's role. They ignore the role of Parliament, Mr. Speaker, even in constitutional matters. We saw the Prime Minister tie members' hands regarding the federal parliamentary committee. He told the Beaudoin–Edwards Committee to go and find out.

But instead of being able to examine the range of problems affecting us, as the Bélanger–Campeau Commission and even the Allaire Report did, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister allowed us to examine only one small point, the amending formula.

Mr. Speaker, if we really want to have what it takes to save Canada, which should ultimately be the responsibility of the Parliament of Canada, we should at least be able to have an all–party parliamentary committee that would have to look at all constitutional issues. Why is the Prime Minister still trying to deal with the Constitution behind closed doors? It is the same kind of attitude we find today with changing the Standing Orders of the House. It is an attempt to silence the minorities in Parliament.

The fact that he has the nerve to go ahead with a motion of closure, Mr. Speaker, is another expression of the contempt that he is showing for Parliament. Perhaps he could help me say it in French, but it shows contempt.

[*English*]

Introducing closure exposes the contempt that the Prime Minister has for Parliament, that on this most fundamental issue of our right to speak here in the Canadian Parliament. He does not care what minorities have to say. He does not care what the opposition parliamentarians have to say. We can see the evidence of contempt as he introduces closure at a time when we as minority members of Parliament want to have our right to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The hon. member will have six minutes remaining after we come back from royal assent.

* * *

THE ROYAL ASSENT

A message was delivered by the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod as follows:

> Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Deputy to the Governor General desires the immediate attendance of this honourable House in the chamber of the honourable the Senate.

Royal Assent

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker with the House went up to the Senate chamber.

• (1620)

And being returned:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I have the honour to inform the House that when the House went up to the Senate chamber the Deputy Governor General was pleased to give, in Her Majesty's name, the Royal Assent to the following bills:

> Bill C–79, an act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act—Chapter No. 20.
>
> Bill C–93, an act to amend the Bretton Woods and Related Agreements Act—Chapter No. 21.
>
> Bill C–98, an act authorizing agreements between the Government of Canada and the provinces to provide for protection for the income of producers of agricultural products and to enable the Government of Canada to take additional measures for that purpose—Chapter No. 22.
>
> Bill C–97, an act to provide borrowing authority—Chapter No. 23.

* * *

[*Translation*]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Andre (p. 19027) and amendment of Mr. Dingwall (P. 19156).

Mme Copps: Mr. Speaker, I did welcome the interruption, and I will tell you why. On our way to the other place, the member for Abitibi told us the real reason why the Tories want these amendments to Standing Orders. Do you know what he said? The hard–working member for Abitibi said in this House that we should somewhat lay off criticizing the new rules because they will give him an extra week off.

An hon. member: A month!

Mme Copps: Yes, a month. That is what he said, Mr. Speaker. The Standing Orders are good because they give him an extra week off every month. How strange to hear the members opposite argue that they need that week to go and work in their riding, when we know that what they really want is to reduce their workload by 25 per cent, earn the same money and be less accountable in this House and across the country.

That is a disgrace, Mr. Speaker, and I hope that the member for Abitibi will address this point when he is ready to discuss his so-called reasons for supporting this motion for closure.

[*English*]

I would like to talk about one other element. I realize that I have a very short period of time left, so I will try to be as brief and as concise as possible. The Prime Minister and the government have stated on dozens of occasions that they would like to do everything they can to encourage more women to come to Parliament and, in particular, more women with responsibilities.

This particular motion is not only an abrogation of the rights of Parliament, it is also despicably anti-family and anti-women. I will tell you why. One of the reasons that the government is bulldozing ahead with this particular motion is so it can not only have a month that is cut by one-quarter in terms of the workload, but it is also planning on having evening sittings.

Mr. Belsher: My family lives in British Columbia.

Ms. Copps: I hear the member say his family is in British Columbia. I certainly have every sympathy for him spending time with his family. I also know that if he were the primary care giver for his family, he would find it extremely difficult to spend three weeks in one city and one week a month in another city.

In about a year my daughter is supposed to start school. Should I enrol her for three weeks in Ottawa and one week in Hamilton? Should I tell her that when we have night sittings: "Gee; I would love to spend time with you".

I want to bring women to Parliament, but in fact because of this crazy system that we are adopting, we have to sit later nights. We start at eight o'clock in the morning. We already sit until 6, 6.30 or 7 p.m., depending upon the evening. I can tell you as one who is trying to raise a child, it is not easy.

This particular measure will make it more difficult because parents of school-age children and parents who are the primary care givers of their children cannot live three weeks in one part of the country and one week in another part of the country.

The member says: "Who is the primary care giver". You are talking about bringing more women to Parliament. The fact is, whether we like it or not, women still tend to be the primary care givers for the children. I suggest that a new schedule which calls for later night sittings and which splits the parliamentary calendar into three weeks in Ottawa and one week allegedly in the riding, although we hear from the member for Abitibi that it is one week's vacation—

Mr. Langlois: You are talking for yourself.

Ms. Copps: Yes, I am talking for myself, and I am talking for other women who would like to be able to take an equal place in participating in Parliament. I hope you have a chance to speak for yourself. I can only speak for myself, and I can tell you that as a direct result of this measure, it will be more difficult for me to recruit good women candidates with dependent children to come to Parliament. The very simple logical question is: What do I do when she goes to school? Do I put her in school three weeks in Ottawa and one week in Hamilton?

The parliamentary calendar that we have has only been in existence for the last number of years. The Speaker will know this because he lived under the old days of the night sittings. In the old days with the night sittings the longer the evening went, the more the quality of the debate deteriorated as the quality of the libation increased. That is a fact of life. I am sure the Speaker and others who went through the experience of late night sittings in the past will know that later night sittings do not necessarily improve the quality of the debate. They usually improve the quantity of the verbiage.

I am suggesting that when we adopted the calendar that had a five-day week here in Ottawa and a weekend in the riding, it gave the chance for people like myself who have small children to spend some time with their children. This particular measure is going to take that away from us.

Not only that, but what about the employees of Parliament? What about those employees who are called upon every night to sit late, two or three extra hours late, because this government is changing the rules of Parliament? Have those employees been taken into consideration, and the fact that it will wreak havoc on their family life?

If this government is truly sincere about bringing more minorities into Parliament, and in particular allowing women of childbearing age to take their rightful place in Parliament, then surely the calendar of Parliament should reflect the capacity for an ordinary family life. Heaven knows, it is hard enough to carry on that life as it

is, but this particular measure will set back the cause of bringing women to Parliament.

I urge you, and I urge government members with some backbone, to ignore the jackboots of closure that have been imposed by the Prime Minister today and to respect the fact that any time the parliamentary rules are changed, they should be changed by the consensus among all members, so that in fact we can raise the quality of debate in this place and we can also give all Canadians the chance to come here and represent their constituents.

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak on this bill today. It is a bill that is going to be very damaging to something that people have fought for long and hard for centuries, and that is the right to a parliamentary democracy.

People have fought and died. We must remember that others are continuing to fight and die for what we have, and which the government now proposes to diminish, the right to hold the rulers accountable for how they govern, how they use the resources of their people, and how they plan for the future of the nation.

What we have here is the tyranny of the majority imposing on the Canadian people and on their representatives in this House a gag for 25 per cent more of the time.

It is seven centuries since people first fought and risked their lives to establish parliamentary democracy. It is the reason why the distance between our two front benches is two swords' lengths, so that kind of destruction is not necessary in the parliamentary system any longer. We now want to give up a large portion of what has been so hard won over so many centuries.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Solicitor General spoke the other day about the importance of being here to speak for the people we represent and the importance of a government being able to implement its agenda. He talked very eloquently about something that I agree with entirely, which is the importance of election campaigns, the importance of going to Canadians with a platform and a program.

• (1630)

He stopped short of what election campaigns are really all about It is not telling people what we are going to do and then going off blindly and doing it for the next four or five years, regardless of what happens or how circumstances change.

What it is really all about is listening to people and hearing the values that are important to them, letting them comment on what we are proposing to them and taking those comments into account when we come into this House to make the rules, laws and decisions about how we are going to spend their money.

The government claims it has a mandate to implement its agenda and a responsibility to ride roughshod over parliamentary democratic procedures to implement that agenda. In fact, that is not the entire responsibility of a government or Parliament. It is to reflect the views of Canadians about what kind of a country they want.

It is to reflect the values that members have heard from their constituents and it is to apply those values to changing circumstances. It is not to blindly follow a political agenda that does not have anything to do at times with what is good for the country.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Solicitor General was right about one thing: We are here to speak for the people we represent. What these changes to the Standing Orders do is merely to strangle our right to speak on their behalf.

The tyranny of the majority is something that democracy always has to be on guard against. That is why we have a parliamentary system where there is a government and an opposition.

The role of the opposition is to hold the government accountable. When we established parliamentary democracies or as we developed them over the centuries, we did not say that once we elect a government it has the right to do whatever it wants to do.

It has the power. That does not give it the right to do whatever it wants to do regardless of what is said in this House and by Canadians. We have this Parliament where every day the government can be held accountable for its actions. It can be called upon to explain its actions. At times, it can be called upon to change its actions.

A wise government does that. It does listen and respond. Where possible, it attempts to seek the consensus of the nation and Parliament.

I do not know how we are going to improve our ability to speak for our constituents by being here eight weeks less a year. It may be very attractive to us not to be in the spotlight every day. I suspect it is more attractive to the government—

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I apologize to the hon. member for interrupting her.

There have been discussions among the parties, and I believe you will find consent for the following motion:

That on Friday, April 12, 1991 when Government Notice of Motion dated April 10, 1991 is called for debate no dilatory or superseding motions shall be receivable by the Chair and that at 2 p.m,. April 12, 1991 or when no further members rise to participate in the debate, whichever comes first, said motion shall be deemed demanded put and carried on division.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Members have heard the terms of the motion. Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): So ordered.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I could get some clarification from the government House leader on when the House is likely to reconvene. Can he give us an end point beyond which we will not recess? We appreciate that we are not supporting this motion, but at least we can give planning as to the maximum time of the recess period.

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, it is the intention now to call the House back on May 13.

The reason for the flexibility in the motion is there may be a change in one or two days in either direction of that. There are a couple of things for which it would be useful to have that flexibility in order not to have to recall the House in order to get it.

I would give this assurance to the House leader of the New Democratic Party and to the leadership of the Liberal Party that should there be any change with respect to May 13, it will only be after consultation with the leadership of both parties.

Mr. Riis Mr. Speaker, I think that is the assurance we are seeking. However, I guess what the minister is saying is that it might move a day or two around May 13. It would not be a week or a month or two, but simply a day or two. We can at this point be considering returning on May 13.

Mr. Andre: That is correct.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I would hope you would take into consideration that Mother's Day is on May 12.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Andre (p.19027) and amendment of Mr. Dingwall (p.9156).

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, given the interruptions, perhaps you could remind me how much time I have remaining.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The hon. member will have until 4.40 p.m.

Mrs. Catterall: Can I clarify that, Mr. Speaker. I thought I had just barely started.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Pardon me, the hon. member will have until 4.50 p.m. Sorry about that.

Mrs. Catterall: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Cutting our time in this House by eight weeks, by 25 per cent every year, means 40 less Question Periods. It may be very comfortable for the government to escape the scrutiny of Parliament and of the public, but I do not think it is in the interests of good government.

How do we hold a government accountable if it is not here? How do we ask the questions that our constituents are asking us every day on the telephone or in letters? How do we look at the spending? How do we look at the actions of the government, and insist on explanations for Canadians so that Canadians can understand what their

government is doing, and understand what they like about it and what they do not like about it so that they can exercise their responsibilities as citizens to provide comment on what the government is doing and to judge it at the next election?

It is this House that is the medium by which Canadians are informed of the actions of the government and the meaning of those actions. It is by the House that the media inform Canadians. Without this House sitting, the agenda of the media is set by the government and the actions it takes outside this House.

That may be very convenient for the Prime Minister and it may be very convenient for the cabinet. I suggest it is not in the best interests of the Canadian public.

There are serious issues confronting this country. Close to four million Canadians will be unemployed this year. This government wants to be out of the House every fourth week so it does not have to confront that fact.

The economy of this country is in decline and this government wants to be out of the House one week out of every four so it does not have to deal with that issue. We are losing jobs in this country on a daily basis. No wonder the government does not want to be here to answer the questions of Canadians and the opposition about that fact.

We have seen what instability does. We have seen what on-again, off-again democracy does in the weeks since December. We have seen this government fail to call back Parliament at the regular scheduled time and we have seen this House in the ignominious position of debating the merits of a war, after our Prime Minister and our government had already committed Canadian lives to a war.

We have seen the House then adjourn. We have seen it come back weeks later for a very short period of time, and then off again. Now we see that we are going to be out of here again for another month. We only have to look at what has happened in those months since December to know that democracy does not work when you have a democracy you can switch on and off like a light switch.

I happen to sit on the environment committee. That is a committee that has done excellent work over the last two years. It has produced three very progressive reports on the condition of the atmosphere. There were strong recommendations and policy for the government with all party concurrence. Yet, that committee has met less than one-half the times it was scheduled to meet in the period of time the government has been pulling us into Parliament and pushing us out of Parliament. It has not once looked at the spending estimates for the environment department so that this government can be held accountable on how it is allocating the resources of Canadians to protect the environment, an issue that Canadians say is their highest priority for the use of their resources.

• (1640)

When is the environment committee going to have an opportunity to meet, to review those estimates and to have the minister in front of it and in front of Canadians to account for the priorities he is setting for the environment? It is not going to happen. Again, for the second year in a row, there is not going to be a report from the environment committee to Parliament on the appropriateness of those estimates and the appropriateness of the priorities for spending on the environment.

That is what happens when we get a Parliament in, Parliament out revolving door. That is what we are going to have.

I do not know about other members of Parliament, but I am pleasantly surprised by the number of my constituents who regularly and consistently watch Question Period. If they do not see it in the afternoon because they happen to be retired and have the opportunity to see it, they watch the reruns at night. They use the watching of Question Period to contact me about issues, with information and with their views. Yet, when Question Period is on this week but not on next week, I think we interfere with that rhythm of people keeping track of Parliament, keeping track of what each and every one of us is doing and holding us accountable to them for our actions in Parliament and our actions on their behalf.

In these changes to the Standing Orders we are told that committees are going to be able to call technical witnesses when they are reviewing bills. We are not here to pass bills because they are technically correct. We are here to pass them hopefully because they are in the best interest of the country and because they reflect some kind of policy and some kind of forward looking agenda for where Canada is heading.

We do not get that perspective on bills introduced in the House by hearing from technical witnesses. We get it from hearing from people who have knowledge, insight, and thoughtful analysis to bring to us on the purpose of a bill, on the implications of that bill and on the long-term effects and when we do that job conscientiously.

Numerous times in this House and in committees I have seen bills being put through a review by a committee which includes members of all parties and coming back to this House stronger and better. It is wrong to disrupt that process and to say that our only purpose is to look for the technical aspects of a bill and to hear from technical witnesses.

Legislative committees perform an important role. It is very clear from the fact that the Environmental Assessment Act went off to a legislative committee and has not come back to us that the inadequacies of that bill have become evident through that examination; not through an examination of the technical aspects of the bill, but of the implications for how well it does its job to protect the environment of Canada from now into the next century. It is evident that members of the committee have concluded that it does not do that job very well. That is why that bill is not back. That is why inevitably that bill will die before the next Parliament. The government itself through that examination has recognized that it is an inadequate bill.

The government wants to stifle the ability of the opposition to set the agenda in Parliament and to bring forward issues that are of concerns to Canadians that the government chooses not to bring forward. We do that through opposition days, as the members opposite know, where we the opposition parties get to choose the topic of the day and to put forward a motion. It is a rare opportunity, but it does happen. Now the occasions on which we will be able to do that are limited.

I want to talk about closure.

The word Parliament indicates that we are here to speak on behalf of our constituents. Yet, in this session alone this government has used closure to limit debate more often than any government since Confederation. In fact I believe in the first year of its mandate it used closure more often than all governments since Confederation.

That is stifling the ability of my constituents and the constituents in every riding across this country to be heard in the Parliament of their country. It is their Parliament; it is not our Parliament. That is what should guide our decisions as to how this House operates.

My colleague has talked about the implication for employees of the House of Commons. I have not heard one member of the government address that issue. I suspect that is the last thing that was given any consideration when these changes to the orders were brought in and the government decided that it was more convenient for its members not to be here every fourth week. The last thing it thought about was the several thousand people who work on this Hill to make our work possible and what it would do to disrupt their lives, their working conditions, probably even the amount of remuneration they receive in many cases.

Mr. Belsher: Parliament is not here for their lives.

Ms. Copps He does not care. "Parliament is not here for their lives" is what he said.

Mrs. Catterall The member opposite can say that he does not care about their lives. Any responsible employer cares about the lives of its employees, their ability to live a decent life, to make a decent living, but this government does not.

I want to close by talking about making the Government of Canada irrelevant. I spoke to a group of immigrants last week and they said: "Why do we have a government that seems intent on tearing things down instead of building things?"

I said: "That is your impression because the only government you have ever known in this country is the government we have now" That is not the kind of government we have always had in Canada. We have had governments that build. We have had governments that provide, that bring in pensions for seniors, that start a medicare system. We have had governments that built railways across this country because that is the only way to build a nation and built a national broadcasting system. Yet, we have seen a government now that seems determined to tear down the infrastructure that holds this country together from ocean to ocean to ocean.

We can think of the magic of a handful of people in the eastern part of this continent actually having the temerity to think that they could build a nation over a period of

a century and a quarter and actually doing it. We can look at the infrastructure, the network of communications and transportation that helped make that happen. Another important part of what made this nation possible was the infrastructure of government.

Politicians had a vision. That vision was carried out by a Public Service which for many decades now has been known as one of the best in the world. Without it anything we decide in here would not happen. That infrastructure of nationhood is now under attack.

Finally with this item before us, with these changes to the Standing Orders, the very institution to Parliament itself is being eroded. Parliament will become a now you see it, now you don't institution, instead of something that Canadians know is there day after day regularly looking after their business, representing their views, hearing their concerns, reflecting their values, and building their future.

I oppose this motion. The consequences will be terribly damaging to freedom and democracy in this country. I regret that the government prefers not to be here, not to be answerable to the people of Canada, as much as it obviously does.

Mr. Peter L. McCreath (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Finance and Privatization): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have an opportunity to rise to participate in this debate, though I am a bit dismayed by some of the comments made by the hon. member for Ottawa West. I cannot help but notice that maybe she is influenced in her observations by the fact that she does live in Ottawa and does not have a problem.

• (1650)

She just made the suggestion that this government wants to stay away from Parliament to hide from the people. Guess what, Mr. Speaker? The 77,000 people I have the honour to represent are not in Ottawa. They are somewhere between Hubbards and Woods Harbour in Nova Scotia. I can be accessible to the people who have sent me here by being in my constituency. I can be accessible to the people who want to be involved in the action, who want to have an opportunity to tell their member of Parliament their views, and who want to come to me with their problems, to seek my assistance, to seek my support, and to do the various things they have elected me to do.

What we are here to talk about today is modifications in the rules of the House. Quite frankly, I think that the government is to be commended for the initiative it has shown in trying to bring this about. It is regrettable that this was not brought about through a spirit of co–operation, notwithstanding the commitments made by representatives of other parties in the House on which subsequently they did not deliver.

It is unfortunate that we ended up in a debate. I could not help but observe this morning, as mentioned by the hon. member who just spoke, that it is regrettable closure is being used to implement these rules. On the other hand, if the name of the game from an opposition perspective is that you oppose whatever the government puts forward for as long as you can to prevent it from happening then you can establish, presumably in the minds of the public, that the government is not fit to govern because it cannot accomplish anything. What kind of message does that send to the public about the way its Parliament functions?

For example, I noticed that it was the New Democratic Party in particular which felt that, no matter what, Parliament had to come back this week to be here because these rules had to be dealt with, had to be fought. Yet, I noticed when the vote was taken this morning that 19 out of 44 NDP members voted. Where were the other 25 to stand up for democracy and justice? Probably they were where a lot of our government members would like to be, back in the constituencies, accessible to the people, doing what can be done to usefully assist.

We have a serious problem in this country with respect to the image of politicians and what the public thinks of us. In my judgment one of the main causes of that is the way this place functions. The adversarial nature of this place is phenomenal. If only as a fluke of fortune or luck, once in a while the government should luck into doing the right thing. Yet, I have noticed in the two and a half years I have been here that no matter what the government does, in the eyes of the people on the other side it is wrong. Not even by a fluke can it once in a while be right. It is always wrong. Everything the government does is wrong in the eyes of the opposition.

I could say what kind of credibility that sometimes lends to opposition members. They can run out and take opinion polls. If the government tries to act in a responsible manner, deal with the deficit, deal with the national debt that is going to cripple the future of our young people, they can stand back and say that they are against dealing with that. They say that they are not against dealing with that, that they are against cuts. However, it is pretty tough to get rid of a debt and a deficit without making cuts or, conversely, by raising revenues. They are against raising revenues and they are against making cuts, but then of course they would also criticize the government for the deficit.

How do we have any kind of credibility with the public if all we have is a situation of constant bickering back and forth between the parties on both sides of this House? I think it is incumbent upon all members of this House—one member earlier in the debate made the comment—to come here and represent people. They have a responsibility to stand up and be heard in this House. I believe very strongly that that is correct. I support the fact, however, that there is no reason that one need speak for 20 minutes to make the point. The notion of reducing the length of speeches from 20 minutes to 10 minutes gives more people the opportunity to speak.

It it is important to note that the rule changes being proposed here are not going to limit the number of hours this House will be available. Opportunities will be there for members to speak. I think the kind of thing we have to look at is how much of the time of this House is absolutely wasted with dilatory nonsense of one sort or another.

I was appalled, the week before Easter, to sit in this House and watch as my hon. friends in the NDP insist that we have the Speaker stand and read a motion into the record for an endless period of time. How do we engender the respect of the people who have sent us here if at a cost of thousands of dollars an hour we are going to use up the time of Parliament, time when members should be standing and speaking out on behalf of the people who sent them here, on foolish nonsense like that? That is why the public has lost respect for politicians. It has become so predictable that no matter what the government does the opposition is going to complain about it.

It is interesting that we have an opposition in this particular Parliament that not only complains about what the government is doing but rarely offers an implementive alternative to replace it. I think we have a very serious problem in this adversarial nature that seems to hold sway in the way this place works.

We have a further way to go. The business of votes and the manner in which votes are handled in this House have amazed and shocked me since I have arrived. First of all, we play this game of trying to keep everybody stuck in Ottawa because we never know when there is going to be a vote. It may be over something really important like whether we should adjourn or not adjourn or whether we should have a vote later or whether we should have a vote now. However, let us not let members of Parliament go back to where their constituents are because we can keep them captive here in Ottawa to do nothing instead of being accessible to the public.

It is eminently reasonable that we work out a system so votes only take place at certain times. After all, there is one vote that really counts, and that is the vote that takes place on election day. The nature of the political system is that the people have a choice. They have eight weeks during a campaign to decide who they want to govern the country for a mandate of four or five years. Once they have made that decision, members have an obligation to get on with the job. The name of the game and the way this place functions are such that opposition members will stand over there and make out that the government is doing such terrible things they have to defend the public.

We must bear in mind that the public makes the decision. It so happens that in 1984 and 1988 it chose the Progressive Conservative Party to lead the country. When the next election comes it has the option to chose somebody else. Who knows? Maybe it will, maybe it won't, but that is the right of the public and the essence of democracy.

When opposition members who are representative of the minority suggest that it is their responsibility to determine the nature of government in the country, surely we have an extraordinarily dangerous situation.

We have a responsibility to balance the need and the opportunity of members of Parliament to come to this place to speak on behalf of the people who have sent them here with at the same time the obligation of the government to govern. While the government in terms of the executive branch may be the cabinet, as members of Parliament we are part of the government in the eyes of the public. When it sees us standing here and bickering back and forth like a bunch of kids in the

school yard it says: "What is that, a Parliament of fools, or are these the people we sent to represent us?"

I cannot help but be amazed from time to time by the attitude of the public toward politicians. As politicians we are them; each one of us comes because a group of Canadians for whatever reason chose us to come here.

Did Canadians chose us to come here because they thought we are a bunch of incompetents? No. The attitude toward politicians in society is amazing. They chose us for the right reasons. They chose us because they thought we were upstanding, they thought we were intelligent, they thought we were committed to the community, and they thought we were prepared to work hard. I happen to think that is why we are here. I think members on both sides come here with dedication to Canada, sincerity and concern to do the job.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): It being five o'clock p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

EXTENSION OF BENEFITS

Mr. Len Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke) moved:

> That, in the opinion of this House, the government should take the necessary measures in order that working spouses accompanying military personnel posted outside Canada may be eligible for unemployment insurance benefits.

He said: Mr. Speaker, this is a very important motion in my view or I would not have put it on the Order Paper. We call upon the Canadian Armed Forces to give outstanding service for this nation and outstanding service in the international community and they give it well.

I think the Parliament of Canada and we who serve here should be prepared to look after the members of the armed forces and their needs and to try to make things smooth for their families. It is very hard on families of military personnel, not only when they are overseas on particular duties such as during the Persian Gulf war, but indeed when they are away from home for long periods of time on training exercises.

As I said, they perform these roles very well. We, as parliamentarians, should pay them the kind of respect during the normal times that we tend to suddenly give them when they are needed in the world or in the nation for specific reasons of great import.

This motion today has been one of great interest to me for a long time. I have had the great fortune to teach in a Department of National Defence high school and to be head of the history department and a vice-principal. As a matter of note, when I left that job on CFB Petawawa in December 1965, to take up my duties in this House, my first pay cheque as a member of Parliament was $5 less than I was getting as the vice-principal of General Panet High School, Canadian Forces Base Petawawa.

When spouses go overseas with their husbands they may have had a job here in Canada for five or ten years and they will lose all their unemployment insurance rights. If they go to Germany and are there for two or three years nothing is intact for them when they come back. They go out to look for another job and have no benefits during that period of time. The purpose of unemployment insurance is to bridge the gap between unemployment and employment.

So, not only are we saying to these spouses, when they go to Germany, for example, or to a military attaché's office in another nation of the world, that they will not qualify for unemployment insurance and that they can either stay back, separate their family, and keep their job in Canada, or not receive UI benefits when they go overseas.

There is an exception to this approach. The claimant who resides temporarily or permanently in any state of the United States contiguous to Canada is not disentitled from receiving benefit by reason only of such residence if he or she is available for work in Canada and is able to personally report at an office of the Unemployment Insurance commission in Canada at such time as the commission may direct.

Then a claimant who resides temporarily or permanently in the District of Columbia in the United States, in Puerto Rico, the American Virgin Islands, or in any state of the United States with which Canada has a reciprocal agreement is not disentitled from receiving benefit by reason only of such residence if he or she proves entitlement to benefit under the agreement between Canada and the United States.

So we have a reciprocal agreement. So, if a Canadian Armed Forces couple ends up going down to Colorado Springs, for example, to work in NORAD headquarters, the spouse can then collect unemployment insurance by virtue of this reciprocal agreement with the United States. This is not the case if they go to Europe, for example, where many members of our forces have been resident outside the country for a number of years.

There are some rather interesting items here that I do want to put on the record.

If you live in the United States, Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands, we mentioned that we had a reciprocal unemployment insurance agreement with the United States, which applies to all states in the United States, including the District of Columbia, which I mentioned, Puerto Rico, and the American part of the Virgin Islands. So if you are living in any of these places and were paying Canadian U.I. premiums before you became unemployed you may be entitled to Canadian benefits. It makes no difference whether you are living there permanently or temporarily.

The same thing applies to Americans or to Canadians who have moved or returned to Canada after working in insurable employment in the United States. They can apply in Canada to collect American unemployment insurance benefits.

There is one very important part that I want to get on the record. We have to keep in mind that Canada has no reciprocal agreements with any other countries. Canadians can collect regular U.I. benefits only in Canada, the United States, Puerto Rico, and the American Virgin Islands. How does the reciprocal agreement work for Canadian citizens in the United States? We have mentioned that. They can go to offices there if they are not close to the Canadian border. If they are close to the Canadian border they can go to UIC offices here in Canada.

Even if you live too far away to work in Canada you may still qualify for Canadian regular unemployment insurance benefits. You must have permission to work in the United States and, in most cases, this requires the possession of a valid work visa. You must be willing to work, be actively looking for work, and must have been paying Canadian U.I. premiums for the required number of weeks during your qualifying period. You would claim through state employment security offices and your claim is sent to the inter-state claims office in Belleville, Ontario. Eligibility rules and the rate of benefit you could receive remain the same as they would be if you were applying in Canada.

But claimants applying from the United States cannot receive benefits for as many weeks as claimants who are applying for regular benefits from within Canada. Qualified claimants in the United States can receive a maximum 38 weeks of benefits. They are not eligible for what are called regionally extended benefits, which allow claimants in Canada to draw benefits for up to 50 weeks.

There are some special rules for Canadian government personnel in the United States. For example, there are special rules for dependents, not only those of Canadian government personnel posted to the United States, but those of military personnel. Dependents include spouses, unmarried children under 21, unmarried full-time students under 25, and unmarried children who are physically or mentally disabled.

Under a 1980 agreement, dependents can look for work and receive a written offer of employment. The U.S. State Department must then approve the offer before the job can be accepted. You do not need a work visa and, as long as you are available and looking for work, you can be eligible for Canadian U.I. benefits. You can apply at an American employment security office; that is your privilege.

Another point deals with maternity benefits and that point is a rather interesting one. Maternity benefits can be paid anywhere in the world. This is a big difference.

During the last 52 weeks a person must have accumulated 20 weeks of employment insurance under Canadian U.I. rules and can then apply for maternity benefits at any state employment security office in the United States.

• (1710)

If someone qualifies and is going abroad she can claim maternity benefits in Canada before leaving or at any Canadian consulate or embassy around the world.

Mr. Speaker, you can see a rather interesting situation occurring here. Suppose a number of couples on CFB Petawawa, CFB Borden, in Halifax, or in Calgary, are posted to Europe. Before they leave, the spouse in house *A* may find out she is pregnant. So she can make arrangements to collect unemployment insurance for the period after she arrives in Europe.

The next-door neighbour may have four or five children in the family, which is a very expensive operation to run today, and the spouse has to quit her job in Canada, live on one income in Europe, and still raise those children, but she does not qualify for unemployment insurance benefits.

So this situation creates a real dilemma. I do not think it is a very fair way to have been treating the Canadian Armed Forces on this issue over the years. I feel we should be taking a very serious look at this issue again and should be reviewing the legislation accordingly.

We have to understand that jobs are very limited. For example, in Lahr, Germany, there might be a number of jobs at the Canex operation and at all its related facilities. Even teachers who go over find it very difficult to work into the system because, normally, when they get there the positions are already filled for the year and, unless someone becomes sick or must resign for one reason or another, openings do not come up very readily.

We are putting them in a situation where the competitiveness for the few jobs, compared with the large number of personnel and their spouses on the base, results in not a great deal of opportunity for them. It would be very humane for us to take a good look at this issue and let those forces families know that we do appreciate the kind of image they are projecting for Canada because I have always said that our Canadian forces are not only good soldiers, but also professional people, such as nurses, dentists, doctors, engineers, and some very well-trained tradesmen in every occupation. The Canadian Armed Forces are probably one of the biggest training schools we have in Canada, if we look at them in that way.

Not only are they good soldiers because of all this, but they are also good diplomats, because they know how to conduct themselves abroad and they give Canada a good image. They are also good politicians because they have to deal with people of many different nationalities. It is their job to try to bridge the gaps and get along with those people and they do it very well. I have always said that our Canadian forces are good diplomats, soldiers, and politicians combined, all rolled up in one ball of wax.

I am making two strong recommendations today, Mr. Speaker, and I know that your heart is in this issue because you have been very close to the forces personnel over the years, yourself. I recommend that we pay unemployment insurance benefits in a normal way to the spouses when they go into areas where they do not presently qualify. Or suppose they do qualify for unemployment insurance, having the required number of weeks, and all their records intact. Suddenly, the other spouse is posted out of the country and they leave.

Why is it not possible for the government and Parliament—I am sure it would be accepted on both sides of the House very readily—to keep all their unemployment insurance records intact during their absence from the country, be it for a year and a half, two years, or three years?

When they return to Canada their unemployment insurance records will still be intact, in the same way as if they had never left the country. Then they will be able to draw UI benefits when they return to Canada and use those as income until such time as they find a job. I think that is a fair solution if the government does not want to change the approach and pay unemployment insurance benefits overseas under the normal process.

The arguments that might arise against this recommendation might include that, first, we cannot afford to do so. We have to remember that the government has considerably increased the contributions for both unemployment insurance clients and the employers. We also have to remember that, under normal conditions, the Government of Canada would not be paying into that unemployment insurance fund nationally. So the government is a shareholder in the unemployment insurance field.

What about the spouses of business people who go abroad to represent a company, for example? The argument might be made that, if someone is posted to Mexico or Italy on behalf of a Canadian corporation why should their spouse not qualify for the same benefits? Well, perhaps we can look at the same approach, because we are living in a mobile world today.

There is a big movement today on the part of Canadian citizens around the world and we, as Parliament, must continue to update and modernize our legislation to fit those new practices that work their way into the operations of our nation generally, whether public or private.

Of course, we will hear the argument, as we did before the Public Accounts committee when we were studying Public Service 2000 and the foreign service officers came before our committee, as well as others in the Public Service and union groups, stating that they are in the same position. When their spouses go overseas they cannot collect any benefits. So you will hear about all those situations.

Today's motion deals with the Canadian Armed Forces and, because we depend upon the Canadian forces to do excellent work for this country, I think we have a duty to try to make things easier for their family lives. As we know, when people cut down from two incomes to one and go abroad, doing so does not make things easier for them. If they cannot draw unemployment insurance at the same time we are cutting back on their privileges there as well and are not giving them the same opportunity to receive income as people who do not have to fulfil those important duties abroad.

I submit this recommendation to all my colleagues in the House and to the government. I know the hon. member for Burlington has had a very soft spot in his heart for this type of issue, as does the hon. member for Bonavista—Trinity—Conception, who has been a distinguished serviceman himself and knows this subject on a very personal basis.

It has been my privilege to work very closely with virtually thousands of Canadian Armed Forces families. So I would ask that the House give this motion some very serious consideration and I hope that we can also look at the motion in a humanitarian manner to try to use it as a good morale booster for our Canadian forces in showing them that we, as a Parliament, do care about what they are doing, internationally and domestically.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. Then I will recognize the hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan.

• (1720)

Mr. Bill Kempling (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I was talking to the hon. member this afternoon and I told him I had put a similar motion down in this House in 1973. It had a little different thrust to it. My concern was that Canadians were overseas on some of our bases, working for Canadian contractors. Unemployment insurance was being deducted from their wages, but they could not collect it.

My point was, if it cannot be collected, do not deduct it. The matter was talked out by a parliamentary secretary who is now a federal court judge. So I will end the story there.

I rise in connection with the motion of the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke. The sense of the motion is that the government should make changes to the Unemployment Insurance Act so that spouses of Canadian military personnel posted overseas would be eligible for unemployment insurance benefits.

I recognize the validity of the problem the hon. member is addressing in this motion. The service man or service woman is transferred overseas, let us say to Germany, and the spouse who wants to accompany the serving member is forced to give up a job in Canada. That creates problems.

The dilemma, of course, is faced not only by the serving personnel of the armed forces and their spouses, it is also faced by people who work for External Affairs. It is faced by advisors who go overseas on missions for CIDA. It is faced by Canadians who work with international agencies operated by the United Nations. In the private sector it is faced by employees of an increasing number of Canadian businesses that do business abroad.

This is a problem with which we have become familiar, as increasingly greater numbers of families rely on two incomes. Nevertheless, the method proposed by the hon.

member for solving this problem is not one which the government can responsibly support.

The most basic difficulty is this. An extension of the unemployment insurance to cover these circumstances would render the program incompatible with the fundamental purpose of unemployment insurance. Unemployment insurance is designed to insure workers in Canada who have lost their jobs so that they can look for employment. It is structured and financed on the basis of certain assumptions.

When one works in the Canadian job market, one insures oneself for loss of work in that job market. Employers and workers pay into a fund to grant protection in these circumstances. If a person decides for one reason or another to live and work in another market, in another country, he or she is no longer covered. In that respect, the Canadian system is the same as the system in other countries. That is the way it works in the U.K., the United States, France, Germany and a multitude of other countries that operate unemployment insurance programs.

The second problem has to do with the basic criteria which apply not only to the spouses of service people, but to everyone who participates in the UI system. The fact that an applicant pays premiums and then loses his or her job does not automatically entitle them to unemployment insurance. One must be eligible and have met two basic conditions.

First, it is necessary to show that the applicant is actively and continuously trying to find another job. It is incumbent upon every person claiming benefits to confirm this on a bi-weekly basis.

Second, if a job does come along, one must be in a position to accept it.

Let us examine each of these requirements in the context of the particular situation referred to in the motion.

In the first case, I would argue that the need for an applicant to show that he or she is looking for work is not only reasonable, it is fair. That could be said because it applies, not just to one group, but everyone who participates in the program.

If we are to exercise a responsible degree of control, we need to enforce this basic requirement.

The question that arises is how can someone living in a different country and in a different job market meets this requirement. In the case of Canadian service personnel or his or her spouse posted in the United States, that obstacle can be surmounted.

Since the early 1960s, we have had a reciprocal arrangement with the United States. It allows continued coverage by the UI systems of both countries for the spouses of federal and military personnel serving across their home borders. Control is not a problem in that situation. American UI authorities have agreed to verify that Canadians in their system are in fact looking for work and that work is available. Once that is confirmed, the cheque is issued here in Canada.

Similarly, our Canadian employment centres perform roughly the same function for American workers on this side of the border. The system benefits both countries because there is a substantial exchange of human resources in both directions. It works well because we are neighbouring countries with similar labour markets and we are willing to make arrangements that are easy to administer.

Unfortunately these conditions do not apply to other countries in which Canada has military personnel. We have no such reciprocal arrangements with them. How could the spouse of a service man or service woman posted to Germany or Cyprus fulfil the requirement that he or she is looking for work? The machinery for verification just does not exist.

Let me now turn to that second requirement, namely that the applicant for UI is in fact a valid candidate for employment; that he or she can accept work. How do you meet that requirement? The answer is simple; you don't and you can't. In most cases, the wives and husbands of military personnel are not eligible to work in the host economy. They may be eligible to work on Canadian military establishments overseas, but eligibility to work for a foreign employer is limited. Exceptions can be made, work permits may be offered, but it is not automatic and it requires special authorization. It is granted only for selected occupations.

It may be said that we are mostly talking about work on Canadian bases overseas. Let us be realistic, not many

opportunities exist in that area. A large proportion of the civilian jobs on Canadian military establishments overseas are held by nationals of host countries.

Another basic difficulty also arises. The motion says:

> —the government should take the necessary measures in order that working spouses accompanying military personnel posted outside Canada may be eligible unemployment insurance benefits.

I do not know precisely what measures the member has in mind. Presumably he is suggesting that we alter the rules so that employment abroad becomes insurable. We know what difficulties we would face on that measure. His other option is to extend the qualifying period.

My time is getting on here. He has 20 minutes and I only have 10. But I want to say there must be reciprocity in any arrangements we make. As far as I know, not a single one of the countries in which we have a military presence, pays UI benefits or anything like them to its own citizens while they are in Canada. An arrangement of this kind would have to be reciprocal and it could not and should not be done on a unilateral basis by Canada.

Let me say this to the hon. member if I could just get his attention for a moment. I think something can be done. I am not sure what it is, but we have to work within the act as it is and I am sure he understands that. There may be some way that we can put something in play within the regulations and, in fact, there is a book *UI and You Outside of Canada*.

We should look at the whole area and see if there is some way we can come to some arrangement on this. We may have to change some of the regulations in the act, but it is going to take some time.

• (1730)

Mr. David D. Stupich (Nanaimo—Cowichan): Mr. Speaker, I have some sympathy for the parliamentary secretary who had to respond to this. It is obvious from the way he spoke that he has a great deal of sympathy for the motion. The fact that he introduced a similar motion some years ago and suggested that maybe there was some way of changing it so that it could be accommodated within the legislation shows that he wants to do something. Yet he was given a script that tells him it is impossible and undesirable and should not be done even if it could be done.

As I listened to the mover of the motion, I could not help but think that perhaps his alternative was a better way of going. The parliamentary secretary talked about the problems of dealing with foreign countries, but the alternative proposed by the member suggested that the spouse who was moving, not because he or she wanted to go, but simply because he or she was following a spouse. It was not their choice.

That is the case certainly with the military services, especially during peacetime. They do not have a choice. They go where they are sent. The same thing would apply to employees or the spouses of employees of external affairs and perhaps even Crown corporations and organizations like that where the individuals concerned are not serving their own personal interests, are not serving the interests of a corporation, a private corporation, or a corporation held in the private sector, but rather they are serving Canadians. They are serving all of us.

For that reason, I think the mover of the motion and the parliamentary secretary feel that Canada should be able to do something. The fact that other countries do not have reciprocal agreements is not reason enough for us not to want to have them.

The mover of the motion suggested, as an alternative, that the spouse who is losing the credits that he or she has accumulated be allowed to carry those forward and when that person returns to Canada, it would be as though they had never left as far as UI is concerned. The time that they had worked would be to their credit. They would be able to draw on whatever credits they had built up and would be able to take advantage of unemployment insurance benefits if they had put in enough time. In that way, they would have something to carry them forward while they were looking for work. I believe it was the mover who said that it is not always easy to find work and certainly that is the case at the present time in Canada.

If a person could carry forward credits, when he or she returned to Canada it would be possible to start from that point in time as though he or she never left Canada. By carrying forward the credits, if work was found right away, so much the better for that person and for the UI fund. If work was not found, it would be something to carry the applicant on while he or she was looking for work. If that person's circumstances had changed to the

extent that he or she did not want to look for work, then he or she would not benefit any more than anyone else would.

It seems to me it would, on Canada's part, be playing fair with people who are leaving the country for quite an extended length of time serving Canadians, not serving their own interests or serving the interests of a private corporation.

I would support this motion and urge the parliamentary secretary to carry back to his government the possibility of accommodating the goal of the mover of this motion by using his alternative rather than paying UI benefits abroad.

Mr. Greg Thompson (Carleton—Charlotte): Mr. Speaker, just for the sake of the people back home listening, the motion reads as follows:

> That, in the opinion of this House, the government should take the necessary measures in order that working spouses accompanying military personnel posted outside Canada may be eligible for unemployment insurance benefits.

I guess most of us know what that means. It simply means extending benefits to those outside of Canada. With the exception of the United States, we do not recognize benefits outside of this country. In the case of the United States we do for a number of reasons, some of which the parliamentary secretary touched on. The reason that we do recognize that particular situation in the United States is because of a reciprocal agreement between Canada and the United States. The reason for that reciprocal agreement is simply this: There are some similarities between our labour force in Canada and that of the United States; there are similarities in labour laws, there are similarities in many of the other social programs that the Americans have and we have. The close geographical proximity of the two countries makes it a more manageable and a more workable system so that when individuals do receive their lay-off notices, being a Canadian citizen living in the United States, they are eligible.

In relation to our soldiers, our Armed Forces personnel overseas, certainly at no other time in the history of this country since the second world war does the sensitivity of this issue makes us reflect on the current situation. We know the role our Armed Forces have played in recent weeks and we want to ensure that they are given every opportunity, as other Canadians, to enjoy the benefits that we enjoy at home.

Let us go through just some of what the member who proposed this motion mentioned, and attempt to put a little logic into it. We do not disagree with what he is attempting to do. Perhaps, as the parliamentary secretary mentioned, at some point in the future we can accommodate this motion, and we can improve the situation we presently have. But the member mentioned, when putting forward the motion, and I quote him: "Jobs are very scarce in areas like Lahr, Germany, for example, where we do have a number of Canadian troops". That is an argument that none of us can dismiss, because jobs are very scarce for the spouses of military personnel in areas in Germany and other parts of the world. That is a reality we cannot dismiss.

But, in saying that, would a change in the Unemployment Insurance Act rectify a shortage of jobs in a foreign country? I suggest that it would not.

Although the emotion of the particular question is very acceptable, it does not change the circumstance. How we can accommodate that situation on foreign soil is beyond me. Many of the military personnel who are sent to other parts of the world go for three or four year periods, and that certainly goes beyond the qualifying period of unemployment insurance in this country.

If a solution in the short term is found, it does not completely eliminate the problem. Unemployment insurance only lasts for so long and after that the individuals are still in that foreign country in a labour market that is foreign to them.

Just to pose another element into the question, many Canadians who are serving in areas overseas are not eligible to work in those respective communities anyway, because of particular labour practices, questions of legitimacy of some of the workers in relation to their unions, for example, and the licensing of some of the individuals who would like to work in those communities in those foreign countries but for particular reasons cannot.

This motion does not recognize that under certain conditions the Unemployment Insurance Act does take care of Canadians serving abroad, and spouses of Canadians serving abroad. For example, there is no restrictions on the maternity leave element of the Unemployment Insurance Act. People who are serving overseas can plug into that particular aspect of the Unemployment Insurance Act. Maternity leave is very much a part and parcel of our present legislation, so we do not have to improve that side of the question. In relation to that, the adoption elements whereby parents who are adopting a child are given special consideration

under the unemployment insurance act also apply to individuals and spouses of individuals serving overseas.

• (1740)

Those special benefits under the UI Act are there and have been there, but can we improve what we presently have, as the parliamentary secretary mentioned? I think we can. If you take a look at Europe and the European Economic Community, the closeness of that community and what they are doing, I think we have to take our hats off to them and say they have done a great deal in terms of labour strategy, industrial strategy and trading arrangements between those countries in Europe, but they have not come to grips with the situation which we are addressing here.

Despite some of the progress that countries in Europe have made, they have not overcome all of the hurdles that we are experiencing here today. In time they will. As the global community in a sense gets smaller, our policies sort of parallel each other and we come closer in our methods of doing business and paralleling particular laws and regulations in respective countries, I have to assume that part of that tells me that in fact we are going to make some progress.

The question that is before us is certainly a legitimate question and is one that is near and dear to all of us. Again, going back to my opening statements, if we frame this within the present context of what our military people have done for us in recent weeks, there is no question that improvements can be made, but we have to be very careful as to how we make them.

We cannot isolate one particular problem without addressing another. The arrangements we have made with the United States of America in relation to this perhaps in future years will happen between us and some of the Europeans countries.

The cost of the UI program is borne by all Canadians who are presently working. That is something we have to remember. Every worker in Canada is contributing. Every employer is contributing heavily to this plan. I think it is incumbent upon us to make sure that those dollars are spent well and spent wisely and that they are monitored properly. Presently we do not have a system to monitor a program such as that if it is extended into countries where we do not have the closeness and harmony as we do with our neighbours to the south at this time. A lot of it has to do with sheer geography.

I am convinced that as communications continue to improve, as does our ability to dialogue with countries across the world, we will in the very near future accommodate the question in the motion put forward by the hon. member.

Mr. Fred J. Mifflin (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by reading the motion so that we can start from the beginning of this very interesting and, I think, timely subject. The hon. member of Parliament for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke has proposed:

> That, in the opinion of this House, the government should take the necessary measures in order that working spouses accompanying military personnel posted outside Canada may be eligible for unemployment insurance benefits.

To me this is a special motion for special people and I want to tell you why I say that.

I said earlier it was timely. If the members present in the House could remember as we stood here and sat here and debated the United Nations motion toward the end of November just before Christmas, I do not think there was any doubts in the minds of anybody here that the men and women who were serving in the gulf at the time and who would be serving over Christmas and beyond were very special people. They were very special people because they were representing our national interest, despite any political differences we may have had about sanctions or whatever. They were representing the interest of their country at a time when all families were together putting their lives, if necessary, on the line in the national interest of this country.

There is nothing more special in the world then that. But there is another special part of the Canadian Forces that, in my mind, relates to the time. If you count the rotations and consider the changes of ships' companies, I am sure we had well over 4,000 Canadians serving in the Persian Gulf if you totalled it all up. They were men and women of different ranks, different services and from every province in Canada working together for one simple Canadian cause, the national interest. They represent a microcosm of Canada and also represent an example that we could all follow in what they are doing, in what they have done and what they will continue to do

in the future as long as they wear the uniform of their country.

If somebody would deny this particular motion on the basis that if we do it for one we have to do it for all, I would ask them to remember Christmas of 1990 when they were with their families and the men and women of the Canadian Forces were serving their country away from their families.

The second aspect of this that I think we should consider is that the members of the Armed Forces have already been short-changed by the unemployment insurance business. I do not remember the exact date and I regret I did not have time to check the records, but it was, I believe, in the mid-1980s, about 1985 when those members of the Armed Forces who, having paid into the unemployment insurance fund, at the end of their career in the Canadian Forces, were they not able to find employment, could not draw unemployment insurance. They were able to, previous to this change in regulations, draw unemployment insurance, which was a pretty sensible thing because they spent a lifetime paying into it.

This change removed the opportunity or removed this benefit from those members of the Armed Forces who had paid in as well as the members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. I recall vividly the disappointment that this had sent through the members of the forces, not only the disappointment, but the disbelief that their government would do this to them. I may say that there are veterans' organizations, including the Canadian Armed Forces Pensioners' Associations and two or three others, which are still trying to get more fairness out of the system by having this aspect of the Unemployment Insurance Act repealed. In fact, it was not a change in the act but a change in the interpretation. I know how tenacious they are and I know that they will continue to do it.

There were two things I heard here that concerned me. The hon. member for Burlington, and I know where his heart is on this particular issue, talked about people who decided to leave the country. I am sure that he would recall that those members of the Armed Forces whose spouses leave with them do not decide to leave the country. They do not have any options.

You may say: "Well, why should a spouse of any organization be entitled because of this particular move?" I think it is an acceptable thing today that people in all professions rely on two salaries. When you move to another country and cannot draw that salary, I do not think there is any question that despite any allowances, which seldom makes a difference in the income that people make as a family, that second income is going to be sorely missed.

• (1750)

This, of course, will have an impact on the morale of the people and how well they serve their country. Not that they would serve any less, but in my mind it creates another disappointment. It is the kind of disappointment that I think we can address.

The second objection I heard to this was put forward by the hon. member for Carleton—Charlotte. He suggested that even if you did draw your unemployment insurance for one year, and if you were on a posting for two or three years, then you would run out in two or three years. I am sure he did not expect us to buy that logic. It was a good try, but we are not asking for anything that other Canadians do not get. We are just asking for the consideration of what the Unemployment Insurance Act does for people in Canada, and if a spouse has to move, to be considered essentially as if that move was forced and caused the loss of a job.

Another argument I heard was that it would be difficult to change the Unemployment Insurance Act. Well, we have short memories if we talk about the difficulty in changing the Unemployment Insurance Act. I recall sitting in this House when massive changes to the Unemployment Insurance Act, called Bill C-21, were was brought forward. It did not bother the government to change the Unemployment Insurance Act for the things that it wanted, so I say that of the arguments put forward, this was the third very obviously fallacious argument.

It remains a fact of life. In fact, we will be talking about this very shortly when we talk about the changes in the Standing Orders of this House. The privilege of being in government is that basically, within reason, you can do what you set your mind to do. You get flak from the

opposition and that is what the opposition is for, to keep the government honest.

The argument that you cannot change the Unemployment Insurance Act because it is going to be too difficult or it is going to cause impediments or this, that or the other thing, I do not accept. I think when government decides it wants to do something for any group of people or for organizations or for businesses, then that is what government does. That is why we are in the House of Commons, to debate the things the government wants to do. It is not the opposition that puts forward bills, it is the government that does this. So if we are dealing with principles, and if we are dealing with the logic that these are special considerations for special kinds of people at a special time, then I think the rest of the detail can follow without any difficulty whatsoever.

If one can accept that there should be changes, and if the changes cannot be as traumatic as is put forward by members of the government to actually treat a spouse as if that spouse had lost his or her job, then at least the consideration should be, as an option, that those who qualify for unemployment insurance when they were leaving, by having enough weeks to qualify, would be allowed to keep this status intact while they were out of the country. When they return to Canada, their UI status would continue again as if there had been no interruption.

I think this is fairly simple to achieve. I think the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke mentioned this as an option as he put forward his motion. I think as a minimum that the government should be able to do this.

There were other arguments put forward by members of the government, but I think I covered the major ones. By way of conclusion, I would just say one more time that this is a special consideration for special kinds of people at a special time, and I think because of that, it deserves very special consideration.

Mr. Peter L. McCreath (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Finance and Privatization): Mr. Speaker, I realize there are only a few minutes left in the debate, so I will just try to make two or three points.

I would like to compliment the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke for bringing forth the motion. I totally respect the good intentions that moved him to bring forward the motion. However, I do feel there are some very serious problems implied or underlying it that make it impossible, really, for this House to support it.

I have to assume that he was unaware of these when he put the motion forward. Otherwise, one might reasonably question his intent, and I certainly would not do that.

Such a motion if indeed implemented in law would quite frankly violate the Canadian Charter of Rights. It is my understanding of the Canadian Charter that all Canadians have a right to be treated equally before the law.

If there is a Canadian serving abroad in the Armed Forces to whom we are prepared to give benefits that we are not prepared to give Canadians serving abroad in other contexts, be they for the Government of Canada, with CIDA, with the trade missions or whatever or just serving abroad with commercial enterprises, then it seems to me we would definitely subject ourselves to a Charter challenge. It would not likely succeed.

It is important to point out that the disadvantage that accrues to the spouses of the Canadian Armed Forces when they are posted abroad and inevitably lose their employment at home is not a circumstance in which they are singled out.

This is something that happens to anybody if he or she is in a situation where their spouse is transferred abroad and wants to accompany that spouse. That is part of the process. Increasingly in this society, we have married couples in which both are working.

We have to recognize that the unemployment insurance program in Canada is intended to serve the needs of Canadians within the Canadian context and to respond to the labour market in Canada.

Unemployment insurance, by the way, is paid for in Canada by Canadian companies or Canadian companies working abroad. It is the people employed by these Canadian companies, the Canadian government or whatever and their employers who pay the premiums for unemployment insurance.

The idea of unemployment insurance is to protect them in the event of unanticipated job loss or discontinuity in their employment. It is in response to a Canadian circumstance that we have unemployment insurance. If Canadians go abroad, obviously they are taking themselves out of the Canadian marketplace and can hardly

reasonably expect themselves to be treated as though they are within the Canadian marketplace.

I believe one of my colleagues has already made the point that we have a reciprocal agreement with the United States which allows Canadians to participate in the unemployment insurance program if they are in either a border situation or, indeed, if they are in the United States.

For example, if a Canadian was posted to the Canadian embassy in Washington, he or she could conceivably continue to draw Canadian unemployment insurance while at the same time checking in through the employment office in the United States. There is a reciprocal arrangement. Of course, he or she would have to be eligible for employment in the United States by having a green card or landed immigrant status, just as the reverse would apply as well.

I think it is instructive to note one improvement that has been made by this government and was made in Bill C-21, which I thought I heard the hon. member for Bona Vista—Trinity—Conception disparaging only a few minutes ago, was the provision that defined just cause to include a person who was forced to leave his or her employment because their spouse had been transferred.

Indeed, the issue is far more complicated than it might initially seem. I think it is important to note that Canadians who are abroad are not necessarily disqualified. Employment and Immigration Canada puts out a very instructive little pamphlet explaining unemployment insurance benefits for which Canadians employed abroad with Canadian companies are eligible such as, for example, maternity benefits or adoption benefits and so on.

I see the clock is winding down, Mr. Speaker, and I want to summarize. I want to compliment the intent of the hon. member but, quite frankly on reflection, he and other members of the House will realize that it is simply not possible to implement the precise change that he proposes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired. Pursuant to Standing Order 96(1), the order is dropped from the Order Paper.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Andre (p. 19027) and amendment of Mr. Dingwall (p. 19156.)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): When debate ended, the hon. member for South Shore had spoken for 10 minutes. He has 10 minutes remaining in this debate.

Mr. Peter L. McCreath (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Finance and Privatization): Mr. Speaker, when the clock ran out on me, I was making the point that one of the biggest challenges we all face is as parliamentarians and as politicians. "Parliamentarian" sounds like a much nicer word than "politicians".

• (1800)

The point I was making is that the public has lost its respect for politicians. There is nothing more ironic in this fact than the fact that, if we all reflect on how we got here, we got here because people chose us to come. We are reflective of our constituents. They chose us not because they thought we were dishonest, sleazy, crooked or out to rip off the public purse. They chose us because they thought we were outstanding members of the community. They thought we were committed Canadians. They thought we were committed to serving our fellow citizens. They thought we were intelligent. They thought we could exercise good judgment. They thought we could participate as active, constructive members of a particular political team whose banner we represented in the election campaign.

It always amazes me that they chose us for all the right reasons and then it seems instantly we are transformed following election into people who are beneath public contempt. I cannot help but think, as I was mentioning

earlier, that a big part of the reason for this is the manner in which this place often conducts itself.

That is why I support the proposed rule changes. I believe the intent of the rule changes is to make the time available to us in Parliament function more effectively so that as individual members we have an opportunity to stand and articulate the concerns of the people who sent us here to participate in important debates involving great issues of the day in our country. That is what we are here to do.

When we are not here doing that, I contend that where we should be is in our constituencies so that the people who elected us have an opportunity to have access to us on a continuing basis. They can see us. They can talk to us. They can have us meet with them in their places of business, in their homes or wherever, in order that we may have a better opportunity to understand their problems, to understand their views and indeed to bring them forth here and articulate them in this Chamber, in our caucuses, in committees or wherever.

One of the problems we have in the current system is what Canadians frequently see of what goes on in our jobs as members of Parliament. They see what goes on in this Chamber. They see Question Period, which seems sometimes to be less than a high level of intellectual debate. They see an opportunity for the same question to be asked five, six, seven or eight times in a row, even though it has already been answered.

They ask: "What is the point of all that?" They do not understand the amount of time that members of Parliament spend, for example, in their offices responding to correspondence and responding to telephone calls. Then there is the role we play in committees. These rule changes also propose some changes in the functioning of House committees.

I have been very distressed since I came here. Like a lot of new members, I did not know an awful lot about the committees and how they operated. I discovered we had standing committees and we had legislative committees. What I have found in practice is there seems to be an attempt to use committees not as a means to investigate problems or to do in-depth research, but indeed to continue the partisan game back and forth.

I have seen legislative committees frequently turn into national touring shows for the hearing of witnesses and so on. Clearly the intent of a legislative committee is to look simply at legislation in the context of the principle that it has already been approved by the House of Commons. The legislative committee has a technical function.

It is the task of standing committees, if they are working effectively, to identify key questions, concerns, problems, issues, or whatever within the context of the committees' mandates; to investigate thoroughly and comprehensively; to come up with recommendations that perhaps challenge government; to put forth constructive ideas; or to add to the volume of knowledge that may or may not exist with respect to serious problems in our country.

I think the rule changes will contribute to making Parliament a more effectively place.

One issue we often hear discussed is the subject of free votes. We hear demands that we should have more free votes in Parliament. Perhaps that is a good idea. I am not sure exactly how a parliamentary system of government would work if members of Parliament had the complete freedom to vote how they wished on every issue. Perhaps there is a circumstance in which it is possible for us to have far fewer questions of confidence and to have more members of Parliament who are members of the government, that is to say cabinet ministers or parliamentary secretaries, vote as they feel appropriate on issues.

I reflect on the very limited number of free votes we have had in this Parliament since I have had the privilege to be here. I note that we have seen a free vote on the government side, on the part of government backbenchers, but we have not seen it from the other side. We have seen pretty solid blocks on the other side. Obviously a free vote system would not work because it simply becomes a guaranteed means for the defeat of legislation.

I am troubled when I hear the comments of people who are not in this place. I am listening to the recent declarations of the Reform Party that is emerging in the west with simplistic values that seem to be popular with the public which do not delve a little bit deeper to see what is the implication of what is being proposed.

One that I find very extraordinary but very popular at the moment is: "Let's cut everything 10 per cent across the board in all government programs". That is what we are hearing from the Reform Party. Yet if we delve a little deeper, we find what that means. It means a 10 per cent cut in veterans' pensions. It means a 10 per cent cut in old age assistance and family allowance. It means a 10 per cent cut in EPF payments, transfers to the provinces.

We heard an incredible howl—and we are still hearing it—about the fact that the government has frozen the growth of transfer payments to provinces at 3.7 per cent. Can we imagine what the impact would be if instead of freezing the growth by 3.7 per cent we actually effected a cut of 10 per cent? I wonder if Mr. Manning and his Reform colleagues would be prepared to go around as part of their party platform and indicate exactly which universities would be closed, which hospitals would be closed, which schools would be closed, and so on and so forth.

Similarly with these issues with respect to how Parliament functions, I think we have to probe a little deeper. I think we need to have a little more respect for the people on the other side of that camera that is focused on me right now. I know there are a lot of people out there right now in my South Shore constituency, watching and judging their member of Parliament as to whether he is acting and speaking responsibly or whether he is acting in some other fashion.

We have to be mindful that what we do in this place is observed by our constituents from coast to coast, particularly our seniors. Since I have become a member I have discovered that many of our senior citizens watch the debates of the House of Commons. It is appropriate that they should, but what we should show them is a responsible group of legislators and parliamentarians not bringing forth a succession of dilatory motions, but increasing trying to use our time constructively and effectively to do the work of Canada and the business of Canada.

In conclusion, the purpose of this debate today and the purpose of these rules is to assist not only in making this place work more effectively, but in helping us win back the respect and confidence of the people of Canada who sent us here.

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina—Qu'Appelle): Mr. Speaker, I too wish to join in the debate on the proposal brought forward by the government House leader to change our Standing Orders.

It is with interest that I heard the remarks by the hon. member from South Shore. I paid particular attention to his comments. In part I heard his frustrations as a member sitting in the back benches of government with how the House of Commons works. I heard his concern that to the Canadian public we look like a bunch of fools, particularly during Question Period, and his concern that this institution does not function in an efficient and effective manner. I feel certain from his comments that he genuinely believed these changes would correct all that he perceives to be wrong with the House of Commons.

I sympathize in many ways. When I first was elected to the House of Commons I certainly had a certain sense of idealism. I wanted to make a contribution, to help govern this country. I wanted to have some input not just in terms of speaking on the floor of the House of Commons, but also in the work of the committees to try to create better legislation. It was not from the point of view of trying to create political points for myself or my party, but a genuine desire to help and participate with my fellow Canadians who have been given this tremendous distinction and responsibility to represent their fellow citizens in this the House of Commons of Canada.

• (1810)

Over the 12 years I have been here I must say that I have grown disillusioned and at times even cynical. Certainly what the government is proposing with its changes to the Standing Orders just increases my sense of cynicism about how this place really functions.

I was one of those who had some sense of optimism after the report of a former member, Mr. McGrath. The major essence of that report was an attempt to allow members of Parliament irrespective of their political affiliations to play a more important role in helping to shape legislation. It proposed a more powerful committee system, a committee system that was more independent from the wishes of the government, a committee system that in fact could at times be used as a check on the government, a committee system that would allow its

members, whether they were members of the opposition or government members, a more independent role.

Of course, what we have in front of us today are proposals that in fact go in the opposite direction, that would greatly restrict our committee system, that would give the government much greater control over the committee system, and that in many ways in fact even begins to choke off the important work committees can do.

We have seen how this government has dealt with committees in a most disdainful manner. When committees dare to oppose the government, even if they are controlled by government members and have a chairman appointed by the government—and there have been some examples where a committee in its investigation and its deliberation has come to the conclusion that the government is doing the wrong thing and has reported as such—this government has come down on them with a vengeance. Committee chairmen have been fired from their jobs. Committees have been shut down so they do not meet any more.

Part of the problem we are finding, to which the former speaker had alluded, comes from the fact that this government and this Prime Minister have a very thin skin. They cannot tolerate criticism. They cannot tolerate opposition. They will use whatever force is necessary to push through their legislative agenda.

The recommended changes that we have in front of us today are just an extension of the government's belief that it is here to push through its legislation. It is an extension of the government's belief that the opposition in this House of Commons has no legitimate role to play and that individual members of Parliament have no legitimate role to play.

The rules that are being introduced today limit the role of the committees and severely restrict the opportunity of individual members of Parliament to make some meaningful contribution to shaping policy. It is an executive government operated by a few public servants and a few select in cabinet. It does not want to see opposition. It can hardly tolerate the House of Commons. That is why it wants to restrict the number of days we will sit. Its only objective is to push through its agenda.

I was hoping when I was first elected in 1979 that a new age of politics could begin to be developed in the 1980s. In fact, what we have seen in the eighties, particularly under the rule of the Conservative government, is certainly not new age politics. It is reactionary politics. It is politics of a few determined to impose their will upon all representatives of the people gathered here in the House of Commons.

Let me get to a few specifics. Of the 64 amendments being proposed to the Standing Orders, there are some that are just window dressing. Others, however, are really important.

For example, the government is proposing that unanimous consent no longer requires what it states, that every member of this House being equal has to consent to changes in the orders of the day or whatever the government is proposing. There are certain parts of parliamentary procedure that require unanimous consent, meaning again that every member can say no, to ensure that the majority does not have its way, that this House operates according to certain procedures, and that any deviation from those procedures requires unanimous consent.

The government is proposing that we really do not need unanimous consent any more. It is proposing that unanimous consent means 25 or less members standing in their place objecting. That of course is a direct blow not only to the major opposition party or to the second opposition party, my party, the New Democratic Party. It is also a particularly severe blow to smaller groups: the Bloc Quebecois, the Independents and the Reform Party member.

The government is wanting to change the rules to protect itself against small—perhaps to the government they are irksome—splinter groups in the House. Democracy does not work that way. These people were also elected. They also represent their constituents. They should also have the same power and the same rights as any other individual member of this Parliament.

It is not a Parliament just of government members and members of the major parties. It is a Parliament of individual members of Parliament. We were elected not as Conservatives. I was elected as a New Democrat. My friend was elected as a Conservative. Our names are on the ballots. People vote for the person, not for the party. Otherwise, all we would have on the ballot is just the party name. Our names are foremost on the ballot. People vote for individuals and as individuals we occupy our seats in this House of Commons and, as such, we should all have equal status and equal rights. Of course

the changes being proposed today would wipe out that basic concept.

There are also some other changes. The government reduces the number of committees and, to make certain that none of these "uppity" committees go too far astray, it is going to control how the committees meet. We have some 28 committees under the five major envelopes. There will only be some 10 committee rooms in which these 28 committees can meet. The government is restricting how the committees can meet by restricting the number of committee rooms they can meet in. How silly, how terribly silly.

Guess who will decide who is able to use the committee rooms? Some super committee that the government is proposing will determine what committee will be able to meet. How outlandish, how totally outlandish. What an idiotic way of trying to thwart the rightful work of committees of this House of Commons.

• (1820)

Then we come across another little change buried among the 64 subamendments. The government now decrees that the only people who can testify before the committee will have to be "technical witnesses". First of all, who determines who is going to be a technical witness. Of course, the government members will.

What does that mean in practical terms? It means that, for example, when we were considering the GST legislation, only tax experts and tax lawyers would have been allowed to appear before us. Senior citizens could not because they would not be considered technical witnesses. Farm people could not. Consumer association people could not. Working people could not because they would not be considered technical people.

What is the meaning of this change to the Standing Order? Might I suggest the change is to prevent ordinary Canadians from having any input into legislation. The government gets embarrassed when senior citizens storm up the Hill protesting the deindexation of their pensions. The Prime Minister gets personally very annoyed when some senior citizen wags her finger in his face and tells him: "No more, Charlie Brown". He does not want any of this. He does not want the riff-raff of the Canadian public to be up on the Hill, to be appearing before these committees considering legislation. No, he just wants to keep it clean. Only technical witnesses are going to be allowed.

For example, when we are considering plant breeders' rights, only geneticists will be able to testify, not farmers, not people who are concerned about the morality of this issue, like people from the churches, people concerned about the environment, no, because they are not considered technical witnesses.

I hear the gentleman from Ontario saying "I am out to lunch." When I was on the finance committee, he came before us with all those petitions that, when he was a columnist for one of the Toronto papers, he had garnered. He came in full flurry before the committee. What a change we see today. But under the change that is being proposed in these Standing Orders he would not have been able to appear before our committee because he was not a technical witness.

Mr. Turner (Halton—Peel): That is not exactly right.

Mr. de Jong: It is absolutely right, my friend. It is absolutely right. Go back and have a look at the Standing Orders and see how they would have affected your performance back then when we were discussing tax reform. You would not have been allowed to appear before us because you were not considered a technical witness. A journalist is not a technical witness when it comes to tax reform. What are your credentials? Are you a tax lawyer or a tax accountant? Of course he is not, so therefore, he would not have qualified to have appeared before our committee, let alone introduce all of those petitions, the people's voice as represented in those petitions and those little pieces of clippings that people had cut out of his column and sent in. That would not have been allowed.

But that was the people's voice. That was the concern of the public about some of the tax changes introduced and they, of course, had a right to be heard.

I understand that the government is concerned about the Reform Party. I have been reading some columns in some of the daily press suggesting how the government is trying to co-opt reform.

I am not certain that this is reform or not. I am somewhat disappointed at the member of the Reform Party not opposing more vigorously these changes and realizing the implications of these changes. Certainly in

my part of Saskatchewan we want to see parliamentary reform.

My constituents want me to become more independent as a member of Parliament. They want to see all members of Parliament become more independent. They want a greater democracy. They want to be able to have some input into their legislation. They want to be able to have a government that is sensitive to their needs. After all, this is in a democracy isn't it?

They are outraged when they see a government just blindly, in a pig-headed fashion, moving ahead despite the fact that the vast majority of the public might be opposed to things like the GST, the goods and services tax.

They are outraged when they see a government so pig-headed in its determination to drive through its legislative program that it totally ignores public opinion. That is the cause of the anger of the public. That is why the public thinks that Parliament in Ottawa is no longer an institution that can meet their needs. They are absolutely right.

Democracy has suffered in the decade of the eighties. The responsiveness of this government to public opinion has gone to zero.

Government members want to spend more time going back home to the constituents. I do not quite understand why. When they get back home and really meet their constituents, they are almost tarred and feathered. They say they have to be more responsive and therefore we need more time to spend with our constituents. I have no problem with that at all. I think it is a tremendous idea.

Mr. Turner (Halton—Peel): It is time to listen.

Mr. de Jong: I hear Conservative members say: "It is time to listen." I wish these government members would listen. I do not know what they would do when they go home. If they really would have listened, we would not have the GST or the changes to the Unemployment Insurance Act. We would not have had the shut-down of VIA Rail and the plundering of the CBC or the destruction of the national institutions in this country.

The government does not listen. I suspect government members feel that if they spend a bit more time at home, they might somehow or other be able to convince their constituents of the rightness of what the government is doing. I doubt that very much.

We have seen a government determined to push through its legislative agenda. We look at the figures, for example, on the question of closure, which is the instrument that the government uses to shut down debates when it feels that debate has lasted long enough in the House of Commons.

We begin to realize that between 1913 and 1988, the time of the last election, closure was used 21 times. Since 1988, which is not quite three years, this government has used closure 13 times.

For Parliament to work and for this institution to regain the respect of the Canadian people, we need parliamentary reform that would allow individual members of Parliament to have a greater say and a greater input.

We need freedom from our Whips and the political tags. In essence, we are no longer living in an age of ideology. It is practicality, that new measures work. Are they practical? How do they affect people? Very often, public servants do not realize the effects of the legislation. It is through public input and communication that we begin to discover the effects.

Madam Speaker, you have indicated to me that my time has expired. Let me say in closing that we need genuine parliamentary reform. Unfortunately, what is being proposed to us today does the very opposite. In fact, it does not reform Parliament, it restricts Parliament even more. I am afraid that the passage of these changes to the standing orders will be known historically as a black day for Parliament.

Mr. Fred J. Mifflin (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception): Madam Speaker, I rise to discuss a subject that is very near and dear to the hearts of all parliamentarians.

I use the word "parliamentarians" advisedly as opposed to the vernacular of "politician". A politician may not necessarily be a parliamentarian, but a parliamentarian should be a politician by definition. Those of us who are speaking on this subject this evening, in days past, later on into the evening and tomorrow morning will be concerned about a number of things but I suppose the thing that would concern them all is the thing that

concerns me the most. That is why I am here in this House.

• (1830)

I have heard it said many times by many members and many Prime Ministers, this is the highest court in the land. Madam Speaker, I know you share with me and with all other members the tremendous elation and feeling that you have been sent by, in my case, over 100,000 people to represent them in the highest court in the land. One derives a great sense of duty and responsibility from that feeling. It is a feeling of pride. It is a feeling of elation. It is a feeling of responsibility. It is a feeling of, I would not say fear, but the burden of that responsibility to make sure that you are representing your constituents in the best manner. I have yet to see one of my colleagues, from either party, not representing their constituents to what they consider to be the best of their ability.

I find it somewhat bothersome that the image of a politician as opposed to a parliamentarian has been undoubtedly, if we are to believe the media and if we are to believe our constituents, somewhat tarnished in the last year or two. Probably it has been going on since politics began. I find it disconcerting because we try to do our best but somehow the best either is not enough or the message does not get out that what we are doing is for the betterment of the country.

When I stop to reflect on it, I can understand the sense of frustration with the people who are running the country because the country is not in good shape right now. It is in very poor shape. I am one of 295 people who is responsible for that, and I have to take my share of responsibility. I happen not to be in government. If I were in government, I am sure I would feel the same sense of frustration. It is a feeling that our people, the constituents, have out there of why have you allowed the country to get into this kind of mess. The prime problem is the unity problem. It is the biggest problem that any country in the world could have. The next problem after that is peoples' needs. Do they have enough money? Do they have enough health care? Are they getting enough education and can they educate their children enough so that they can make it a better world to live in?

Those are the two basic problems I think our country is facing. At Christmas time we were faced with an international crisis and now we are faced with debating the rules that allow us to handle these problems, and the rules that hopefully will allow us as parliamentarians to cope with the problems in our country in a much more effective manner, a manner that gives credibility to those people who are out there watching us, who are watching me tonight, watching you, Madam Speaker, who watched our previous speaker and will watch the next speaker.

I am sure the question they ask themselves is whether or not we are sincere. Are we trying hard enough? Do we know what we are doing? If the answer to all these questions is yes, then why can we not do a better job?

I think how we work here, the rules that we follow should be related to how we do our work, how we do our jobs. What I want to do in the next 15 minutes is to create a highlight type of presentation to just run through my reasons for being here, what I think this House does, what Parliament does, why we need the rules and what they are supposed to do, and then maybe summarize some of the major rule changes that concern me, and some that I am pleased with.

Let me just begin by saying that in my mind, no matter how you look at it, it does not matter what the terms of references say or what the specifications say, the purpose of any Parliament is to run a country. It is to levy taxes, it is pass laws, but it is to run a country. To run the country you have to pass laws. In order to pass laws, you have to have some kind of rules. Otherwise you never have laws. Or if you do have laws, they may not be the right kind.

Parliament has an obligation to its people. We as elected members, as parliamentarians, have an obligation to ensure that no legal requirements are imposed on Canadians, except that Parliament itself has approved or authorized the executive to enact.

While we want the executive to enact these laws, and we delegate to the executive the authority to make these laws, it is still Parliament's duty to hold the executive accountable for the exercise of that awesome authority. That is the whole purpose of the rules, to hold the executive, to hold the government accountable for what it is it does.

The rules that have allowed us to go about our work began when this Parliament first sat as a country in 1867. Those rules in turn were derived from the rules of the

legislative assemblies of Upper and Lower Canada which was the Canada before Confederation in 1867.

For the next 100 years, not a great deal of change took place. In the 1940s and the 1950s there was concern about parliamentary reform. My history books tell me that we had some procedural committees formed. It was not until 1955 that any change of note at all took place. That change, as I understand it, gave a fixed period of days for Parliament to sit and I am sure to the relief of many in the House and outside the House it limited the length of speeches that parliamentarians could make.

The next change that took place, if we look at it as a quantum change, was in the mid-1950s. There was a crisis when the government of the day was unable to get supply approved by Parliament and it had to resort to a Governor General's warrant. Like many crises, this caused a special committee to be struck on procedures and organization and resulted in 1968 in some important reforms. Many of these reforms are with us today. It resulted in for example 25 opposition days, it resulted in standing committees and Oral Question Period was institutionalized.

The rules that we have today were derived from the third, if you like, quantum change that took place in the rules of this House back in 1985, rules that I may say came under the auspices and the leadership and the guise of this present government which was in power at the time. They basically were contained in a special committee report of the House of Commons. While they were not all enacted, as I understand it, many of them were.

What are some of the changes? My constituents who have been watching this on television are probably fed up with the kinds of changes and some of the technicalities that we are discussing. I just want to summarize that we are looking at 64 amendments. Some of these amendments are highly technical, some of them are good, some of them are housekeeping, but I look at the changes in three major senses and in order of importance.

The first one is the parliamentary timetable. The proposals would have us reduce the annual sitting of this House from 175 days to 134 days. That is a reduction of 25 per cent. Some of the time would be made up by adding an hour of business to each sitting day. Under the proposals there would be a timetable set up. The end result is that we are going to be sitting for 25 per cent less time.

• (1840)

The theory, as I understand it from the speeches I have heard from the government side, is that the change would allow us more time to be in our ridings to listen to our constituents and that the streamlining would allow certain other things to take place here.

But I have spoken to my constituents about this matter and, almost without exception, their feeling is that, at a time when the country is facing a constitutional crisis—and, as I alluded to at the beginning of my presentation, there are also rising tensions amongst native peoples, we have international problems, a recession, unemployment in my riding is over 20 percent and there is a lack of jobs, there is concern about the goods and services tax, there are difficulties because of the freeze or reduction in transfer payments to the provinces, which, in the case of Newfoundland, means that, because we are not a wealthy province, we cannot make up the difference, so the loss has to be passed on by a reduction of the health services and the reduction of education services—my constituents find it very difficult to understand why a proposal would be put on the table that would allow this Parliament to sit for less time to discuss these overwhelming problems, at this, of all times in our history.

I just talked about the first 100 years since 1867 and if there was a time for this House to be sitting more and not less, I think people would understand that. But for me to go back to my constituents and tell them that I am not familiar enough with the issues so must spend more time in the riding and for them to say that I have been representing them here for two-and-a-half years and do not understand that one of the big problems in Newfoundland is the lack of good fishing policy, which is ruining the fishing industry in Atlantic Canada, then I think they would say that I should not be here.

I know what the issues are in my riding. I speak to my riding two, three, four, five, or sometimes twenty times a day. I visit the riding most weekends and last year I did so on 40 out of 52 weekends. I am not alone. Most other people do the same thing. You probably do so, Madam Speaker, in order to see people, to attend functions, to hold meetings, to act in your ombudsman role, to talk to people to show them you are there to discuss some of the

difficulties Parliament is having and to try to explain some of the issues. I did a lot of explaining on Bill C–21 on the goods and services tax. You also try to give reasonably both sides of these arguments.

So it is going to be very difficult for me to explain that, when this country is looking for leadership—and they see leadership here, in the highest court in the land—the government is proposing a 25 per cent reduction through these rules. They believe such a proposal is unconscionable. They believe there is a recipe for the rebirth of Canadian values and it will not be found by choking debate in this House.

This new parliamentary timetable reduces the number of sittings the government will have to face during Question Period. Question Period is a movable feast. Sometimes, when people are watching Question Period, I am sure they wonder what their elected members are doing here and I wonder that myself sometimes; I have to be honest. I am sure that, from where you sit, Madam Speaker, you have to wonder more than perhaps we all wonder, because you have to adjudicate at times.

Well, you can understand, Madam Speaker, that a member can get carried away with an issue or may want to put some feeling into what you say. In holding the government accountable for some of the things we, in the opposition, do not like one gets carried away because there is emotion involved. We do not put an act on here. When you get up and hold a minister accountable and do not receive any kind of answer at all you would be less than human if you did not get mad. When you get mad you do things you would not do if you were operating under a normal emotion. It is not an act. We mean what we do here and I would like more time to hold the government accountable, not less.

If I were in government, would I want less time? I do not know and I am not going to make any statements about why the government needs more time in their riding; that is for them to say. I think the standard reply is that they want to spend more time with their constituents and it is related to the polls, but I am not going to draw any conclusions about that. I want to speak as a parliamentarian, not necessarily just as a Liberal politician, at this particular point in this debate.

The proposal to cut speech lengths to about one day's debate at second or third reading, I find very objectionable. I was sent up here by the constituents and by the members of the riding of Bonavista—Trinity—Conception. They elected me, presumably, because they saw in me someone who they thought could come and represent them as a voice in the House of Commons in Ottawa. That is what I am paid to do, to come and speak on their behalf. I have tried to represent them when I have the time to speak and the opportunity to speak, when I can get on during Question Period or make a statement in the House of Commons. It is not for me that I am doing so; it is for my constituents.

I believe, as an individual, without looking at rules or reading bits and pieces that have been put together by research staffs, I believe myself I am here to represent their views as often as possible. I think my constituents would expect that this House has traditionally recessed during the summer, during Easter, and during Christmas, at which time we have all returned home to spend some time with our families, visit our constituents, attend social functions, officiate, open buildings, mediate, and carry out the functions I mentioned earlier.

I would find it very difficult to try to rationalize or try to give a good reason why, at this particular point in time, I, as their voice in Ottawa, should have either a weaker voice or a voice that is heard less frequently. I do not think they would buy it, so I am not going to try to sell it. But I am not going to try not to sell it not only because they are not going to buy it, but because I do not believe it myself. I believe my job is to be here to follow the issues, to watch the legislation, and to do what I started by saying. In order for this legislation to be proper law and in order for the Executive to do its job properly, they have to be watched and they are best watched here, not somewhere else.

The second type of reform is the revised committee structure. I am a bit concerned about that. I belong to a number of committees in this House and am rather proud of what we have achieved, quite frankly. I am proud of the work we have done on the defence committee. We have put together three reports, two on maritime sovereignty, and have recently put together a report on arms control, both of which are very important subjects.

I am concerned that the new structure will be cumbersome. and that the committees will lose a very important principle they now have, which is essentially that they are not tasked by the government and are largely responsible for doing what they, as a committee, believe they should do. I would not want to change that principle for anything.

With respect to technical reforms, I would say that the most significant is the abolition of permitting votes on first reading of bills and the provision of a device to circumvent, in my mind, the requirement for unanimous consent to waive rules concerning the conduct of the business of the House.

I am going to summarise because I know a lot of other people want to speak on this subject. I also know that my time is very close to expiring.

I have a great deal of respect, and I know that respect is shared by all my colleagues in the House, for the late Senator Eugene Forsey. I perhaps knew Senator Forsey better than many others because he was born in Newfoundland and I had built up a rapport with him. I would see him frequently in the House and we would chat about informal things and sometimes about formal topics and subjects political.

I cannot do better in a conclusion than quoting Senator Forsey. He once said or wrote that Parliamentary control of delegated legislation is not possible unless there resides in the Houses of Parliament power to disallow such legislation.

• (1850)

I will read it one more time, Madam Speaker. "Parliamentary control of delegated legislation is not possible unless there resides in the Houses of Parliament—" in the other place as well as in the House of Commons "—a power to disallow such legislation".

That is why we are here and why we have rules. The proposed rules would, in my mind, detract from this very important and all-assuming principle.

[*Translation*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate. The hon. member for Abitibi.

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Madam Speaker, I am really pleased to take part in this debate. We all know the Government House Leader has tabled a motion to amend the Standing Orders of the House of Commons, after a series of fruitful discussions with members of all parties—Liberals, New Democrats and Conservatives. The series of reforms includes in particular changes to the schedule and to the Standing Orders of the House of Commons so that it can do business more expeditiously. I would like to give a few statistics about changing the parliamentary calendar.

The present parliamentary calendar provides for 175 sitting days. The average number of sitting days in 1991 is 155. The new calendar provides for 134. The calendar always provided for an average of 155 days or 881 hours a year. The new calendar provides for 134 days or 897 hours a year. Madam Speaker, I would like to mention how many days other legislatures sit. Let us take provincial and territorial governments for a period of three or four years: the Yukon Territory, 39 days; New Brunswick, 42 days; Prince Edward Island, 45 days; the Northwest Territories, 51 days; Newfoundland, 59 days; Nova Scotia, 62 days. Alberta, 73 days; Quebec, 74 days; Saskatchewan, 79 days; Ontario, 84 days; British Columbia, 89 days; Manitoba, 98 days.

I could also give some statistics for Canadians who often ask us for figures, especially my constituents.

Mr. Della Noce: Don't forget Australia!

Mr. Saint-Julien: Now, for other countries—

Australia, as my colleague from Laval-Est was saying, 77 days in 1991. The U.S. House of Representatives sat 144 days, or 814 hours, a year on average from 1961 to 1989. In the United Kingdom, they sit 170 days on average.

Madam Speaker, the new schedule will enable members to divide their time better between their parliamentary obligations and their obligations to their constituents, thus meeting their constituents' desire for more direct contact with their member of Parliament. Although the reform provides for fewer sitting days, the number of hours per day will increase.

The situation today is very different from what it was when the Standing Orders of the House were written, Madam Speaker. These days, members are asked to be in their ridings more often and on the other hand, Parliament requires more of them.

The changes made to committees respond to members' desire for a better adapted and more efficient

structure of standing committees and a clearer distinction between standing and legislative committees.

The committees of the House will belong to one of five categories, each with four or five standing committees and two legislative committees. Members will thus be able to hone their knowledge in areas covered by the various committees in a given category, because the substitution rules will be more flexible.

The proposals also contain a provision to allow cameras in committee meetings with the approval of a majority of members. The government proposes that the House of Commons accept the recommendations from the Committee on Privileges and Elections regarding the process for Private Members' Business, which will enable ordinary members to present more bills and motions.

Madam Speaker, Parliament's task is to debate issues and to make decisions and the Standing Orders of the House guide this process. They govern the proceedings of the House and establish a framework in which the government carries out its legislative program and the opposition holds it accountable. They were designed so that Parliament could do business in an orderly way and members could debate issues and make decisions by majority vote.

The modification to the Standing Orders before Parliament is the result of a year of discussions and great co-operation among the House leaders. It is the most important series of changes proposed in the modern history of the Canadian Parliament.

Madam Speaker, with the proposed schedule, the House will sit on average 134 days per year, as opposed to an average of 155 days over the past 10 years. But the members are expected to sit approximately the same number of hours during the year. The changes to the schedule will give the members, especially those from the West and the Northwest Territories as well as from Northern Quebec and Ontario, more flexibility in planning the time they can spend in their riding. Government policies and legislation are more complex and Canadians show an interest in an increasing number of issues. While the opposition can use an attendance reporting system and not have to worry about keeping most of its members in Ottawa these changes will help all members to fulfill their obligations in Parliament and their ridings, so that both Parliament and constituents receive all the attention and services they deserve.

Madam Speaker, I listened to the speech the hon. member for Manicouagan made today about the difficulty of serving a huge riding. The riding of Manicouagan covers 450,000 square kilometers. My riding of Abitibi covers 550,000 square kilometers, with a population of 85,000, and it is hard indeed. We spend a lot of time here, in Ottawa, Madam Speaker. As my records show, and the hon. members are welcome to check, I am often present during the week, but when the week-end comes, we leave on Friday evening, spend Saturday and Sunday working in our riding, then come back to Ottawa. We have huge ridings.

For many summer is a time for holidays, but we Northerners head out north, in northern Quebec, in particular in the Nunavik area, to visit the Inuits and Crees and work with them to find solutions to their problems. It is the same thing for the member for Manicouagan, because we cannot get away when the Parliament is sitting.

The opposition parties are fortunate. Both the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party had their leadership convention in the past few years. We know there is a secret pact between them. It is rumoured in town and at home. It is a "one third, one third, one thid" system. We saw it in action today, during the vote. There is one political party in this House that I will not mention which had only 18 members present out of 44 tonight to vote on this important issue, that is—

An hon. member: They can be mentioned. It is the socialists!

Mr. Saint-Julien: My friend said they can be mentioned, they are the socialists, the comrades. However, opposes the rule changes and that is the Liberal Party. Today, out of 81 Liberal members, only 44 were present. Madam Speaker, with the "one third, one third, one third" system, we notice which members are often in Ottawa. We look across the room and wonder where the members have gone. We know why that is. They spend two weeks a month in their riding, and as many as three in some instances, because they do not need to stay here, so they can travel. Now they refuse a change which would give us, the members from large ridings, the opportunity to spend a week in our ridings to meet with our constituents.

Earlier today, I heard the member for Hamilton East say that we had met, that is true, on our way to the Senate for the royal assent and that I told her that I

would be happy to go and spend one week per month in my riding for a working holiday. Upon our return to the House, she forgot the word "working" and mentioned only the word "holiday". That is pure partisanship! But when she went away for the leadership convention, she was away for a long time. It was not mentioned in the House at the time, but now we can pursuant to the rules.

Madam Speaker, it is very important that we spend one week per month in our ridings. When I go back to my riding on Friday night, 50 weeks or so every year, I often work Saturday morning and afternoon to meet with my constituents or travel up North. I sometimes drive 400 or even 800 kilometers in one day and a half during the week-end to Matagami or Lebel-sur-Quévillon. I have a huge riding.

That is why, Madam Speaker, we must have the opportunity to return home because it is important. Therefore, I will vote in favour of that motion, those amendments.

There is another thing that I would like to say to you. The other day, I noticed that three opposition members, three liberal members were away on a trip to Taiwan in the middle of a budget period, when it was most critical to be here if they wanted to take the government at task for that budget. But they chose rather to accept the invitation of Taiwan Chamber of Commerce to go there, all expenses paid. In other words, during the budget debate, those three liberal members, who were here today criticizing the government and saying how important it is to be in Ottawa, were absent that very week.

Madam Speaker, I have another thing to say to you, namely that your servant, the member for Abitibi and several of my colleagues from the province of Quebec want to obtain the privilege that Liberal and NPD members already have to go away one week a month. I will vote for these amendments, for the people back home, for the population of Abitibi, Madam Speaker.

[*English*]

Mr. Len Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Madam Speaker, this package of rules that we find before us today is really going to change the operations and the face of Parliament itself. I would like to deal with the many comments I have heard from several people in this House today, being very concerned about the image of politicians today. It is obviously bothering some of them. If members of Parliament are themselves prepared to face the issues, defend themselves on charges that are made about them, whether it be in the media or elsewhere, I think that we are doing ourselves a service. The members of this House have a tendency to sort of let everything flow by, but, you know, when you are in that kind of contest, some of the tar and feathering sticks.

There is another thing I want to really bring out here, and I do not think it has been emphasized enough in this debate. The hon. member for Vanier brought it out in his speech the other day, and it is this; rule changes in this House have traditionally been done by parliamentary committees. The members of this House are the ones who have to work in the system. They are the ones who know whether the system will indeed work or not.

Madam Speaker, it is just like you sitting up there in the Speaker's chair. You have to be able to read what is going on in the minds of members here on the floor of the House of Commons. You have to be able to judge that in order to keep a firm hand on the House. You have to sit out here for a while in order to be a good judge from the chair, and indeed it helps, as the Speaker himself has done, when you have had the privilege or opportunity of sitting on both sides of this House from time to time. You know what it is like to be in the opposition and you know what it is like to be in the government. As a result, our Speaker is able to judge the mood of this House very well and he is also a good judge of the mood of the Canadian people.

It is the same with members of Parliament, sitting here in this House. Many, many meetings went into the McGrath report. I remember Senator Lefebvre's report when he was a member in this House, and how hard he and a number of members worked in bringing in the Lefebvre report. The McGrath report was a follow-up to that one.

If those kinds of reforms had been introduced in this House, they would have worked very well. They were done by people who knew how the place operated.

I resent very much, as a member who has been in this House for 25 years and who has seen many rule changes taking place and many personalities handling those rule changes, and I think it is incredible that the government House leader has taken it upon himself to put his name, with the backing of the government, to a large number of rule changes and to enforce them on Parliament rather than doing it by a consensus which has been done in the past.

I was almost brought to tears yesterday when the Minister for Fitness and Amateur Sport stood in his place and was telling the House how hard the government House leader had tried to get agreement on rule changes. He could not get any co-operation. Give me a break.

I have worked with the government House leader in other capacities in this House. I know how he agrees. His agreement consists of it either being his way or the highway. That is the way he operates.

I remember very well, as an example, leading a delegation of parliamentarians from this House to one of several North Atlantic Assembly meetings in a European country. When it came to the plenary of the whole at the end of the three-day meeting, the member who is the present House leader of the Conservative government, the hon. Minister of State for Finance and Privatization and another person who was in this House at the time left the Canadian delegation.

They would not sit in the seats allocated for the total Canadian delegation and went over and sat about 50 feet away from the Canadian delegation. On some issues, they even voted against what the members in the official delegation were voting for.

The late Hon. Allan McKinnon was a member of that delegation. He sat with the Canadian delegation and did his homework as a gentleman should.

I know about what they speak about this House leader. No co-operation. If he does not get his own way, then he will ram it down the throat of Parliament.

That is why we are in this debate tonight. That is why we were in it yesterday and the day before. That is why we are going to have this debate choked off at 1 a.m. Closure is on the books.

That is the way this minister operates. Do not tell us that the system is going to be more efficient. Do not tell me that the rules are what is causing the disruption in this House. Do not tell me the rules are responsible for the conduct in this House.

I remember very well in that famous summer of 1984 when the present Prime Minister travelled around this country telling Canadians that he was going to bring a sense of decency and decorum to the Canadian House of Commons. We remember that.

I have sat in this House under five Prime Ministers and I have never seen one of them act in the arrogant manner in which this Prime Minister has when he ridicules other members of the House and expects to have decency and decorum.

The way the Prime Minister has operated in this House, and he has been an example to some of his other ministers, is what is causing the lack of decorum in this place. There is indeed a lack of decency in here and it comes down to the fact that the government is arrogant. It does not need these rule changes to make the House work. The Conservatives say they want to go home and visit their constituents. That is fine. I do not think there is anything more important than visiting our constituents.

• (1910)

There used to be a policy in this House where members in the opposition would pair with members of the government if they wanted to go home for a while. In those days that pairing agreement was absolutely honoured. That was when a handshake meant a deal. There was nothing wrong with it. If the member sat in his or her seat when the vote took place, they usually got up after for the benefit of their constituents and said: "I did not vote on this issue because I was paired with a minister", or "I was paired with the hon. member for Norfolk-Haldimand", or wherever in Canada.

That is the kind of relationship that is lacking in this House. The government House leader can bring in all the amendments and all the changes to the rules of this House that he likes, but if the human factor is not there, if the sense of decency is not there, and if there is going to be smart aleck conduct on the floor of the House no rules are going to settle that.

An hon. member: Oh, oh.

Mr. Hopkins: The hon. member is getting a bit upset, but I would suggest he look over some of the background of this Parliament. People think that because television is in the House, this Parliament has suddenly become a very bad place to be or a bad place to watch.

For heaven's sake, if we want to even take a brief look at the history of the Parliament of Canada, I remember sitting over there in the fifth row when the famous Munsinger debate took place in this House. It was a fierce debate. Personalities entered into it, a viciousness. There was no television in the House. It was for real.

I remember one person, whom I will not name, who sat just two seats away from where I am now. He was virtually jumping six inches off the floor with every second word he said because he was angry. It lasted two days; two days of absolute tension in this House. After that it sort of died down. People realized that it was a real tempest in a teapot.

Let us take another example. The rules of the House had nothing to do with what took place in this Parliament in 1917 during the conscription debate. If you really do an in-depth study on that famous debate in this House of Commons, the debate went on all day and all night for several days. During that particular debate, believe it or not, Madam Speaker, they had a bar in each lobby. As the night went on the debate got a little more interesting. That was not televised. There was no television in the House then.

The point I am trying to make is this. People seem to think that because television is in this House, there is more grandstanding, more tenseness in the answers, someone trying to put somebody else down. It has always been like that. This Parliament has not changed because you have elected a group of personalities to this House. Everyone in this House has a certain amount of ego, whether they want to admit it or not, because they have been leaders in their communities from which they came. When they come in here, they are not going to sit down quietly back in the corner and have nothing to say. There is going to come a time when they will get into very aggressive debate.

Changing the rules in this House is not going to change the conduct of the members of this House. Each member in this House holds it unto himself or herself to improve their conduct if they want to be more respected and, as a result, to look more decent in front of the public. But the leadership must come from the Prime Minister, as he promised in 1984. When he stands up and aggressively starts to put people down, naturally he starts a rhubarb because no one is going to tolerate it.

I was listening to a debater last night who was talking about spending so many hours on airplanes and how difficult it is to travel long distances and represent his constituents. It is true. I have known many members of this House who went home every weekend to British Columbia, and it is a big deal, but it is also good. It shows that members are interested in their constituents and they are there to serve them and to listen.

The other point I want to emphasize as I say that is that one thing is listening to your constituents; the other thing is doing something about it. I think there are many times that even if there is nothing you can do with their requests, if you at least treat them with a sense of decency and try to solve their problem, they will still respect you for it because they know they have had their day in court.

We had an issue here in this House a few weeks ago that would not be cured by these rules. That was when the public accounts and supplementary estimates were tabled in this House. It was a time when the opposition parties were asking for Mr. Spicer to come before a parliamentary committee. The government, and they talk about democracy, referred those estimates to a committee that had never had a chairperson for months. What an insult. What a way to run Parliament. Rules would not have changed that. It was all in the attitude of the people who did it. Eventually they did get a chairperson for that committee, but they would not have done it had there not been a big uproar about it. That is no way to run Parliament.

We see House management in the committee changes, which has a host of things to do from looking after the committee schedules to other items relating to the management of the House of Commons, which would be in the same envelope—in other words the same time-frames—and the public accounts committee, just two of them. That will work because you can only have two committees sitting at one time.

Where you have five committees in one group, if the government is willing to refer estimates to a committee that has no chair, what is to prevent it from looking at those five committees, making two of them very busy so that there is no slot for a third or fourth one, when a very important issue comes up that might be embarrassing to

the government? It could use the block system to blot it out, keep it off the record and so on.

• (1920)

The committees should be televised, but the committees have to be given far more control than they are given under this system. If they are just going to have technical advice, that is not enough. There has to be some wide-open explanations about legislation because if people are going to watch that on television they want to know what that legislation is about.

I see you giving me the high sign, Madam Speaker. I am going to abide by your request.

If we look at the work that this House has accomplished in the last couple of years as outlined in the speech delivered in this House by the hon. member from Vanier, we will find that there has been a lot accomplished at a time when the government is complaining about the opposition holding things up. It is absolutely not true.

Here we have the government coming in, in a dictatorial fashion, in an non-traditional fashion, not been practised in this House. The government is bringing in its own rules and using the majority to put them in place and say you like them or you can do whatever you like about them.

That is not the way to bring about decency in this Parliament. There is going to be disruption from time to time in the future simply because there was no consensus on them by having consultation with all members of the House.

It has to start over there as well as over here. If we want decency and we want people in this House to be respected then we have to earn it, but the first way to do it is to start by looking in a mirror.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Pronovost (Saint-Maurice): Madam Speaker, I wish to take part for a few minutes in today's debate which concerns us all.

I have just listened with great interest to a veteran of the House, a member who is far from being a novice in parliamentary affairs. We can of course, make use of certain of his comments. However, there is one thing that we must not forget when debating a subject as fundamental as the reshaping of the rules which regulate the House, there is one objective that we must all keep in mind as parliamentarians: How must the House operate so that its activities are democratic, efficient, and so that it serves the best interest of all Canadians?

The basic question is not how the opposition can defeat the government in the long run, or how the government can crush the opposition, as a few members of the NDP and the Liberal Party have already said today. That is not the basic question. We are then faced with a very serious problem, me must find a way to maintain the democratic balance and permit opposition and independant members to question the government on its actions, to criticize it, since this is the essence of democracy.

Certain countries of the world envy us a lot, Madam Speaker, as you know very well, because close to two-thirds of this planet's inhabitants, unfortunately, do not have a democratic Parliament. If you go to Africa—a region you know quite well Madam Speaker—, you will find that most African countries are ruled by a one-party system and do not have this kind of debate.

However, what must be kept in mind about the reform we are now proposing—and I want to appeal to those watching this somewhat sterile debate, perhaps, and who wonder why we talk about such a thing for a week. What you must keep in mind is that the government is trying to make the Parliament of Canada efficient, so that it will not be paralyzed by any member who comes along.

We are almost 300 members in this House, 300 strong-willed individuals, each with our own personality. To lead all those people at the same time, we need some order, Madam Speaker. The opposition must be allowed to express itself, but at the same time the opposition does not have the right to abuse the government, no more than the government has the right to commit abuses.

[*English*]

I listened very carefully to a comment made by the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle. In reply to me he explained that the new rules will not permit members of the Bloc Quebecois to do their work in this House. As the rules are now, any member of the Bloc Quebecois can stand and paralyse the whole process, not only during one hour but during one day or one week. If one

member of Parliament wants to paralyse the Parliament he is able to do it by refusing his personal consent.

The hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, as a member of the New Democratic Party, was trying to defend a member of the separatist party in this House. It is quite curious to see a member of the NDP trying to support a member of the separatist Bloc Quebecois, in order to help and give a chance to a party that wants to destroy this House, that wants to destroy this country. That NDP member wants to give those guys more chance to destroy this country and to paralyse the Parliament of Canada. It is quite curious.

[*Translation*]

Madam Speaker, the members from the Bloc Quebecois have the right to speak in this House. Although they are not an officially recognized party, they can rise at any time to raise questions of privilege, points of order or speak in a debate like the one today. Members of the Bloc Quebecois have the right to be in this House. However, given their numbers, they are a very small group in Parliament compared to all the elected members here.

Why listen to the NDP member for Regina—Qu'appelle who would give full rights to an independent member in this House to pursue his ultimate objective?

[*English*]

Members of Parliament sitting here under the colours of the Bloc Quebecois want to prove to the people of Quebec that this Parliament cannot work, that this government cannot do the best thing for the people of Quebec, and that Canada is not a country in which they are able to be proud of being Quebecois and being proud of being Canadian. The Bloc Quebecois is here to prove to the people of Quebec that this country will never function, that it will never work.

[*Translation*]

Madam Speaker, I do not intend to give the Bloc Quebecois those extra chances. I think that the Bloc Quebecois has the right to be represented here, to rise in this House, but not to spread trouble in the Parliament of Canada. I will never allow a member of the New Democratic Party, which is supposed to want to keep Canada united and come up with a renewed federalism in the next few months—I will never accept such a thing although it is presented in the hallowed name of democracy.

. Several opposition members have said that this government often used closure, Madam Speaker, and gagged the opposition, stifled the right to speak.

The Liberal government that preceded us did exactly the same thing and it was quite legitimate, Madam Speaker. Many people watching us now will wonder why a government member would agree to prevent other members from speaking. The reason is quite simple. If we listened to the opposition members, there would never be any closure and they could talk for hours and even days and weeks on the same subject. During that time, the Parliament of Canada could not function or pass laws, legislation that would be extremely important for Canadians.

I think, that it is very important to keep this essential fact in mind. The Parliament of Canada cannot be like a nursery school, although on some days one feels that it is. You have surely noticed that yourself. I say very sincerely that without order, if we cannot make Canadians again trust the Canadian parliamentary system and how this House operates—the regulations proposed by the government and largely accepted by the opposition, because several opposition members have risen in this House to say that they accepted many of the rules presented—

Mr. Della Noce: The rules must be obeyed!

• (1930)

Mr. Pronovost: My colleagues, including one from Laval, have just told me that rules must be followed, and they are quite right. For example, a little while ago in this House, we saw New Democratic members try to delay the proceedings of the House and paralyze it—and it costs $250,000 for every hour that we sit here—by rising for and against the same motion. We even saw New Democratic members, try to delay the proceedings of the House, loudly demanding that a private member's bill from a member of their party be presented in the House and as soon as the Speaker rose to call for an oral vote, the same New Democratic members who had insistently demanded it and wanted to bring all parliamentary

proceedings to a halt, voted against their own member so that the bells were rung to summon everyone.

How many times in the past, Madam Speaker, have we urgently had to call back members from all over Canada to come and vote when it could have been settled on Thursday evening, which would have given the same result. But all members had to be called back from across Canada. That is expensive, Madam Speaker. You can imagine that, when members have to rush back to Ottawa from British Columbia, Saint-John's, Newfoundland, Atlantic Canada, Ontario, and all around the country, including from Abitibi, it costs the taxpayers a bundle.

I think that, for that reason, it is important that we adopt the new schedule the government has proposed, which we will do as early as tonight, Madam Speaker.

I have another point to make. The riding Madam Speaker represents is both urban and rural. That of the member for Outremont, not too far from us, is essentially urban. In fact, it covers such a small area that you could walk through it, while Madam Speaker, in her riding of Saint-Hyacinthe, would need a car. My colleague, the member for Champlain, must travel by plane to go from one part of his riding to another. Personally, I have to drive at least two hours to go around my whole riding.

Mr. Hogue: When the weather is fair.

Mr. Pronovost: If the weather is fair, of course. Can you see the problem we are faced with today and why members need to spend more time in their ridings? They need to be there not only to attend social functions and events of all kind, but also to get together with constituents who have problems to discuss, Madam Speaker. That is perfectly normal in any Parliament. Many citizens make appointments and may have to wait several weeks before they can meet their member and talk about their problems, the Canadian policy or their troubles with the federal bureaucracy.

As you know, we often hear reporters who work on the hill—I used to be a reporter before I came here—say: "Parliament is about to adjourn, so you will be on holidays." Quite the contrary, Madam Speaker. We work very hard here, of course, but once in his riding, a good member, whatever his or her allegiance, has to put in at least 60, 70, 80 and even 90 hours a week. It is very important to mention this.

[*English*]

I ask members of the New Democratic Party to be very sensitive to what they have said about the Bloc Quebecois before. The member for Regina—Qu'Appelle is trying to convince me as a Canadian that those new rules will impeach the Bloc Quebecois, will not give the right to the Bloc Quebecois to destroy this House.

It is quite curious to hear that a member of the New Democratic Party is happy with the fact that a member of the separatist Bloc Quebecois is able to paralyse this House at any moment of the day, at any moment of the year. That is how it works now, and the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle wants that to be maintained.

I cannot accept that as a Canadian. I am ready to accept that at any moment a member of the Bloc Quebecois can rise in this House to speak freely, but with the same rules that apply to all the members of this Parliament. For one member to be able to paralyse the whole Parliament, especially seeing the NDP defending the Bloc Quebecois on that question, is unacceptable.

[*Translation*]

In closing, I would like to mention, Madam Speaker, that most parliaments in the world, democratic parliaments that is, sit much less than the Parliament of Canada. Even countries like France, where there are no provincial governments, manage to have much shorter sessions than we do. We can do it, to make our Parliament efficient and avoid falling into anarchy like Italy.

Mr. Della Noce: Do you have something against Italy?

Mr. Pronovost: Madam Speaker, I was thrilled to be able to take part in this interesting debate. In conclusion, I must say that I fervently wish that Parliament will adopt this resolution unanimously so that we can at last have rules permitting a more efficient Parliament in Canada, whose mandate it is to serve Canadians who spend more than a $1.5 million a day for its operation. It is of the

utmost importance that we use those dollars well. I thank you for being so patient, Madam Speaker.

[*English*]

Mr. David D. Stupich (Nanaimo—Cowichan): Madam Speaker, there is a lot to cover in all of these rules and I do not intend to try to cover the whole area. The one topic among all of them that I want to discuss is the section dealing with committees.

I came to this House after almost 23 years of experience in the provincial House of British Columbia. I am often asked by people in my own constituency which is larger now than it was before, by people here, and by all over: "How do you feel about making the change? What differences have you noticed?" I always reply that the first difference I have really noticed is that in the federal House the committees seem to have some role, some *raison d'être*, some function.

That was not generally the case in the provincial House. Once a year in the provincial House we would get together. The selection committee would recommend the names of the people who were going to sit on the various committees. Someone would be designated as the person to call the group together for a meeting. The committee would meet, elect a chairperson, elect a deputy chair and a secretary, and generally with something like 13 out of 15 committees would never meet again until they were reconstituted a year later.

There was nothing that they could do on their own. They could take no initiative. The only time a committee could actually do anything, even hold a meeting, would be if the minister responsible for that area of discussion, assume it was agriculture, moved a motion in the chamber referring some particular topic or question to the committee for study. Once that motion was passed by the House the committee could start holding meetings, but not until then.

There were a couple of exceptions. The public accounts committee, for example, was ready to roll as soon as it was named, as was the one dealing with private members' bills and standing orders. But with every other committee, they never met unless the minister in charge moved a motion in the House.

In the federal House here in Ottawa it is different. That is something I noticed as soon as I came and something I appreciated. The committees did their own work. They started meeting almost immediately and started looking into whatever committee members thought was worth while, would be in the interest of Parliament, in their own interest of educating themselves as members or in the interest of the House. I appreciate the difference, thought it was very worth while and, as I say, it is always my first comment when I am asked what is the main difference between operating in the legislature in British Columbia and operating in Parliament in Ottawa?

What concerns me about the changes in the rules is the changes that are being made with respect to the operation of committees. They have been working well. It does not mean that the opposition members get their own way. They can bring in minority reports. They can even get those reports printed, which was not the case provincially. Nevertheless, they do hold their meetings. On occasion, even government members will vote with opposition members on something the committee is doing or the committee wants to do. They operate as a separate group and by and large, in my experience, they seem to vote not party line but in the interest of the work of the committee itself, and that is another difference I welcomed.

Some of the people taking part in this debate have expressed the wish that debate in this House could be the same way. Committee members speak individually without keeping to a party line as we in this Chamber seem to. That is the way committees work and I have enjoyed that aspect of my work as a member of different committees, but that too is changing with the way the rules are presented to us now.

• (1940)

The government apparently is not satisfied with the way the committees have been working. They want them to meet less frequently.

They are cutting down on the opportunities for committees to meet. Twenty-eight committees are going to be divided into five envelopes with two committee rooms assigned to each one.

In some cases, there will be six committees in one of these envelopes and in other cases, seven. Seven committees will be fighting for the opportunity to meet in just two committee rooms which cuts down on the opportunities for those committees to meet.

Deciding which committee is going to get a committee room will be left to a new committee, the Standing Committee on House Management. That committee is going to have the right to say which two committees in each envelope are going to have the right to meet. They will not be able to meet if they do not get a room. If they get a room, they will meet.

The Standing Committee on House Management will be controlled by government members, as are all committees. This is an important committee. The government will make sure that the committee is following government policy and direction rather than simply leaving things to chance.

When we look at some of the committees, we might wonder whether the Standing Committee on House Management is going to be guided by the interests of the House generally, or by the members. Is it going to be guided by the desires of the government at that particular point in time?

In each of these envelopes, there are two legislative committees. One would expect that in the event there is legislation to be considered by any of the committees in these envelopes then that particular legislative committee is going to have an opportunity to meet.

The government will be anxious to get the legislation through the committee and back into the House. There will be pressure on to get those committees meeting and to get the legislation passed through the committee and back into the House. This will leave five other committees that are waiting for an opportunity to meet in a room that may be assigned.

How often is that going to happen? How will the Standing Committee on House Management, controlled by the government, not be able to select those committees that are working in the interests of the government at that particular time? This means, perhaps, dealing with a subject that the government would like to have dealt with by the committee or, alternatively, avoiding a subject that the government does not want discussed at that time.

It may not want international affairs talked about. If that is the case, this House management committee would make sure that that particular committee did not have a room to meet in. Effectively, it would stop it from meeting. That is not the case now.

Now, there is sometimes a contest for rooms but the active committees do get rooms when they want them.

Beyond that, the legislative committees are going to be restricted to calling witnesses on technical aspects. That is not the case right now. The legislative committee can hear witnesses on any aspect of the work they are doing.

It is an opportunity for the general public, for groups with an axe to grind or for groups that feel its members have particular knowledge of something—whether they have or not. They feel they have. They want to express their opinions, try to have some influence and effect on government policy and legislation. They can make application if the committee agrees, and the committee will meet with them.

The way this reads now, through the changes that are being proposed, it will only be if someone decides that they are dealing with technical aspects only. It is not clear who makes that decision. Is it going to be the chair of the committee? Is it going to be the committee itself under the control of the government members? Is it going to be the House management committee?

What is a technical witness? Is he or she someone who comes from within the ministry or the department who is going to give evidence as to what the legislation was intended to accomplish? Is that what is meant by "technical" witnesses? There is no definition that I am aware of. There might be one somewhere, but none that I am aware of.

It would seem to me that it is cutting down the opportunities for that legislative committee to really look at the legislation. Mr. Speaker, you and I know that on occasion these committees do bring in useful amendments that are accepted by the government. This does happen. Under the new system, if the only witnesses they are allowed to hear are witnesses that are hand-picked by some group outside of the committee and presented to the committee as the ones who are going to be heard, there will be little opportunity to hear, not necessarily contrary views, but any views that are helping to develop legislation that will serve the interests of the people.

It occurs to me that we are going to get to the point where the only way in which legislation can be examined by anyone other than witnesses approved by the government, or some person representing government, will be when it gets to the Senate, the other place. The Senate will still have its committees. The Senate will still have its opportunities to have witnesses of any kind that a committee is prepared to hear. In those Senate commit-

tee hearings, as they have done in the past, it will be much more important in the future that they make opportunities for the general public—and I am not talking about everybody coming in—but people other than those designated as "expert witnesses" or "technical witnesses", people with technical ability or knowledge to be heard.

The Senate will be able to go beyond that. They will be the only ones that will be able to, with respect to a legislative committee. Yes, our standing committees will still be able to hear other witnesses. But when it comes to legislation that has been referred to a legislative committee, then one of the principal roles and the principal opportunities of the legislative committee, as I see it, in my rather limited experience in this House, is to serve Parliament and to serve Canada. That will have been lost to it by the change in the rules that will allow that committee to hear only technical witnesses.

As I have said, the definition of that is open. Who is going to select the technical witnesses? Who will they be and will they be picked by that same House management committee that is controlling everything else?

I said I would not be long and I do not intend to be. I wanted to deal only with this matter of committees, and I have tried to explain that too. In my experience, the committees of the House of Commons are serving the House of Commons very well. They are not just serving Parliament itself, but they are serving the people of Canada very well.

While some of the other changes are important and have been dealt with at great length by members in the House from both sides, I do not think there has not been enough attention paid to what is happening to the committees. That is the thing that disturbs me most. There are other things that are important, but the thing that disturbs me most is that the one feature of the House of Commons that I have enjoyed in contrast to my experience in the legislature in B.C., is the way in which the committees serve. The committees' role, their opportunities are going to be cut down. The possibility of them meeting is going to be up to the House management committee controlled by the government. They may not be able to meet at all unless the government wants them to meet. When they do meet, what they are able to do is going to be curtailed by the fact that they can hear only technical witnesses.

I will leave the rest to my colleagues to deal with. I wanted to deal only with this matter of committees.

We will be voting on the amendments to committees as a separate item, as I understand the breakdown of the vote. I hope the government will decide to take another look at the damage it is doing to the committee system in the House of Commons.

Mr. Scott Thorkelson (Edmonton—Strathcona): Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to speak on a particular aspect of these rule changes to the Standing Orders, that of Private Members' Business. I believe the changes that have been proposed to Private Members' Business are very good. They are positive changes, but I would urge the government to go even further.

I would like to give a bit of the history of Private Members' Business and talk about the reasons why we might increase the number of items that are made votable and to increase the number of hours of consideration given to Private Members' Business.

In Canada, at the time of Confederation, it was accepted that private member's bills were as important a source of legislation as bills tabled by the government. The rules adopted on December 20, 1867, gave precedence to Private Members' Business on three days of the week and to government business only on two days. From 1867 to 1906 the House operated under a set of rules that permitted fairly broad participation by individual members in all stages of the legislative process. The introduction and discussion of private members' bills consumed a considerable proportion of the House's time and private members' bills constituted a substantial portion of the legislation receiving Royal Assent.

• (1950)

In the early years the government made no serious moves either to increase its control of the House's time or to accelerate the pace at which legislation made its way through the House. Gradually however the time set aside for Private Members' Business started being encroached upon to enable the government to complete its legislative agenda.

At first, this was done "by leave of the House", although it became so customary that eventually the rules of the House were changed. During the period 1927 to 1961 numerous changes were made in the rules governing the introduction and discussion of private members' bills. Not only did such bills lose the pre-eminence that they had sometimes enjoyed over government bills during the 19th century, but the opportunities available to introduce and to discuss them were so severely restricted that their utility as a vehicle for initiating legislation was effectively ended.

The growing role and size of government, the increasing complexity of modern legislation, and the fact that much legislation had a financial component, all contributed to the growing pre-eminence of government. As you know, Madam Speaker, private members are prohibited by the Constitution from introducing bills with a financial initiative attached to them. This development was aided by the increasing cohesion of political parties which tended to restrict the activities of individual members. The government's need to use so much of the legislative time available has meant that the time for Private Members' Business has gradually, but inexorably diminished.

In Canada, during the 30 years from 1944 to 1974 only 14 private members' bills were passed, excluding bills to change constituency names.

There are several procedures in the British House of Commons whereby private members may table legislation. The most significant of these is the ballot. At the beginning of each session the names of 20 members are chosen and a priority established. These members are entitled to have their own bills discussed on Fridays which are set aside for Private Members' Business. In the late 1960s a number of very contentious moral issues, capital punishment, abortion, reform of laws respecting homosexuality and so on were successfully dealt with as private members' bills, although in several cases additional time had to be provided by the government.

In Canada, the 1984 Special Committee on the Reform of the House of Commons, the McGrath committee, made a number of recommendations to reorganize Private Members' Business in the House of Commons. Several of these proposals were adopted. A selection process was established whereby 20 private members' bills and motions were selected by ballot. From these a committee of members, the privileges and elections committee today, designate up to six of these votable.

The government has accepted the committee's recommendation where there would be 10 bills drawn and 10 motions drawn and 3 bills designated votable and 3 motions designated votable. I would call on the government to allow more items designated votable, perhaps 4 or 5 bills could become votable out of 10 and 3 or 4 motions out of 10 could become votable. Each of these votable items can be debated for a maximum of three hours. I would argue that as bills are more important than motions, we might restrict the number of hours that votable motions are debated to two hours.

Mr. Speaker, as you know a number of private members' bills have been passed into law including relatively controversial ones such as Bill C-204, the Non-smokers' Health Act, sponsored by Lynn McDonald. Nevertheless, certain defects have continued or become apparent. I believe we can go a long way to addressing these. Those are: the lack of time and the lack of the number of items being designated votable.

Now, why do private members put forward bills? They often put forward bills that are of particular interest to their constituents or other interest groups. Ideas for these bills arise from the problems dealt with and the complaints received by their offices. We all get a good knowledge of what is going on in government and in our constituencies by interacting with people and helping them solve their problems.

A member may wish to publicize his or her concern with particular issue. Certain members champion or adopt a particular cause or issue or carve out a particular area of specialization on their own. Private members' bills are a way of making the public and other politicians aware of the member's interest or concern.

They are also a means for members to assert their own individuality and sometimes deal with matters differently than their own parties.

Many government members will usually try first to see if the government will introduce certain legislation, although in some cases the individual member may not always receive credit for his or her work behind the scenes. The bureaucracy may be opposed to a particular measure, or the government may not have room in its

legislative agenda. In such cases, the member may introduce a bill on his or her own.

Private members' bills are often used, especially by opposition parties, to advocate party positions. This can be perfectly acceptable, but there are, at the same time, concerns over the use of private members' bills to bring forward official opposition, or for that matter government policies or businesses.

More importantly, private members' bills are an important source of ideas. They are presented by members who are often reacting to public concern. Government ministers, on the other hand, are often insulated from the public. Many individual members have or develop expertise in particular areas, or by virtue of their contact with voters are made aware of problems in a unique way. Private members are not captive or influenced to the same extent by government departments; while this can deprive them of expert advice, it also can mean that they are more receptive to innovation and public concerns.

Private members' bills are an important alternative source of legislation to government-inspired bills. Sound ideas emanate from the back benches of Parliament. Moreover, since private members are politicians, they are inherently more attuned to public opinion than are civil servants.

Certainly, the government does not have a monopoly on sound ideas. With members of Parliament active as ombudsmen, they may be just as or sometimes more attuned to the popular view of their interest areas than are ministers or public servants.

Government inactivity is often a motivation for private members' bills. Private members' bills provide an important outlet for individual private members. It allows them to leave their own stamp on the legislative process. If the system were changed so as to improve the chance of success of private members' bills, this would help restore the power of Parliament, as well as revitalize the role of individual members.

Private members' bills allow members to act as individuals rather than as part of a team, yet they still can belong to a team. They provide an outlet, and most importantly, encouragement for individual initiative here in the House of Commons. In an effective private member system, there would not be votes along party lines, nor would party Whips try to get their members to vote a particular way. This would mean that it would be up to the bill's proponents to garner support. This is, of course, much closer to a true legislative system where individual members vote as they see fit on individual issues.

Many voters would be very proud of a member who managed to sponsor legislation successfully.

• (2000)

No matter what changes are made to the procedure rules governing Private Members' Business, it is essential that they be accompanied by changes in attitudes. Governments have to stop feeling threatened by an individual member's initiative. They must stop feeling threatened by bills that may not accord perfectly with their own legislative platform. The same is true, perhaps even more so, of bureaucracies that often hinder and thwart private members, consciously or not. Governments and parties have to sincerely allow members a free rein on private members' bills, not insisting on party lines.

Members themselves have to change. They have to be responsible for tabling bills and to avoid silly, petty and poorly drafted ones. If members only tabled bills that they seriously felt should become law, it would have an effect on the seriousness with which all private members' bills are taken. Members also have to make more of an effort to attend and participate in Private Members' Business.

The biggest problem facing private members' bills is lack of time. Every session, hundreds of private members' bills are introduced but only a few are selected by ballot and not enough of them are given enough time to be debated. Once again I call upon the government to allocate one or two more hours a week or consider alternative schemes to increase the number of hours of consideration given to Private Members' Business.

One alternative would be to have two half-days during the week set aside for Private Members' Business. It is conceivable that two morning sittings could be created to deal with Private Members' Business. The advantage of this idea is that it would minimize the disruption of existing House business and time. As we know, an hour here and an hour there prevents real continuity in discussing Private Members' Business.

Of course reform of Private Members' Business is part of a larger issue, the issue that we are discussing tonight, the general reform of the House of Commons, increasing the effectiveness of Parliament and of members of

Parliament, enhancing the role of individual members and eroding the dominant role of party discipline.

The power and clout of private members cannot be legislated. It is possible to create opportunities to bring forward their concerns in the form of private members' bills, but much will depend on how they choose their issues, develop expertise, and use the system.

The attitudes of all members of Parliament and of the government will also determine whether the system succeeds or fails. The quality of private members' bills has to improve if there is a real possibility that they might become law and not form a pretext for debate.

There is some evidence that this has happened since 1985 when the McGrath commission reforms were instituted. I must compliment the Prime Minister and cabinet of the day for accepting many of those recommendations, for they have worked extraordinarily well.

Members of Parliament fulfil an important ombudsman role representing their constituents to the federal government. In doing so, they often become aware of areas that need to be addressed or reformed before the government does.

Private members' bills are a way for ordinary members to take advantage of the opportunities afforded them to initiate changes.

Writing in 1974, a newspaper columnist said: "Unless you subscribe to the quaint notion that the only people in Ottawa who are capable of thinking are those that inhabit the Treasury benches, you have to be concerned about the short shrift given private members' bills. It is one more argument for the real reform of the parliamentary procedure".

I think the rules of the House of Commons which have been presented are fine rules. I especially would applaud the government for accepting the recommendations given to it by the privileges and elections committee concerning Private Members' Business. I would encourage it to go that one step further in the future.

Mr. John Harvard (Winnipeg St. James): Mr. Speaker, I bring an official opposition perspective to this issue, and I do not apologize for that one little bit. Let me explain. The premise of these rule changes is to limit debate, choke off debate. In the government's view if you delay legislation you make this House, this institution, more inefficient. In other words, it construes delay as inefficiency: "Delay is inefficiency".

Delay in this particular institution is not necessarily inefficiency. In fact, it is an absolutely vital part of the democratic process that is played out within these four walls.

When an issue comes to the floor of the House time must be given to have that issue percolate, to give people an opportunity to express themselves, to arouse the public. All of that takes time. Yet, those people on that side of the House would like us to believe that is delay or inefficiency and that the best way to pursue the political process, to pass legislation, is to do it in a great hurry: "Let us have no delay because that would be inefficient".

They are wrong. The role of the opposition is very vital to the democratic process. Believe it or not, our job which is much different from the job of those people over there is equally important. We have to have our time to do our job as they have to have time to do their job.

Speaking of delay and inefficiency, I suppose if we wanted to include cost effectiveness in efficiency it would certainly be more cost effective if I did not go home every weekend, if I did not get on the iron bird every Friday and go home. I would certainly save the taxpayer several hundred dollars a week. I guess, according to the thinking of some people, that certainly would be cost effective. But, would it really be good politics? Would it be good representation if I just sort of hunkered down here and I went home only once every four weeks or every three weeks?

The fact of the matter is that when you are in public life not only do you have to be here debating issues and taking part in the legislative process, but you also have to be back home. You have to be with your people, you have to mingle with your people, you have to be seen by your people, you have to be touched by your people. It is all part and parcel of the democratic process. It is very

important. It is not necessarily the most efficient thing in the world, but it is a vital part of democracy.

I know that when I look at this package of changes I look at it rather cynically. I really wonder whether we would have this package of changes before us today if the government were not low in the polls, if it were not sitting at 15 per cent, 16 per cent, or 17 per cent in the polls. My guess is that if government members were riding high these changes would not be made or these changes would not be proposed. I gather they believe that the only way to political salvation is to shut this place down, rob the opposition of a political platform, and go home to see if it can find their political salvation. I think they are wrong on two counts. They are wrong on this package of changes and there is no political salvation for them. They are beyond redemption.

Let us look at the amount of time we devoted in debate to the goods and services tax.

• (2010)

I pulled out this legislative document, *Status of Bills and Motions*, and what does it show? It shows that when it came to Bill-62, the GST legislation, debate at second reading was on January 29, 30, 31, February 5, 6 and 7, 1990.

It seems to me, according to my arithmetic, six days for the GST at second reading. Then there was a debate at report stage on April 3 and April 9; two more days. There was a time allocation debate because this government is very prone to time allocation and of course closure. On the time allocation debate two more days, April 4 and 5, were devoted to that. Then there was concurrence at report stage on April 9, 1990. Then there was debate at third reading on April 10.

I have added it up and it looks to me as if there were about 12 days of debate in the House devoted to the GST. It seems to me that this government is saying that is too much time.

The GST, when it comes to tax legislation, was a watershed for this country. We had never had this kind of a tax in the country before. In this House of Commons we spent about 12 days debating. Is that too much? I do not think so, yet this government is saying: "That is too much. That is inefficient. That is delay. We have to limit debate".

As one of the previous speakers pointed out, we now face the irony that there will be more ventilation of an issue in the unelected other place than there will be here. Does that make sense? For the life of me, I cannot understand that.

I also want to touch on this matter of limiting witnesses before legislative committees to what is going to be called technical witnesses. There is a presupposition in that. There is a presupposition that the principle of whatever legislation is being debated, whatever legislation is going before the legislative committee, has already been fully explored some place else, presumably before a standing committee, so why would we want to go through the principle again or to debate the principle again? "Let us just sort of tinker with some technical aspects of a bill and we will leave that to the legislative committee". Does that make sense?

What guarantee is there that when a bill goes before a legislative committee the principle has been fully explored? Is there any guarantee that this matter would have been dealt with, particularly its principles, at the standing committee or elsewhere? I do not think so. It is a sham, but this package of changes is just another example of the erosion of the erosion of our democratic rights.

I want to enter a little positive comment here. There is a provision in this package at a certain point—I think it is after six or eight hours of debate—to reduce speeches to 10 minutes. I do not think it is a bad idea at all. Maybe it is because it is because of my journalistic background or maybe it is because of my broadcasting background, but I would submit that in a majority of cases if you cannot say it in 10 minutes you probably will never say it.

I would think that after six or eight hours there is not going to be anything lost to the public if speeches are limited to 10 minutes.

I want to touch on a couple of omissions; omissions not commissions. First I want to touch on free votes because we do not have many free votes in this House. We do not have enough free votes in this House and this package of changes is not going to help the situation at all.

People out there for better or for worse—and I happen to think it is for better—want to give their public representative, their members of Parliament, a greater role and a bigger voice in this House. What they are really saying to the political parties and to all of us is that party discipline has gone too far, that party discipline is excessive. The pendulum has swung too far in the direction of party discipline. That pendulum has to be pulled back to give members of Parliament more individ-

ual expression, particularly when it comes to sensitive regional issues.

Constituents are not stupid. The voter is rather sophisticated. Voters know that parties must stand for something, that parties cannot go in every direction on every issue, that there is many times, perhaps a majority of times, when a party has to speak with one voice. I will just pick one example. When it comes to something as fundamental in a government program as a budget, the governing party in that particular case must speak with one voice for better or for worse.

There has got to be some elasticity in the system, some room for the parties to speak with one voice, but also room for members of Parliement to speak with their particular voices, voices that represent a particular point of view of a particular region of the country.

What is happening now is that members are being asked to be nothing more than puppets. I do not think that is what we are supposed to be. After all, this is supposed to be the highest court in the land.

I think there is something that members have to look at when we ask for the right for free votes. We are not asking to defeat the government on each and every occasion that we want a free vote. All we want to do is to say that we do not like a particular piece of legislation, take it back, redraft it, improve it, and then return it to the House. We are not asking to defeat the government, to kick the cabinet out, to cause an unnecessary election or anything like that. All we are asking is for us to focus on a particularly egregious, bad piece of legislation; to send it back to the shop and fix it up. I do not think that is too much to ask for. I really do not think that is too much to ask.

I want to touch on the proposal of three weeks on and one week off. A part of it is appealing. Certainly that one week off is simply off from this place. It is certainly not off from work. I can assure you, Madam Speaker, that if it goes through I will be spending the so-called week off in my riding and in my riding office. I am sure I will work just as hard during that week off as when I am here for the three weeks.

My concern, though, is that unless we do a very good educational job of explaining what it is all about—and politicians tend not to be good at that—people are going to look at it cynically. They are going to say to themselves and to us: "Oh, it is just a way of reducing your workload. It is a way of giving yourself another break, another holiday". That bothers me because we are in low enough esteem now.

• (2020)

I am also afraid that this approach of three weeks on and one off from the House will be abused politically, that House leaders, particularly on the government side, will do all kinds of stage managing of sensitive issues around this provision of three on and one off. I can just imagine the government thinking: "How could we perhaps introduce something that is unpopular and is going to cause a lot of flack for the next few days? Maybe we will introduce it just as we are shutting the House down for a week".

You see, there is even cynicism in me, as there is among voters. That worries me, it worries me a lot, because if we politicians are not thought of in a good light, nor will this institution itself. In other words, as we go so goes this institution.

There is also the matter of the televising of House committees. A good idea, Madam Speaker, a very good idea. I said this the other day and I want to repeat it here. If we come to the televising of House committees, I want no part as a parliamentarian, and I don't want to see any other parliamentarian either on this side of the House or that side of the House, deciding which committee is going to be covered with the television camera, be it a permanently installed television camera or one that is hand-held and moves around the committee room. That must be decided by the media and the media alone.

I do not tell the Toronto *Globe and Mail*, the *Toronto Star*, the *Winnipeg Free Press* or any other newspaper or any other publication in this country which committee meeting they are going to cover. They have to decide what is in the public interest. They have to decide what is news and what is not news on a particular day. That is not my decision, that is not the business of the government, and it is not the business of this side of the House.

I know that there is a predisposition in this House that would give some politician the power to decide which committee is going to be covered by television and which committee is not. If we go down that road, that will open

up an unbelievable can of worms. That is a Pandora's box, and we cannot allow ourselves to fall into that trap.

The media is far from perfect. The media makes mistakes every day. But I would rather, in this particular instance, have the media make those mistakes, for better or for worse. That is not our business.

In closing, Madam Speaker, I want to touch just briefly on legislative planning.

The way we conduct business in this House very often does not make any sense. It does not matter which party is in power, it seems to be the same old way. That old way is always keep the opposition guessing, keep the opposition off balance, and if we can give the opposition a matter of just hours' notice about the next piece of legislation to be debated, well, that is well and good for the government.

As I said at the beginning of this speech, the opposition has an important, vital role to play in this democratic process in this House.

Yes, we are adversaries, but there has to be a team approach. We need to have our resources and our time to think through legislation so that when it comes to debating, we know what we are dealing with.

I would like to see much more legislative planning in this House.

Mr. Chuck Cook (North Vancouver): Madam Speaker, I represent a riding at the far outpost of the empire, North Vancouver. There are many of us in this House who represent ridings as far away.

Let me describe how I get here. When I leave my home, it takes a good 40 minutes to get to the airport. If I want to catch a plane, I had better be there 40 minutes to an hour ahead of time. I am already into my day with an hour and a half to two hours. To fly from Vancouver to here is a minimum of a full five hours. Then, of course, there is the extra approximately 40 minutes to get downtown from the Ottawa airport and to the House of Commons.

When I come to Ottawa, I have already spent seven or eight hours just to get here. That procedure is reversed when I go back to my riding. I am not the worst off by any stretch of the imagination.

Those people from the interior of British Columbia have to oftentimes overnight in Vancouver and fly from one to three hours the next morning to get back to the voters who elected them. The same thing is true to a certain extent in the maritimes and Newfoundland.

For that reason, I am very highly in favour of three weeks sitting and one week off from here. The one week off from here is important for several reasons. What a lot of people in this part of the world forget is that the Rocky Mountains are much more than a geographic barrier. They are a mental barrier as well.

I find that the minute I start thinking what I read in *The Toronto Star*, *The Ottawa Citizen* or the Montreal *Gazette* is important, it is time I went back to British Columbia to find out what the real people are thinking and concerned about.

Believe it or not, the people in this country do not all agree with the Montreal–Toronto–Ottawa access. What these regions consider important is not necessarily important in the other regions of the country. In many cases, it has no bearing at all on that thinking.

Can I find that thinking out, sitting in Ottawa? There is no way. We have to go home and spend time with our people.

I have not been able to accept a speaking engagement on a Tuesday or Wednesday night in years. The reason, of course, is that costs me practically a week here. No matter how I slice it, it is a day to get here.

If I take an early morning plane, then I can make it here by five o'clock or 5.30 in the afternoon when the business day is over. If I take an afternoon plane, I am here very late at night. If I take the "Red Eye" out of Vancouver at eleven o'clock or twelve o'clock at night, I may get to Ottawa by nine o'clock the next morning. Believe me, my mind is still exhausted over Saskatchewan. I may be here physically, but not in the best mental shape.

No matter how it is sliced, if we come from the far outpost of empire, it is a difficult thing coming here, doing our work and staying in touch with our constituents. That is why three weeks here and one week off will make a tremendous difference.

There are also the time changes involved. There are three hours difference between here and the west coast. I would recite a bit of an antidote.

When the Pope was in North America, his doctor made the statement that for every time zone change of an hour the Pope went through, generally speaking it took the average person at least two days for their biological clock to adjust to that time change.

When I read that, I started thinking about my travel schedule over the previous six months and I came to the conclusion that if I stopped flying immediately, by 1995 my biological clock would be back in the proper rhythm. Unfortunately, it does not happen that way. It is a very difficult thing for members from a long distance away. I am not the only one. If you have a tight little Winnipeg riding, that is fine. You can take about a two hour flight and you are home in your riding. If you are from Montreal, one hour. No wonder you have no sense or understanding of what it means for those members who are a long distance away.

• (2030)

I have heard a good many insensitive speeches in the last three days on this subject. Most of them demonstrated a total lack of understanding of what a good many members go through in terms of doing their job here, representing their people, as I said, at the far outpost of the empire.

I heard some rather cynical speeches, I thought, from some NDP members. They have been doing the three and one for over a year now. Just check them any day and you will find out that about one third of them are away visiting their ridings for that week. To hear somebody be opposed to this one week in four off is simply not fair.

I can think of a great many very terrible movies I have watched at midnight in the city of Ottawa, having got off a plane, got home and it is really only nine o'clock at night west coast time. I wish they had better movies in Ottawa, really, particularly late night ones.

In any event, that is part of the story. The real part of it is the fact that that week off is extremely important to all members if they only knew it. Get out in your ridings, meet your people, be available for speeches, breakfasts or whatever. What happens, of course, is your constituents will very rapidly get to know when you are in town. They do this, I might add, in Australia. The Australian members have found that after a week at home they come back to Canberra to rest up because everybody in the riding knows you are there, knows you are going to be home for the week, so there are breakfasts, luncheons, dinners. They plan their events around when their member is definitely going to be in the riding. We cannot do that now, but with the three weeks on and the one week off, we will be able to do it. It will be better for all of us, particularly those who come a long way.

Oftentimes, I feel sorry for myself on the plane until I think of some of my colleagues. There are places in Saskatchewan you cannot get to from here, and they have members. Some of the members from Manitoba fly into Winnipeg and then get into an automobile and drive for two or three hours to get home. Try and do that on a Friday night, spend Saturday and part of Sunday at home and then drive three hours back to the Winnipeg airport and try to get to Ottawa.

That one week off in four, I think, is necessary for the health of the country, for the health of the members and also to give the public a real chance to get at their member.

I would dispute what the previous member said about the government attempting to bring in nasty little bits of legislation two days before the week off. I do not think it is going to happen. If it does, it means every member goes back to their riding and will get the fallout from that legislation in their face when they are there and have to explain it. So that does not matter. But a week in four to spend in your riding is particularly important to anyone who has a ridiculous travel schedule to get between Ottawa and their riding.

The only other point I want to make in my particular remarks on the bill is that I am highly in favour of the new committee system for these reasons. I have chaired enough committees here with enough members over the years. One the greatest faults of the whole thing is that so often, in order to make a quorum or to carry on your committee business, you get a stranger who is put on that committee. He does not know the background of the committee. He does not know what has been discussed and, invariably the floaters, as I would call them, are the ones who want to take up most of the time uselessly talking about things they know nothing about. With the new committee system you will have groupings of members. If you are interested in the finance envelope and all

those committees, you will become knowledgeable in each one of those areas and will be of use to a number of committees within that particular envelope. The same will happen with the social services committees.

In that sense I am highly in favour of it because it means more knowledgeable members of Parliament dealing with issues with which they are concerned.

Frankly, there are some other things on which I could agree with the opposition. I find it offensive that the House leaders of all parties have reserved so much power and responsibility to themselves. I do not agree with that. It should be spread out to committee chairman and private members to a much larger extent. First of all, I do not think it is necessary and I do not think it is healthy.

However, I would do almost anything to get that week in four home in my riding, to have an opportunity to take speaking dates when everyone knows you would be there and when there would be a full week, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Monday to conduct business in the riding which many members from way out of town now have difficulty in doing.

For those reasons I am going to be voting for these rule changes and with heartfelt thanks for the changes that are being made. They are all very worth while. For those members with their tight little ridings close to Ottawa, fie on you. Those of us from the far outposts of empire deserve that week off.

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Madam Speaker, I am gratified to be given the opportunity to say a few words in terms of the rule changes. I would like to preface my remarks by simply having a complimentary word for our House leader, the member of Parliament for Cape Breton—East Richmond who put forward in response to the government House leader in a very brilliant and articulate way this past Monday, in a speech close to an hour and a half to two hours, trying on our behalf and for the benefit of Canadians to dissect a number of the rule changes that are being proposed. I know that all of the members of our caucus are very appreciative of his efforts and those members of our caucus who assist the House leader such as the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell and the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

I would basically like to structure my words in the time allotted to me in three ways. First, to touch very briefly on the full question of closure which I find ironic given the context of the debate this evening. Second, the timing of the proposed rule changes themselves. Third, obviously a few comments on the actual changes that are being contemplated.

On the first aspect I mention that I found it very ironic for closure to be ushered in during a debate about rule changes, rule changes that purport to give greater relevance, greater significance to both this Chamber and to individual members of Parliament. At the same time we have a government that has used closure a record number of times, but becoming much more cold about the whole situation as it introduces closure on the very time that members of Parliament are debating how we can make this place and members in this place function better on behalf of the country and on behalf of Canadians.

I believe if the Chamber is to be made more accountable, if members of Parliament are to be given greater latitude, greater authority and greater flexibility with which to discharge their responsibilities, it would seem to me that their constituents would win if we did not always have the club that has been known in parliamentary language as "parliamentary closure". This is a very fancy way of abruptly closing and choking debate when debate can foster new ideas in new directions. So I find it very ironic that, while we are trying to improve the lot of the House of Commons, closure is being allocated on the other end.

• (2040)

The second aspect—and I say this in a non-partisan way, as a member of this place—is that I find the timing of this debate to be circumspect, to say the least. If I was a member of the Canadian community looking on, by my parliamentary channel, I would see a House of Commons seized by parliamentary rule changes and the debate herein.

I find the timing ill-advised because the country is currently wrapped in what can best be described as a crisis on two tracks, one being the economic track and the other being national unity. We know the situation with respect to the economy, wherever Canadians live.

We know that close to 1.5 million people are unemployed; we know plants have been closing; we know de Havilland is being sold, and we know there is double-digit unemployment in my own city of Toronto, which happens to be the heartland of Ontario and the capital of the manufacturing industrial heartland of Canada.

Canadians are in trouble and Canadians are hurting; small businesses are either downsizing, going bankrupt, or going south of the border; Canadians are looking to this government and to this Parliament to inspire a nation, to try to stimulate an economy, and to collectively try to pull ourselves out of the economic pit we find ourselves in.

Instead, we are engaged in what some Canadians are suggesting is a navel-gazing exercise. As important as it is to be reforming this place with a view of hopefully improving it, at the time, be it on the economic front and on a national unity front, when we have one province contemplating whether it wishes to leave the Canadian family, other parts of the country are wishing-in to the Constitution, and Canadians of neither English nor French background want to be encompassed by the debate, we are contemplating rule changes.

The changes are very distant from the causes that are gripping Canadians today and are very far removed from the malaise in which Canadians find themselves. I am sure the changes will certainly fuel the cynicism in which Canadians all too often hold this place and the members that occupy it.

To make matters worse, not only are we debating proposed rule changes at a time when the country is going through one of its toughest times since Confederation, but as soon as we are finished the debate on rule changes, rather than having the expectation of then getting on with the business of Canada, this House is going to adjourn, as proposed by this government, which will close the lights in this Parliament.

On the one hand, Canadians see a Parliament engaged in itself, rather than engaged in the business of removing Canada from this economic and constitutional malaise. Then, of course, after we have finished the business of rule debates and rule changes, we will close Parliament on the excuse that the government has to get ready for the Throne Speech, which will not be delivered until the 13th, 14th, or 15th of May.

So it is no wonder that Canadians would view this debate as being very much ill advised in terms of timing. I would share that commitment. As much as I have a commitment to improving this place, I have to question whether the timing of this particular debate could not have waited until the issues of the nation were better resolved and whether our forces and energies as members of Parliament would then have been better focused on addressing the issues that are involving Canadians from one coast to the other coast to the other coast.

The third issue on which I would like to spend a few minutes relates to the actual changes and can be divided into three areas. Firstly, the new parliamentary timetable that is being advocated; secondly, the revised committee structure; and, thirdly, the technical orientation.

I think the latter two are of somewhat more of a technical orientation and I have the biggest concern, as an individual member of Parliament, with respect to the new timetable. That new timetable would suggest that the annual sittings of the House would be reduced from 175 sitting days to 135. Notwithstanding the fact that some of those sitting days will then be increased by an hour or so to make up for some of that loss, there is still a House of Commons sitting for less hours overall, over the long-term.

We can say quite rightly and quite legitimately that we need to spend time in our ridings and that we need to be with our constituents and responding to them. I would agree with that and I think there needs to be the time for the Members of Parliament to balance the two communities: the one in Ottawa where this Parliament is our factory and in the riding, which also happens to be a workplace of utmost significance.

I believe that when this House is closed we remove a forum that has been vital for Canadians. We recall the summer that just went by during which we had the situation of Oka and during which the situation in the Gulf intensified, and this House of Commons was closed. There was no apparatus for Canadians to look into these issues, beyond the press releases that were issued by the government and the Prime Minister of the day.

I recall during that summer when Canadians were asking why Parliament was not open for business then, of all occasions, when it had been brought back a few summers ago on such flimsy excuses as a number of people coming in on the east coast, as one illustration, or as dealing with the Correctional Service. However, when there was a true and real emergency during a crisis, this Parliament was not open.

Therefore, I would lean towards having this place be in operation more often, be more alive, and be in closer concert on the television set in the living rooms of Canadians than having this place closed, thereby removing an outlet that is the forum and the centrepiece for parliamentary democracy in this country; a democracy that people in other countries are dying and starving for.

The other aspect of the parliamentary timetable is that of the 25 allotted supply days would be removed from the opposition. That is a fancy way of saying that there would be less days when the opposition dictates the agenda of the parliamentary day.

That reduction erodes the accountability portion of an opposition. We on this side are not arguing in a purely opposition mode because we know that one day very soon we will be on the other side of the Speaker, in the government benches, and the members on that side will have their roles reversed. So we are trying to speak to the traditions of an opposition in a democracy and the democracy of any country is only as strong as the rights accorded to its opposition. When the rights of the opposition are eroded so is the definition and power of the word democracy.

Therefore, why have fewer opposition days in which the opposition can dictate the agenda for a change.

I have been in the House for six years. I have lost every single vote in the House of Commons. I accept that. The government has a parliamentary majority and I accept that.

But it is not only important who wins the votes, but who wins the debate, has the force of debate, has the force of right on one side, has the ideas, has the clarity, and has the convictions. Therefore, votes are one thing, but debates are a very different subject. Therefore, I oppose quite strenuously the attempt to remove the ability for of opposition on behalf of Canadians to set the parliamentary agenda on any day against a parliamentary government—in this case, a majority government—that has all the power, all the clout, and all the tools at its disposition.

I would also suggest that two out of the eight Throne Speech debate days be removed. Now the government says that the day of the Throne Speech is one of the most important days in any parliamentary calendar. It provides political inspiration to the government and the party and is intended to provide political inspiration and leadership to a country. The Throne Speech supposedly ushers in "a new agenda". Therefore, is it not logical that, if the government attaches such importance to an undertaking in a Throne Speech, this House, this chamber and its opposition should be accorded the fullest possible time in which to try to explore important undertaking on behalf of Canadians?

• (2050)

It seems illogical, on the one hand, for a government to adjourn for a month to prepare a Throne Speech and to then suggest in its proposed rule changes that there ought to be less debate surrounding one of the most important initiatives a government can take in the parliamentary agenda.

The proposal also goes on to say that two out of the six budget days ought to be removed. Once again, the introduction of a budget is another centrepiece of any government program and of this chamber, of media, and for a country, in terms of the fiscal and monetary policies that will be dictating its course, for not only months but years to come.

Therefore, if a budget is that crucial to the livelihood of a country and its people, why not provide this chamber and the opposition of the day, whoever is in that unfortunate position, the opportunity to try to account again for the parliamentary program, in a budgetary sense, of that government.

It seems to me that we have a contradiction when a government flags the important days of a budget and a parliamentary Throne Speech, then at the same time tries to advocate greater relevance for this place by removing the debate surrounding these important initiatives.

The proposal also talks about limiting a Member of Parliament's speech and cutting it in half after a number of hours. I suppose there are two schools of thought. One is to try to move the debate on. On the other hand, if Members of Parliament are to occupy a more relevant role in this chamber and are to try to be somebodies in

this chamber, then cutting one's time in half is not going to do it.

If a Member of Parliament wishes to eloquently discuss an issue affecting one's riding, one's country, or one's Parliament, then 10 minutes— although it is true, Madam Speaker, that if you cannot say something in 10 minutes it is not worth saying— is not not enough time to put some points in this country as a national federal politician because some statements cannot be put eloquently in 10 minutes or less.

How do you speak, Madam Speaker, about a Meech Lake constitutional package, for instance, in less than 10 minutes? How do you speak about a Persian Gulf crisis in less than 10 minutes? How do you describe how one feels when one looks at the Kurds, in less than 10 minutes? Sure, we can discuss some aspect for five minutes and that is plenty of time. But on many other issues, ten minutes does not do justice to the substance of the day. And who is to decide which issue deserves five minutes and which deserves unlimited discussion in this beautiful chamber we ought to protect, in every sense of the word?

Therefore, on some of those changes, I am opposed, because, if you look at this chamber, it is a magnificent chamber. I remember the very first time I came here as a visitor, in early 1980. Seeing the chamber was very different from viewing it from a distance or reading about it in the newspaper. It reminded me of the first time I went to Maple Leaf Gardens. You can watch a hockey game, as many Canadians are doing this evening, and you can say it is a great game. Then you go into Maple Leaf Gardens and there is an *ambiance*, there are lights, and there are pictures on the wall. It is history in action and it gives you a different sense.

That was the same feeling I had when I came up and sat in the visitor's gallery and looked at the lights, the wood carvings, and the history that embodies this place. It is truly a remarkable place, that is the envy of the world, that we sometimes take for granted, that sometimes does not work, in which we sometimes do not listen to each other on enough occasions, that sometimes becomes too partisan, yes, but that has also lost a bit of relevance over the last few years, that has sensed a loss of power in the last few years, and that is concentrated more in the executive of a government.

If we are to give a sense of better purpose to this magnificent place and if we are to give a greater sense of purpose to individual Members of Parliament, who have been elected by a large number of Canadians, who have their franchise to make important decisions on their behalf, then we cannot contemplate some of the changes being proposed to us in these rule changes we are debating.

If we want Parliament to be more responsive, if we want it to be more relevant, and if we want to give the opposition a chance to hold the power and the government in check, then we have to approach it in a very different sense from that by which this government is approaching it. Unfortunately, I get the sense that this is a government that does not have the intention of spending too much time in this place.

But that view is short lived. This government has come and this government will go. This opposition will also change. You and I will one day hopefully be looking on a very different parliament and we have to look at a parliament in its long-term context. This Parliament does not belong to this government, this opposition, or this Speaker. We are simply custodians for a four- to five-year period. What we are doing this week is possibly changing the way this place operates for years to come.

With that sense in mind, we ought to move in the right direction and with dignity. We ought to restore some of the respect and dignity of this place and of the members who occupy it, which have so regrettably been lost and eroded in the last number of years.

Mr. Murray W. Dorin (Edmonton Northwest): Madam Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity to participate in this debate.

I am hoping this evening to talk about a couple of points that are not necessarily contained in this package but might be, because when we examine the rules and rule changes we can consider what changes we are making, but doing so also gives us an opportunity to talk about some changes that we might wish to make in the future.

Some members have talked about some of these rule changes, both positively and negatively. Most have dwelt on the amount of time Parliament may or may not be sitting, either more or less, or in a different way. Frankly, I do not really believe that aspect is particularly relevant. I do not mean that as a negative comment toward the people who have spoken, but it seems to me that the changes being proposed here are not particularly revolu-

tionary and will not change the nature of how we operate in any substantial way. That is why I would like to suggest a couple of changes a little further along that might change things substantially.

Part of the problem, I believe, is that there is a substantial gap between what the public believes we do here and what goes on. One of those gaps, if you like, has been brought closer to the forefront in recent times under the Spicer commission and other forums in which the public has increasingly been saying that they believe there should be more free votes in Parliament, less ties to party lines, and less control by the party or the leaders of parties.

That is probably an interesting point and a good one, but, in part, it reflects the fact that most Canadians do not understand exactly what Parliament does and what kinds of matters it deals with. That is not to say anything negative about them, because frankly, until I got here, neither did I. But the issue is not free votes. In my opinion, virtually every vote we have had in the time I have been here has been free. I know that the votes usually break down along party lines, but I think we have to explore how that happens.

When I examine the last two years of Parliament, in this session, I see that we have introduced approximately 100 bills. I looked through those bills and determined that of those bills, only 14 had what I would call substantive votes.

• (2100)

I want to explain that a bit. We have a lot of votes around this place which involve such things as voting when to adjourn or not to adjourn, whether someone can speak or not speak, whether or not to move to Orders of the Day. If we examine the votes which occur on substantive issues, and even though in some cases there may be several votes involving the same bill or issue, we call that one vote, because obviously it is essentially consistent. We may have moved to Orders of the Day and done a number of other things to trigger the vote, so several votes may be involved. But we can narrow it down to how many issues Parliament divides on which are substantive. Of the 100 bills, about 85 per cent of them passed through this House on division or on a voice vote. In other words, no recorded vote was demanded. It was supported by the House.

Only about a dozen bills, in actual fact, required a formal division by the House. In some cases more than one division is taken, but as I say we will look at them one issue at a time.

Of those 12 or 14 bills, four or five were divisions triggered by something else. On the Broadcasting Act, Bill C–40, there was substantial support in the House but because cutbacks had been announced to the CBC the day before, there was a protest vote, so to speak, which triggered the formal vote.

On the borrowing authority, by and large no one in this House plans to vote down the borrowing authority. But sometimes it can be used to send a message to the government or to extract other things.

If we really narrow it down to this session of Parliament, of the 100 bills, in my opinion, we have had only four or five substantive votes. One, everybody would realize was on the GST, and we may have voted several times involving that issue but really there was only one issue involved. There was another vote involving some income tax amendments, including what we call colloquially the clawback. There was Bill C–21, amendments to the unemployment insurance, and there was the privatization of Petro–Canada and perhaps one or two others.

What I am saying is that on virtually every issue on which there was a substantive vote, where people voted because they were voting in terms of the issue, the vote did break down on party lines. That is relatively natural, because if we are talking about privatizing Petro–Canada, one can presume that most members of the Conservative Party would be in favour of that, most members of the New Democratic Party would not, and so it is only natural that it would break down along party lines.

If every vote was formally and officially a free vote, the question is would there be any difference. I suggest that, no, there would not. The reason is that for a whole bunch of issues out there which the public is concerned about, no vote is ever held—or if it is, no vote is ever held that would have any effect on the issue.

Consider three or four of the controversial issues over the last five or six years that I have been involved in while I have been here in Parliament. For example, consider the CF–18 contract, when Petro–Canada purchased Gulf or the issue of Sikhs and turbans and whether or not RCMP members would be allowed to wear turbans. None of those things were decided by a vote of Parliament, they were all decided by executive

decision, by decisions of cabinet ministers involved or by the cabinet as a whole. None of those issues which the public was interested in and which were important to them were decided by a vote.

I am suggesting that it is not a matter of free votes or not free votes, it is the matter of what comes to a vote in this House. That is determined, by and large, by the executive, by the government, the cabinet. In actual fact very few votes are held on substantive issues that are not going to break down on party lines or are not going to pass through the House without a declared vote.

This whole issue of allowing more free votes of freeing members from party lines to support their constituents, is a bit of a red herring.

The question becomes, what can we do about it? One of the things we can do is try to educate the public as to how this place works, but after about 125 years that this Parliament has been in existence I am not sure that anything is going to really change in the future.

One of the other things we might do is allow more issues to be voted on. This could be done by allowing individual items coming from members of Parliament to be voted on.

We have had various changes in Private Members' Business since I have been here. However, because of the system we now have, none of these changes are likely to bring substantive issues to the table. Among other things, first of all, there is the lottery system, which means our name has to be drawn to have our item even selected. Then, there is another system that decides whether that item is going to come to a vote.

I would like to suggest that one of the things we might do is consider allowing bills to be introduced at committee stage.

One of the complaints that has been made is that there are some restrictions in terms of allocated times for certain stages of the bills. I suggest that we might want to consider abolishing second reading altogether. Perhaps we could restrict it to an introduction and response on the bill by each party. Automatically the bill could be sent to committee to be studied.

At that time, we could gather the information and examine it carefully. When it comes back to the House, we could have the substantive debate. Part of the problem now is that in making a commitment or virtually deciding in advance of any study how people are going to line up on a particular bill or issue, we pre-determine how they are going to react when we get to committee. In my view, it prejudices the kind of debate or examination that might take place. We could avoid that by sending bills to committee automatically after only minimal discussion.

I have been involved in the changes made in the committee system. Some of them have been good. I have been on one of the committees which has worked as well as any of the committees of the House; that is, the finance committee. The reason it has worked well is that members have chosen to take an independent view from the government from time to time. That has been supported by all members, including the opposition members.

What has not happened in our committee or in other committees is that opposition members have not taken independent views from their party's position. As a result of that, the system has not been very balanced. That is not an argument against the parties or the individuals, it is because they have no real vested interest in doing so.

One of the reasons for that is because the position of their party has already been made known at the second reading vote. It seems to me that if we would introduce bills and have them referred to committee, they could be considered in a serious way in committee. Then they could be sent to the House.

In making that examination, we would not necessarily have the committed points of view and partisanship that goes along with it. I recognize that I have not thought out all the ramifications and how this might work, but I do acknowledge that I have been looking essentially at the United States system where by and large bills are introduced at committee stage. Once bills pass that hurdle, they then get considered by the House as a whole. It seems to me that if we were to allow both private members and the government to introduce bills, then they would have to compete for the attention and support of committee members. Those members would

then decide those things that needed to be moved further along.

In a parliamentary system, a government—the cabinet and the executive—will have to move those things and decide support. That would have to be preserved. It is preserved right now. The House of Commons and the cabinet through the House can invoke closure, if you like, on a bill at committee stage and have it brought back to the House.

They have the ability even in our current system to set the priorities. What I would like to suggest is that rather than having a system of Private Members' Business where first the bills have to be drawn and then decided by a committee of Parliament which of them have priority and which get voted, in advance of that stage, bills would have to come through the committee involved. If I decided that I had a bill I wanted to present that involved labour, for example, I would have to convince the House of Commons committee on labour, employment and immigration, I believe it is called now—we change the names around here so often I have trouble keeping track—that my bill was worthy of support. In terms of thc priority of that committee and the agenda and the other things it had to do, my bill would have to compete for their attention. It would consider my bill. It might examine it; hear witnesses and decide that it could move forward. Only after that would it then compete for House of Commons time, either in a separately allocated period of time within the private members' period that we now have, or perhaps in conjunction with other bills and other time in what we currently call Government Orders.

• (2110)

I think this would be helpful because it would allow committees to consider matters right from the very beginning and would allow committees to decide some of their own priorities, leaving the government the ability to bring forward those items that it decided was a priority.

The other thing it would allow is items to come before committees and, perhaps, the House to be voted on by people who are really interested in it. As I tried to point out in my earlier remarks, the issue is not free votes. If every vote was officially and formally a free vote, in the past two years, chances are virtually no votes would have been different. Mine would not have been. I can think of one bill in six years as a member of Parliament that I might have opposed and voted differently from my party and the leadership.

As I have said, the reason for that is these items never get presented. If a bill is introduced by a minister and warning signals are picked up by the House leader, because that is the House leader's job, to know that this particular bill might not garner the support of virtually all members of the government, that bill simply sits on the Order Paper.

The public, of course, never sees government members voting against government bills. That is because the government does not bring a bill to be voted if there might be substantial opposition to it or danger of losing it. It then becomes the responsibility of the minister responsible for the bill to work out whatever problems there are so that at least all the government members, if not the opposition members, are satisfied.

I do not think that the number of days and hours that we sit here, more or less, is important. By changing those and changing how we allocate them to the calendar might make it more convenient for members, including me, and I am all for that. I do not think it is going to make a substantial change to the way this House does business or to the way the public perceives us. What will make a change is if we decide to have issues aired and perhaps voted that the public thinks are important.

As I said earlier, I do not think that most debates really contribute all that much to whether a bill is advanced or not. Again, in my six years as a member of Parliament, I can probably count on one hand the number of debates that were true debates and actually affected the thinking of members. The opposition parties want to keep the debate going and the government wants to respond in kind, so we present speeches, not for making arguments or changing people's minds, but to fill up the available time. We all do that and we are all guilty, including myself.

We would be far better off spending less time on time filling and more time on substantive debate on issues that people are truly interested in. In fact, that might be part of overcoming what I call the gap between the current attitude of the public that Parliament does not respond to the things they are interested in. They also believe that we are always voting for and following either our parties or our leadership or what we are told by the Prime Minister or the leader or whoever it happens to be. It is not how much time we spend in debate, or even

how we vote at the moment. The issue is what gets on the agenda.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Debate, the hon. member for Okanagan—Shuswap is next, then it will be the hon. member for Portage—Interlake, and then it will be the hon. member for Lambton—Middlesex.

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have the opportunity to speak on the proposed changes to the Standing Orders. I think that these changes are really very severe. Some have called them Draconian distortions of the parliamentary and democratic process here in the Chamber.

As has been presented many times this evening, the changes that have been presented—and there are many—by the government through the House leader are changes that are essentially going to muzzle Parliament. If the changes are brought to fruition, Parliament will essentially cease to be accountable to the Canadian people, at least as much as it is at this point. There is some concern across Canada that we are already not accountable enough.

I can see that these changes would not be the reformation of Parliament but, in fact, the deformation of Parliament. The Prime Minister's assertion that the aim of these proposed changes will be to allow the members to be more accountable and more available to their ridings really is the greatest hypocrisy. While members may, with these changes, be able to spend more time in their ridings, I think it will be a moot point since the government will not be as accountable to the concerns brought up by the people in the ridings when they talk with their member of Parliament. I will get into that in just a little while.

If the aim of the government is really to increase accountability and the democratic process, I suggest we are going about it in the wrong way. What it is going to do is increase the distrust and the anger that is already out across Canada, the anger that Canadians feel in regard to their lack of access to Canada's Parliament. If these changes are brought to bear, which undoubtedly they will because we are speaking on closure debate tonight, this government and particularly this House leader is going to become known as the Grinch who stole democracy.

The first argument in support of my concern is that the changes that the government is proposing reduces the actual sitting time of this House by some 40 days, or if we want to do it on a percentage basis, by some 25 per cent. The committees, and this has been discussed many times tonight, as they are currently structured, will certainly not meet as often. I want to point out that today was the first day in literally months when the standing committee on communications of which I am a member met, even though there have been many very important and critical issues that have happened in the whole area of communications and broadcasting. Take, for example, the situation with the CBC. Canadians right across this country have rallied against the CBC cuts and have spoken strongly about their concerns. They faced the shock of these cuts. Yet this committee has failed to meet on these very important changes that are being proposed to the CBC. If these changes are brought forward through the changes in the House Standing Orders, these committees will have even less opportunity to meet.

• (2120)

Under the old rules, committees meet infrequently enough. Some of them are much more active than others. Some of them are essentially completely inactive. The argument I am trying to make is that under these proposed new changes, these committees would meet even less often and would also be restricted in who could actually address the committee. The government is restricting it to what it calls those witnesses that it wants to call forward would be witnesses who would have some technical expertise.

No longer would it seem that community advocacy groups or individuals who are concerned about proposed legislative changes would have access to the standing committees as they do now. Those committees would be restricted to calling forth witnesses who would be of witnesses of technical expertise.

I think that is a very serious restriction on the public's right to voice their concerns, their opinions on the legislation that is before us, on the legislation that is being imposed by the government. Lord knows that with the technological changes facing our society, with the vast amount of legislation that is before the House, legislation which in some cases is extremely technical,

and the changes very profound indeed, one has to rely upon those witnesses, both expert and lay person, who want to come forth to the committee to give their concerns, to raise their objections to the changes. I submit that with the restrictions on the committee structure, this is not going to be able to take place.

I want to reflect back to when I served for a couple of years as the member of the legislative assembly for the North Okanagan back in 1984 to 1986. During the two years that I was provincial MLA, with the government of the day under Premier Bill Bennett, the committee structure there did not work at all. I can recall being very excited about being nominated to the select standing committee on environmental issues and was very excited with the opportunities that that presented. I was literally shocked to find that the committee met only once over the two years I was there and that was to basically select a chairperson and a secretary and subsequent to that did not meet at all. As a result, there was virtually no opportunity to have a decent review of the legislation before us.

That was a very difficult situation. I suggest there was a lot of poor legislation that came through during those years simply because the public did not have access to a procedure of appeal through the committee structure to allow them to present their concerns about some of the legislation that was coming through.

I want to say that I think we are in danger through the changes that are being presented in these changes to the Standing Orders of approaching that kind of very unacceptable situation here in our federal institution.

Another argument I want to present is that I think that the changes are being proposed are an attempt by this government to seal the lips of the opposition. There is going to be a reduction in the number of opposition days, the number of days that opposition parties have to propose their topic for the agenda of the day, for their motion to be debated.

There is going to be a reduction in those days where the opposition has its own day in court, so to speak. There is going to be a reduction in the number of days of debate on the throne speech and on the budget.

The end result is really very convenient, if you look at it from the government side, I guess, a very convenient muzzling of the opposition voice in terms of the democratic process. Opposition and government members may have more time to go to their ridings, find out what their constituents think and how they are feeling. We are actually reducing the ability of the forum where those views could be aired. We are actually reducing the effectiveness of the parliamentary forum with the changes that are proposed.

I have heard a lot of comments made previously by one of the government members who resides in British Columbia about how difficult it is to get back and forth to the west coast. I certainly agree with him, as a member also from British Columbia. I am from the interior of British Columbia. My riding is in the central southern part of the province, the Okanagan—Shuswap.

It is indeed a lengthy trip back and forth between the Kelowna airport, either through Vancouver and Calgary, and then on through Toronto, or directly to Ottawa. I figured it out that on an average trip, depending on the connections, it takes B.C. members, particularly if they are having to make the jog up into the interior of the province, between nine and eleven hours to get doorstep to doorstep. There is no question that with the length of travel, some of us travel more often in a month than some of the airline pilots log. There is no hiding the fact that it is difficult indeed for most members, particularly the members from the western provinces.

As well, you are dealing with three-hour time zone changes which are pretty disruptive to the old biological time clock. I would be the first to admit that. But even with the difficulties that are imposed on the western-most representatives in this federal Parliament, I would still submit that it is a mistake for these changes to come through which reduce the parliamentary voice of opposition members in this institution through the reduction of the hours, only to give us more time back in our ridings.

I try to split my time up each month and take a week out, if I can, when I do not have duty days here in Parliament, and spend that week—and I must submit, probably most weekends also—back in the riding. There is no question, there is a lot of travel.

I think if you want to be an effective representative, despite whether your riding might be an hour away in Montreal, or nine or eleven hours away up in B.C. or the Yukon, if you do want to be an effective representative of your constituency, you can do that under the current parliamentary structure. You can continue to be effective representatives and yet still have the kind of parliamentary forum that we need in order to have an effective debate of the issues, and in order to have an effective opposition.

If you do not have an effective opposition, you have the next thing to dictatorship in this country. I think it is extremely important that the opposition voice not be muzzled by the kinds of changes that are being proposed in these changes to the parliamentary rules.

The other argument I want to submit is with respect to the reduction of speaking time. It is proposed to reduce speaking time down from 20 minutes to 10 minutes with respect to members speaking on legislation before the House.

I go back to the point I made before. Often we are dealing with legislation in this House that is extremely difficult, extremely complex, very technical. I submit that Bill C–40, the Broadcast Act, when it came through had a lot of intricate detail in that legislation. There is simply no way that a person can stand up and in 10 minutes give a detailed and thoughtful explanation as to why he or she may support or oppose the legislation, to give the details of that information and fully explain the reasons for either supporting or opposing the legislation. Ten minutes is simply not enough. I often think 20 minutes is not enough. We need more time to speak. But the rules that are being proposed take us to a reduced time allocation, and I think that is a serious mistake.

• (2130)

Last, the fifth point, and I think probably the most insidious changes that these changes to the rules suggest, is the government's ability to override unanimous consent. Through this, the government is trying to override a very fundamental principle of Parliament that essentially one person can make a difference.

I want to explain myself on that. I do not think one person should be able to take the decision away from the majority. That is not what I am suggesting. Regardless of whether it is a strong majority government or a minority government, one person, as a public representative, a federal representative in this Parliament, should be able to force the government to play by the rules, play by the book and use the democratic process.

The greatest irony is that by using closure, this government will in fact be able to impose those kinds of changes which muzzle the voice of the opposition, closure that has been used during the last three years no fewer than 13 times. It does not sound like a lot, 13, but when you look at it in terms of the historical precedence in Parliament, over the last two or three years the use of closure 13 times is more than half of all the times that closure was used in the House during the previous 75 years of government. In the last three years, we have used closure far more than during those previous times.

I think the people across the country are beginning to look upon the Canadian political system with a certain amount of disdain. I do not think that these changes are in the best interest of Canadians. They are certainly going to harden that feeling against Canada's parliamentary system.

When we go back and look at the history of this last Parliament, people have seen the government using closure on the free trade debate and the imposition of free trade despite the fact the country did not want it. Closure was used on the GST debate. Now, in addition to using that process of closure, these rule changes essentially allow the government to cloak its actions in secrecy; 40 fewer Question Periods, fewer opposition days, and the many other changes that are being mentioned.

I think the changes, in short, are going to turn this parliamentary system into kind of a legislative sausage factory, if you like, a kind of a legislative assembly line where really there are no inspections, no taste tests and there is no ability of the opposition to slow down or to stop dead in its tracks poor legislation or to provide the opportunity in order to make that legislation, if it is supported, better.

In concluding, forcing these kinds of changes that are proposed and proclaiming that it is so, that all members of Parliament can participate more in their riding activities, I think is ludicrous and is really hiding the fact. The fact of the matter is that the changes are being brought to bear because this government does not want to take the kind of heat that it has been taking and, quite frankly, it should be taking in bringing through the

Draconian legislative measures that it has brought through in the last three years.

Mr. Felix Holtmann (Portage—Interlake): Mr. Speaker, I would like to just enter the debate in a very brief way because I think everyone should have an opportunity to participate in what I consider to be a very historical debate in this House of Commons.

I submit that the whole world is in a change. We see the world changing, not only going from one-party systems in the East Bloc but hopefully to a multi-party system where there is a democracy as the Canadian people have known it for some 125 years. They would like to have that opportunity.

Let me tell you, I am not going to speak for more than five minutes because I do not need 20 minutes to say what I think is important in terms of how this place operates. I have a lot of respect for the last speaker, the hon. member for Okanagan—Shuswap. His party would like to form the government next time. If it does form the government the next time, he probably would be happy as can be with such a move as has taken place in this House.

I submit that the change this government is asking for, although I respect that it is not perfect, I think it is going to take us out of the 18th century. I follow the U.S. congressional and senatorial system on television through C-Span, through the communication devices today. With all respect to the systems that we have in place here and in England, I do not see that adversarial activity that I see in this House of Commons. There seems to be a lot of respect for each representative, a great deal more respect than we show each other in this House.

I ask myself why are they not using every kind of motion and different methods of changing legislation as we do rather than just good honest debate. That is what we should be doing. Colleagues across the way, you and I should be debating. We should not take the time for petitions. In my view, you should send the petitions up to the desk—you don't have to take time to announce them—and stand in your place and debate the legislation that is put forward.

Obviously, your position will be different. But I do not believe that we have to get at each other's ideas in the adversarial way such as I have experienced in the last six years.

We do not have to talk for 20 minutes, with all due respect, to put a point across. The committees should sit and debate positions in a manner that is not adversarial. I have not experienced that. I wonder why.

Even in this Chamber I would like to see changes. I would like to see changes to your dress, Sir. Put an ordinary suit on, like the Speaker in the U.S. Congress. That is not going to show any less respect for our institution. We do not have to dress people up in a different way. In my view, we could even go further, and I would have no difficulty with that.

But let me tell you something as I see it. I have not sat in opposition. Heaven knows, that likely could happen some day. I am not advocating that, but should the day come, because I may disagree with a piece of legislation that has been proposed by the government, I would not see myself as trying to present petitions all day to stall the debate on that legislation, or presenting dilatory motions to stop the debate on the legislation because I disagree with it. Should not that time be spent on debate?

I hear from across the way they should storm the Chair. Yes, I understand that the Tory in the past in opposition have stormed the Chair. That is nonsense. I do not agree with that. I would not be a part of such an action.

That is what has happened over the years, I believe, to the deterioration of our House of Commons, a place that is so important. We have lost respect for different people in this Chamber from time to time because of something they said. I don't think that action has been very helpful.

I must submit, as a sitting member of the government side, that I have seen wasted hours of debate in this House, wasted hours of debate by playing silly games. Maybe my five minutes is up, but my point is, with all due respect, that we have wasted hours and hours and hours of debate in this House of Commons by playing games.

Now, now, you are falling into the role again, with all due respect. We have wasted hours of debate because of a procedural wrangle.

Those 20-some hours that I believe the change adds up to would probably not have been lost to anyone. Who knows who the opposition is going to be next time? I am not conceding defeat but I am saying that the people opposite in this House today obviously hope that they are going to govern after the next election. That is their goal, there is no doubt about it. But, surely to goodness, when they are there some day—heaven forbid, some may say—we do not want to spend this time on silliness.

The House of Commons in England. I have not been there as often as some in this Chamber. In the United States Congress and Senate, there are not many times when people are able to speak for 20 minutes, because there are many more of them than there are of us. They may get to speak for five minutes and will then yield three minutes to someone else to bring their point of view across to the floor.

• (2140)

I am just wondering if we are not so hung up on this institution and its historical way that we should not think of changing it and making it more effective. Although this is not a perfect package and there is probably more change to come as years go by, I believe it is moving in the right direction. I think members opposite will concede that we are not still going to run the House of Commons as we did 20 or 50 years ago. Changes are taking place.

This is a vast nation to represent and I do not think anybody is upset about the time he or she has to spend in this place. But I like honest, fair debate and when the day is done the vote is taken and we go on to another issue. That is something I have lacked, but I have nothing but respect for our members opposite. I even disagree sometimes with members on our side of the House and I think that is healthy. I do not think that is totally antiquated anymore; that is our democracy and our freedom.

I believe we have moved away a little from operating this House and have created it as too adversarial. I hope the change that does come forward works more effectively for all sides of the House, albeit there may be less time in hours, but in the end I do believe in the representation we have in this House and the honour we should attribute to one another, not in the adversarial approach. Make your point, let us get on with it and take a vote on it. That is the way I see it and I believe I will support this.

Hon. Ralph Ferguson (Lambton—Middlesex): Mr. Speaker, I have to commend the member for Portage—Interlake. There are some things he and I agree on. I think we have the same taste in what we do not like, such as so-called modern art, when you see something that looks like the side of a barn, where they ran out of one pail of paint and had to dive into another. He and I agree on that. We agree on what we should be doing with steaks. I would rather see a vibrant living picture or piece of art and I am sure you would, too; something that would reflect nature and the delicate hand of mother nature.

But I do have to say that I disagree with him saying that he would rather have something like the American congressional or Senate system, where the speaker wears a suit, the same as everyone else.

Mr. Speaker, you and your Chair are the symbol of the tradition of this House, a tradition that instils the tradition of a democratic parliamentary system, which respects the Chair and the Speaker, who is elected by the members of this House of Commons.

Mr. Speaker, we are all commoners and are elected by commoners to represent them in this House and I would not want that changed. I want to state the respect in which I hold you, Mr. Speaker, the other Deputy Speakers, and the Speaker himself.

One of the things I am very concerned about is that, as I look back at the record of this government and at the number of times they have used closure, going back to 1986—1987, they have used it 35 times. Yet the member from Portage—Interlake said that every member should have a chance to speak.

When I look at the record of this House and, again, at the number of times closure has been applied by this government, the successes of the legislation, the effectiveness of the legislation, the impact of the legislation on the economy and society, and at how this government has used the application of closure, I realize that this government is becoming more and more one that governs by corporate decision and that responds more to big business than to the wishes of the people who elected its members.

The government is going to use its majority here tonight, as we near the end of this session, to bring about changes that will cut the sitting days of this House and will deprive the members of this House of an opportunity

to fully represent the wishes and needs of their constituents.

As I reflect on this package of real changes and on the cut in the number of sitting days involved, and as I look back on the last two and a half years and on the fact that closure has been consistently used by this government rather than allowing each member to speak and allowing full debate, I could not help but think back to about 35 years ago next month. I want to quote from Hansard of that time:

> The first duty of Parliament is to remain a Parliament, not to become a subservient and ornamental body.
>
> Parliament has a right that is certainly paramount to the convenience of the Prime Minister and has the right to live. It also has the duty to defend itself and to not allow anybody to invade its rights and privileges. It is the will of Parliament, not of the government, that is the will of the nation.
>
> When the Prime Minister says he speaks for the whole country he is mistaking the echoes of his own words for the voice of the Canadian people. Parliament is and must remain the authorized exponent of public opinion and public will. The sovereignty of the people is delegated to the Parliament, not to the executive.
>
> When I say Parliament, I mean the minority as well as the majority in Parliament. However, I do make an appeal to the Prime Minister that this Parliament and this institution should be a temple of freedom, not a place where frustration becomes a means whereby rights are swept aside and where rules are misinterpreted in order to achieve a temporary advantage.

Those words accurately reflect what we are seeing here today and were uttered by the late Rt. Hon. John Diefenbaker, who became Prime Minister. After a statement such as that, I wonder what he would say if he was here today and listened to this debate and saw the further erosion of the role of the members of this institution.

Closure was applied on three agriculture bills in second reading. First of all, we had the bill on plant breeders' rights. Let me tell you, the jury is still out on that one. The opposition insisted there were far too many years of protection and of the continued corporate acquisitions that are taking place in society today, and of the takeovers. We may well rue the day when we provided the legislative foundation for a few very powerful corporate structures to control the world's food chain.

Then, of course, the government applied closure to the Advance Payments of Crops Act and the Prairie Grain Advance Payments Act. We tried to tell the government they were wrong and numerous witnesses in committee supported us in the Official Opposition, but rather than allow the adequate debate of second reading and, even worse, rather than listen to what we in the Official Opposition had to say, this government bulldozed ahead with their majority of trained seals, who actually believed their minister rather us on this side, who actually had the base of experience and knowledge of the industry.

If the members had listened to us in the Official Opposition they would not have suffered the embarrassment of having to reinstate those interest-free loans. That must have been a terrible embarrassment to them because they had to turn around and eat humble pie last fall due to the huge crop and the low prices of grain in Canada.

Not only was the government proven wrong and embarrassed, but their credibility has fallen to even further lows. Only experienced farmers can tell them what is going to happen, but perhaps it was fate itself that intervened and their embarrassment is certainly justified because of their unwarranted application of closure before all members on this side of the House had the opportunity to speak.

As if closure on the Advance Payments of Crops Act was not enough, the government applied closure again on Bill C-48, the Crop Insurance Act, when it came before this House. We again opposed it and they again invoked closure at second reading and again in committee. The witnesses all asked that the government not proceed with the legislation. Of course, that bill has now been replaced by the GRIP legislation or the safety net legislation.

That legislation has been flaunted as the greatest thing since sliced bread, but when I compare that program to the programs of the farmers in the country to the south of us I believe it will be found lacking. A safety net is slung just a little bit above the ground. It may cushion the landing somewhat, but it will not enable the farmers to survive continuing years of low prices. This is just another example of this government not listening to the Official Opposition or to the witnesses in committee.

• (2150)

We have another example: Bill C-26, the At and East legislation that eliminated the rail subsidy for grain being

transported by rail into Atlantic Canada during the winter months when the St. Lawrence Seaway is closed.

Those people needed grain down there over the winter and they did not have storage in which to hold it all. This legislation was originally put in place to enable the railways to supply that grain in order to keep the Atlantic industry alive, their flour mills going, and their elevators in use.

We opposed that legislation at second reading, in committee, and at report stage. Do you know, I believe they finally realized when we reached report stage what a blunder would have resulted from this legislation. Not only were elevators and flour mills in Atlantic Canada faced with closing, but a huge loss of jobs and a traditional market for grain from western Canada would now be filled with grain from another country. What a blunder.

In fact, the elevators in the minister's own riding in Georgian Bay were demolished because of this ill-conceived legislation. The only good thing I can say about it is that the government apparently must have realized its blunder because it never brought that bill forward from Report stage for passage on third reading. I suspect the government is simply trying to avoid further embarrassment over the error of its ways. The damage was done and those elevators were demolished and it is doubtful whether they will ever be rebuilt.

Surely, if this government had listened to the opposition and had paid attention to our concerns instead of marching to the tune of the corporate elite and their idols to the south, it would not have approved the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement in its present form. The Conservatives would not be as embarrassed as they are now over the pork ruling that Carla Hills has rejected. They would have had a fairer agreement; one that would absolutely forbid the use of subsidies to steal our grain markets with export enhancement subsidies. Now they are so embarrassed that they have not been able to screw up enough courage to demand consultation, as provided for in the Free Trade Agreement, or to demand compensation for our grain producers, as provided for in that agreement, which they negotiated.

We have seen these things happen, as I have outlined here tonight. One would think that, rather than cut back on the number of sitting days, the government would have wanted to increase them in order to give the opposition more time to point out the blunders and mistakes in the legislation it has brought forward and to then amend that legislation, in keeping with the advice of the witnesses in committee and with the amendments proposed by the Official Opposition.

I am alarmed about the erosion of the role of the members of this House and of the democratic system of government that has served this nation so well since Confederation. With the problems facing this nation today, whether national unity, the economy, the millions of people who are out of work in this country, the state of affairs across rural Canada, the closing-down of our post offices, or the boarding-up of businesses in the small towns and villages across this nation, surely it is time this government should not be cutting back on the time permitted for Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. Rather, we should be calling Parliament more often and it should be sitting more often to make sure the needs and aspirations of the people of this nation are adhered to.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, it is close to 10 p.m. on this Thursday, April 11. Canadian unity is in a state of crisis, our citizens are losing their jobs, agriculture is in serious difficulty, there is a 16.6 per cent unemployment rate in my riding, and the government has decided that the hottest topic for us to talk about is whether we should change our rules, to give ourselves more time off.

I wonder if the Canadians who are watching this debate tonight or who will read *Hansard* during the next few days will be impressed by the choice of subject of today's debate; a choice made, of course, by the government across the way.

As you and I know, Mr. Speaker, under our rules, the government brings forward the legislation we deal with. The House collectively decides how it disposes of the legislation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, tonight we are talking abaut amending the Standing Orders in this difficult period when we could be talking about something else. Have you noticed, that when the House sits, when Parliament is debating hot issues, important issues of the day, it is rarely advantageous to the government? This is not peculiar to the period we are now in. I think that historically, when Parliament sits, having the House and its members

question the government and hold it accountable certainly does not always make them popular for doing so.

[*English*]

I have in hand a public opinion poll dated March 21, 1991, which speaks of the level of popularity of the various political parties. Without making a diatribe about all of them, suffice it to say that, according to that particular poll, the present government had a popularity rating of some 16 per cent according to the Gallup organization.

It is no coincidence that the people are upset with governments that choose, in difficult times such as the one we are living in, to debate this particular issue instead of all the other issues that could be on the public agenda.

I have listened with attention to the member for Selkirk—Interlake, whom, of course, I respect very much. The member for Selkirk—Interlake always has a grass-roots approach to stating matters and I agree with many things he says. Tonight, though, I will have to part with some of his statements, such as when he remarked how we should modernize our so-called institution by removing some of the traditions we have. I will use the Speaker's attire as one and perhaps the Clerks attire, the Mace, and those other objects of tradition that we have.

They are not only part of a fetish we have for conserving old museum-like ideas, but represent in our parliamentary system 1,000 years of parliamentary democracy. Every one of those objects is a part of those traditions and every time we see those objects we remind ourselves of those years during which people fought to achieve the freedom we have.

That Mace on the table represents an ancient object that was not a decoration with which to represent authority, but something with which people would arm themselves. We all know there was also a time when that object was necessary for the physical protection of the institution.

Today, that object is still necessary, not because we want to club a member over the head with it, although I suppose that, from time to time, that temptation might arise on the part of some, but to remind ourselves of the fact that the Mace stands for those years when people fought to give us the freedom we now have.

The role of the opposition and of Parliament in this type of democratic institution is to debate. It is not a luxury to debate the important issues of our country. This is not the pure legislative chamber they have in certain democracies. I will use the example of the United States. It is partly that, of course, but it is also a place where we can raise the aspirations, the feelings and express the grievances of those who sent us here.

• (2200)

You might recall, and I say this to all colleagues in the House, a couple of years ago when Patrick Watson produced the television series entitled, I believe, *The Struggle for Democracy*. I watched that series very closely. In one episode they dealt with the October crisis of 1970. I watched attentively the interpretation of that particular episode.

It was interesting to note that Mr. Watson, when presenting this issue, was telling us that in 1970 the democratic rights of people were removed by the invocation of the War Measures Act, that this particular action was decided by the government and adopted, according to him, very quickly by the House of Commons with little debate.

I will not get into the issue as to whether or not the action was appropriate at that time. I happened to think that it was, but that is a subject we can debate at some other time. That is not the issue I am bringing to your attention. Mr. Watson was basically transmitting the message that the opposition and Parliament as a whole had not questioned the government properly, had not held the government to account, had not opposed in such a way as to make the government justify what it was doing. For that, according to him, the opposition was to blame, not the government, because it had failed in its duty to question. That is our job, to question the government.

Similarly, Mr. Watson made the same criticism of the press. They had not held the government to account as it is necessary to preserve democracy. It is not a foreign concept, it is the same in our courts. I am not a lawyer, but we watch how our courts operate, with both sides producing the most eloquent argument that they can for the position they strongly believe in.

Mrs. McDougall: Some people better than others.

Mr. Boudria: Some people better than others, says the Minister of Employment and Immigration. Quite true, but the point is that the adversarial system in Parliament and in the courts has not exactly been wrong. As a matter of fact, I would like to think that it has been good. It has been good because we have been able, I, as an opposition member, and I speak with lots of experience because I have not sat on the government side yet—hopefully that will change soon—and other members as government members saying what they believe in. Ultimately the public reacts to our debates, the people listen to what we have to say, the media report what we have to say, editorials are formed, people's thoughts are gathered and eventually the process changes when it is not sufficiently appropriate to meet the expectations of people, or at least generally it does.

It is not perfect and, yes, there are days in which time goes by here and there is delay. I have seen a lot of that. I have seen that as an employee of this building, I have seen that as a member of this Parliament and I have seen that in my previous role as a member of a provincial legislature. But all of that process is not useless. The process is used to express the wishes and the aspirations of those who sent us here.

Governments have been known to change their minds about policies in the past. The opposition, and even government backbenchers, have raised important issues in this House repeatedly. Because people in the media have reported on those debates repeatedly, and because constituents have phoned their members of Parliament to express their opinion on what they heard, what had been said in the House and what had been reported in the media repeatedly, ultimately that has served us well.

It is a delicate balance that we have. I recognize that. Others in the past have recognized that. The rules of this House were changed some years ago, after the report of the Lefebvre committee, now Senator Lefebvre, who was a great member of this House. Senator Lefebvre chaired this committee which reported on proposed rule changes. The House decided to adopt the rules. The rules had been adopted unanimously at committee and the House decided to adopt them. They did not decide to adopt some and reject others, but they adopted the report.

In the case of the McGrath rules, again a very distinguished member—a different political party, but nevertheless a man I have a lot of respect for—presided over a committee in the mid-1980s and again, we looked at what had been proposed and agreed to unanimously by the committee. But this time the government set off on a dangerous precedent.

[*Translation*]

And I said so then in the House, Mr. Speaker. The government chose parts of the McGrath Report to adopt and of course left out others. Fine. I said then, Mr. Speaker, that the government today chooses parts of a report. The precedent is there. From now on, whole reports will no longer be adopted. The government will change the rules as it sees fit, because the door had been opened to it that day and today is the second step. Today, we see a whole series of changes with which the opposition members of Parliament do not agree.

[*English*]

Those rules, unbalanced as they are, give advantage to the government, make the government less accountable. There are fewer Question Periods in which this government can justify to the people of Canada what it does and does not do for them. If that process makes a few bills pass more quickly, well, I suppose there will be two or three people, perhaps, who say is that not great, instead of passing 12 bills in a given period of time, they have passed 13 bills in that period of time. Does that in itself better serve the people of Canada? Are they not better served by perhaps one or two bills less being passed, since 85 per cent of them are passed unchallenged anyway. One Conservative member admitted to that earlier tonight.

If some of those bills are not passed because they are wrong, because the opposition indicated as much to the government, and because the people reacted, is that not better government? Is that not better for the people who sent us here? And is that not the reason why we were sent here, to serve our constituents, not to serve ourselves, or not to say when we retire or are defeated that under our particular stewardship, more legislation had been passed than the term before by some other government whose name the people will already have forgotten anyway? Is that not why we are here?

Together with my colleagues, I do not approve of these rule changes. We do not approve of the fact that this time today, at this crucial period in our history, was utilized for no other purpose than to change the rules. The purpose of the change in the rules, of course, is to make the government less accountable. We do not think that is a proper thing to do. We will not agree to them.

• (2210)

Even at this late hour, I still have a very cautious little bit of optimism in me that perhaps I can convince the government to repent and to do the right thing. Let me give it one more opportunity by asking it to vote at least for the following proposition.

Therefore, I move:

That the amendment be amended by deleting the number "21" and adding after the words "proposed amendment numbered 24" the following:

"and by substituting for the words "11.00 o'clock p.m." the words "12.00 o'clock midnight" in proposed amendment numbered 21".

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I will recognize the hon. member for Chambly and have a look at the amendment.

Mr. Phillip Edmonston (Chambly): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to speak against the Standing Order changes. I would like to speak from my experience of coming here just a little over a year ago.

I came into this Parliament with the desire to serve my constituents to the best of my ability—

An hon. member: What a crock.

Mr. Edmonston: I hear the cynicism of the other side because they say: "What a crock". I do not believe that to be a crock and I do not think it is fair to myself. Neither is it fair to other members who sincerely believe they are here to represent their constituencies.

I would like to mention that I believe in this Parliament. Maybe some of the other members here on the government side do not. If we take a look at the changes to the Standing Orders, we would see that they do not believe in Parliament.

The reason we have these proposed changes is because the government wishes to shoot the messenger rather than change its practices. All we have done is brought out, as an opposition should, facts and figures showing where the government has made mistakes. No government is perfect. This one surely is not perfect.

As a reward for what we have been trying to do as good parliamentarians, where we normally have 175 days where we would have Parliament convene, we have now 134 days if these changes are passed. This will seriously affect our role in the opposition and I even think the role of government members because I believe that when the government members are sitting here in Parliament they are much more responsible to their constituents and to all Canadians.

That does not have that much to do with Question Period, because I do not believe that there are any real questions asked that often in Question Period. Perhaps the minister on the other side would agree there are not always that many answers which are forthcoming either.

There are some things that do occur during Question Period which I find to be very productive. I will give you and example, Mr. Speaker, of some of those things, as one of my colleagues would know doubt have asked me, if I heard him correctly. One of those examples is that we are able to discuss things with ministers many times behind these curtains in a much more expeditious way than sending letters or memos. Many times we have a false impression of what the government is doing without making a statement in the House. We can find out from the minister exactly what is going on and save him some trouble and save us some trouble. That is what I call democracy. I think, Mr. Speaker, you can easily say that is what is serving your constituents best.

When we reduce the sittings of the House from 175 to 134, we reduce the opportunity of people like myself, parliamentarians, to directly speak off the record with ministers who are here and resolve issues which are important to people in our riding.

I can give an example. I can mention the Minister of Transport, for example. I never brought this up in the House before now because I did not feel it was appropriate.

Much to the credit of the Minister of Transport, I contacted him during the period when the House was sitting just after Question Period and informed him of a problem that they were having at Dorval airport where some of the taxi drivers were taking pay–offs in order to get the most lucrative trips.

The minister saw to it that the system would be changed and that those taxi drivers would be put out of that dispatch service. There was no big question in the House, and there was no major brouhaha. He just competently attacked the problem, and I thank him for it.

If the House sits less frequently, these types of opportunities to bring problems and situations to the attention of the Minister of Transport or the other ministers will not come up as often. It is very difficult when we are dealing with letters, secretaries and the minister's assistant to the assistant to that assistant. It is almost a kind of jungle that we have to cut through. It is unfortunate and should not be that way if we are all parliamentarians. I find it works very well.

There are people who listen as well on the government side, not always, perhaps, but frequently enough that if we can grab them after Question Period, things work out all right.

That is particularly why I am distressed with these rule changes. We will not have as much of an opportunity as we had in the past.

I am also concerned about the committee system because I like participating in committees. The reason why I like doing that is because we have more than a one minute question that we can ask. We can foul it up, and the minister who is there can foul it up. Many times we can discover things that we would not normally discover during Question Period.

I recall just today questioning the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. I found it very interesting to learn that some of the people who were participating in writing a report on decriminalizing misleading advertising came from firms that had been guilty of misleading advertising. I never knew that, and the minister never knew that. He just found that out today.

That was not done in Question Period or in a press conference. That was done in the consumer affairs committee. I enjoyed that because it was informative and it was fun.

I am trying to think back to a committee that I found particularly enlightening. We are able to have one round of about 10 minutes when we can question the minister or any witness and we can follow it up with a second round of about five minutes. We can keep some flow and some continuity.

I think that is the kind of thing that the McGrath committee wanted to maintain back in 1985. He was a Conservative, but he wrote a very good report dealing with making parliamentary members more effective.

Mr. McDermid: What do you mean: "He was a Conservative, but he wrote a good report"? What is the inference?

Mr. Edmonston: My hon. colleague asked me about the inference when I said he was a Conservative but he wrote a good report.

The fact is that I have seen very few good reports coming from this government. I have seen some, but I have seen very few. I would be willing to say that as much as there have been some good reports, most of them have not been very good.

An hon. member: You are a socialist.

Mr. Edmonston: It is not a question of socialism.

If we take a look at the committee system as it stands now, it is a pretty good system. It works very well as far as getting information out and resolving problems.

When we have the committee system as the changes propose we can only call technical witnesses. What is a technical witness? What is a technical witness supposed to do when we require information from someone such as a minister or minister's assistant, a consumer's group or a group that is responsible for helping to write a regulation, a standards making group. These people have a lot of information to give. To have a committee which can only call technical witnesses is unfortunate and it would really gut the committee system.

• (2220)

That is unfortunate as well for people who are used to being called before committees, for consumer groups that have had a chance many times to tell committees what they have learned on the barricades, as I call it, or in the real world and for people who can come before government and explain their side of a story without being called socialists or without being called partisan in any way. I think we need more of that and that we do not have that much of it in this Parliament.

In addition, we add all the activities of the past year wherein the government has not been very respectful of members' rights to dissent. With respect to closure motions, even now we will be entertaining a closure motion when it is actually being debated before the courts. It seems at the minimum to be a contempt of court action because it is presently *sub judice*, but we are still engaging in closure.

I do not really think that is fair. I do not think it looks good to the rest of the Canadian public because I think they would like us to be here as well as in our ridings and, when we are here, to earn our money. I do not think we will be earning our money by reducing up to 20–some per cent of the time we are here when we should be here and we are reducing that time.

I have just one final remark. The government should understand that we in the opposition are only trying to better serve our constituents. We are only trying to make this place work correctly. By protesting these rule changes we are not trying to score cheap political points. We understand that there is a majority over there with this government. It is a majority which is abusing its majority status to stifle dissent, to stifle any information that can come in from our side which could help the government and particularly to prevent independent groups from having their views presented before a committee of Parliament.

Having been here only a year and having had to work much of my time in my riding because the former member from my riding was not there that often, I appreciate the chances I have when I do come here actually to participate in all the committees and in the House.

The problem is one of what kind of participation. Should we just sit here as a government would obviously want us to do and nod our heads in agreement? We cannot do that, not when the government is wrong, but we can do that when the government is right. However, there are other more meaningful things that we should be able to do in the committees as well as in Parliament.

My minister friend on the government side pipes up occasionally whenever I try to be generous with his side. I wish he would just perhaps open his ears sometimes and understand that I am not trying to score points with him or with the government. I am just simply trying to say things as I see them and to present in a matter of fact way or in a common sense way why these rules changes are going to work against the rights of the constituents that we are supposed to represent.

I do not think that there is an urgency to pass these rule changes right now. I believe that the system is not broken. There is no need to fix it. There is no urgency. There are a great deal of other problems that Canadians are expecting us to tackle. If we were to make a list of things that our constituents would want us to deal with, I believe that probably the economy would be number one. Perhaps the Constitution would be down to number five or six. Obviously unemployment would be very high up. Yet our constituents, Canadian voters who are watching us now, are a bit mystified as to why we are talking about rules changes and democracy and what they have to do with their everyday existence.

It has to do with democracy. It has to do with their representation either directly before committees or to this government through their elected representatives, those of us on the government side as well as those of us on the opposition side.

When these people see us on television discussing something into the wee hours of the morning—because I suspect we are going to be here that long—I am embarrassed that we have to be spending that time on a subject which seems to be of such arcane interest. Really, there are better things we could do with our time.

An hon. member: We won't sleep.

Mr. Edmonston: My colleague says that we will not sleep. I do not think we will have time to sleep. We have some interesting debates coming up later on.

Why not look at the other issues before we look at changing the Standing Orders? Why do we have to deal with this right now? Surely there are enough things on our plate with which to deal without having to bore to a certain extent the viewers and listeners with what the government has imposed upon us.

We will probably have three or four more hours of debate. Then the government will just cut it off. That is very typical of this government.

They say that it is part of democracy, just as ramming through the GST, cutting off debate and cutting down the committee system. Yet, what did they do when a Conservative fellow presented a good report dealing

with the committee system back in 1985? I knew Mr. McGrath personally.

An hon. member: We are improving it.

Mr. Edmonston: I do not believe they are improving it. I believe that when we have this House management committee, for example, it will actually decide which committees meet. That strikes at the very heart of the McGrath report which wanted the committees to have as much independence as possible.

I am not going to go into all the jargon of why this is wrong. Most people will see that it is wrong and that this government has had a very bad year. It is reeling from its almost single digit polling result and desperately wants to cut off dissent. Temporarily this government will be able to reduce dissent, but it will not be able to cut it off.

It is all the more surprising—I remember watching television—when the Conservative Party was storming the Chair, complaining about its rights being abused, making the bells ring, engaging in all sorts of extra-parliamentary and parliamentary opposition. It was kind of guerrilla warfare. Today, when that party is in government, the hypocrisy is that it is doing exactly what they accused the Liberals of doing for so long, and that is what I call hypocrisy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I have had an opportunity to look at the amendment to the amendment and I find it in order.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, I am really pleased to take part in this debate. We all know the Government House Leader has tabled a motion to amend the Standing Orders of the House of Commons, after a series of fruitful discussions with members of all parties—Liberals, New Democrats and Conservatives. The series of reforms includes in particular changes to the schedule and to the Standing Orders of the House of Commons so that it can do business more expeditiously. I would like to give a few statistics about changing the parliamentary calendar.

The present parliamentary calendar provides for 175 sitting days. The average number of sitting days in 1991 is 155. The new calendar provides for 134. The calendar always provided for an average of 155 days or 881 hours a year. The new calendar provides for 134 days or 897 hours a year. I would like to mention how many days other legislatures sit. Let us take provincial and territorial governments for a period of three or four years: the Yukon Territory, 39 days; New Brunswick, 42 days; Prince Edward Island, 45 days; the Northwest Territories, 51 days; Newfoundland, 59 days; Nova Scotia, 62 days. Alberta, 73 days; Quebec, 74 days; Saskatchewan, 79 days; Ontario, 84 days; British Columbia, 89 days; Manitoba, 98 days.

I could also give some statistics for Canadians who often ask us for figures, especially my constituents. Australia, as my colleague from Laval-Est has said 77 days in 1991. The U.S. House of Representatives sat 144 days, or 814 hours, a year on average from 1961 to 1989. In the United Kingdom, they sit 170 days on average.

• (2230)

Mr. Speaker, the new schedule will enable members to divide their time better between their parliamentary obligations and their obligations to their constituents, thus meeting their constituents' desire for more direct contact with their member of Parliament.

Although the reform provides for fewer sitting days, the number of hours per day will increase.

The situation today is very different from what it was when the Standing Orders of the House were written. These days, members are asked to be in their ridings more often and on the other hand, Parliament requires more of them.

The changes made to committees respond to members' desire for a better adapted and more efficient structure of standing committees and a clearer distinction between standing and legislative committees.

The committees of the House will belong to one of five categories, each with four or five standing committees and two legislative committees. Members will thus be able to hone their knowledge in areas covered by the various committees in a given category, because the substitution rules will be more flexible.

The proposals also contain a provision to allow cameras in committee meetings with the approval of a majority of members. The government proposes that the House of Commons accept the recommendations from the Committee on Privileges and Elections regarding the process for Private Members' Business, which will en-

able ordinary members to present more bills and motions.

Mr. Speaker, Parliament's task is to debate issues and to make decisions and the Standing Orders of the House guide this process. They govern the proceedings of the House and establish a framework in which the government carries out its legislative program and the opposition holds it accountable. They were designed so that Parliament could do business in an orderly way and members could debate issues and make decisions by majority vote.

The modification to the Standing Orders before Parliament is the result of a year of discussions and great co-operation among the House leaders. It is the most important series of changes proposed in the modern history of the Canadian Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, with the proposed schedule, the House will sit on average 134 days per year, as opposed to an average of 155 days over the past 10 years. But the members are expected to sit approximately the same number of hours during the year. The changes to the schedule will give the members, especially those from the West and the Northwest Territories as well as from Northern Quebec and Ontario, more flexibility in planning the time they can spend in their riding. Government policies and legislation are more complex and Canadians show an interest in an increasing number of issues.

While the opposition can use an attendance reporting system and not have to worry about keeping most of its members in Ottawa these changes will help all members to fulfill their obligations in Parliament and their ridings, so that both Parliament and constituents receive all the attention and services they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, I listened to the speech the hon. member for Manicouagan made today about the difficulty of serving a huge riding. The riding of Manicouagan covers 450,000 square kilometers. My riding of Abitibi covers 550,000 square kilometers, with a population of 85,000, and it is hard indeed. We spend a lot of time here, in Ottawa. As my records show, and the hon. members are welcome to check, I am often present during the week, but when the week-end comes, we leave on Friday evening, spend Saturday and Sunday working in our riding, then come back to Ottawa. We have huge ridings.

For many summer is a time for hollidays. But we Northerners head out North, in Northern Quebec, in particular in the Nunavik area, to visit the Inuits and Crees and work with them to find solutions to their problems. It is the same thing for the member for Manicouagan, because we cannot get away when the Parliament is sitting.

The opposition parties are fortunate. Both the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party had their leadership convention in the past few years. We know there is a secret pact between them. It is rumoured in town and at home. It is a "one third, one third, one third" system. We saw it in action today, during the vote. There is one political party in this House that I will not mention which had only 18 members present out of 44 tonight to vote on this important motion. However, another party opposes the rule changes and that is the Liberal Party. Today, out of 81 Liberal members, only 44 were present. Mr. Speaker, with the "one third, one third, one third" system, we notice which members are often in Ottawa. We look across the room and wonder where the members have gone. We know why that is. They spend two weeks a month in their riding, and as many as three in some instances, because they do not need to stay here, so they can travel. Now they refuse a change which would give us, the members from large ridings, the opportunity to spend a week in our ridings to meet with our constituents.

Earlier today, I heard the member for Hamilton East say that we had met, that is true, on our way to the Senate for the royal assent and that I told her that I would be happy to go and spend one week per month in my riding for a working holiday. Upon our return to the House, she forgot the word "working" and mentioned only the word "holiday". That is pure partisanship! But when she went away for the leadership convention, she was away for a long time. It was not mentioned in the House at the time, but now we can pursuant to the rules.

Mr. Speaker, it is very important that we spend one week per month in our ridings. When I go back to my riding on Friday night, 50 weeks or so every year, I often work Saturday morning and afternoon to meet with my constituents or travel up North. I sometimes drive 400 or even 800 kilometers in one day and a half during the week-end to Matagami or Lebel-sur-Quévillon. I have a huge riding.

That is why we must have the opportunity to return home because it is important. Therefore, I will vote in favour of that motion, those amendments.

There is another thing that I would like to say to you. The other day, I noticed that three opposition members, three liberal members were away on a trip to Taiwan in the middle of a budget period, when it was most critical to be here if they wanted to take the government at task for that budget. But they chose rather to accept the invitation of Taiwan Chambre of Commerce to go there, all expenses paid. In other words, during the budget debate, those three liberal members, and I would like to mention the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell most specifically, who were here today criticizing the government and saying how important it is to be in Ottawa, were absent that very week.

Mr. Speaker, I have another thing to say to you, namely that your servant the member for Abitibi and several of my colleagues from the province of Quebec want to obtain the privilege that Liberal and NDP members already have to go away one week a month. I will vote for these amendments, for the people back home, for the population of Abitibi.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to participate in this debate for the second time this evening, especially after the speech by the hon. member for Abitibi. I must tell the House that it is the fourteenth time this government has cut off debate on government bills or motions in this House since the 1988 election.

It is absolutely horrible, Mr. Speaker, that a government can be so—what is the word?

An hon. member: Ridiculous!

Mr. Milliken: Ridiculous, yes, that is possible, ridiculous by moving this motion once again. I am sorry to hear it and after rereading the details of the closure motions that the government has brought in this House, I am proud to take the floor to denounce the government for it.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of my speech in this debate yesterday, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the Solicitor General of Canada asked a question during the period for questions and comments.

He said:

• (2240)

> I would just like to ask the member, who understands rules and procedure very well, why he chose to give us a history lesson instead of dealing with the technical difficulties he sees in the rule changes. Why would he do that when we are debating rule changes, and he does not deal with that?

Mr. Speaker, I am sorry that the hon. member is not here tonight. I hope that he is watching the debate on television; otherwise he may read it tomorrow in *Hansard*.

[*English*]

Perhaps I could switch to the other official language. The hon. parliamentary secretary is really going to miss something because I want to go through the details of the changes that the government has proposed to the Standing Orders. Before I do, I want to say something about the use of closure by the government.

The government has given notice of closure. It gave notice of closure yesterday and so we are debating this motion under the closure rule. As of the end of yesterday, 13 hours and 9 minutes had been spent discussing this motion. One hour and 58 minutes of the time spent on the discussion was spent by the Speaker having to read the motion out to the House. We can thank the members of the New Democratic Party for their great co-operation and brilliant tactics in forcing that rather childish episode on the House. They insisted that the Speaker read this motion instead of waiving the right, dispensing as we call it here, of the reading in order to delay the House and obstruct the proceedings of this House. They really should be hiding their heads in shame at this particular moment for that tactic. It was really childish and silly.

However, take that away and we have 11 hours of debate on this motion and the government is up on its hind legs proposing closure. The parliamentary secretary to the government House leader, who is the mastermind behind this scheme, knows perfectly well he put the deputy House leader up to it, and after a very reasonable speech, the poor hon. gentleman went off giving notice of closure in another disgraceful episode, number 14 in this Parliament. Who knows how many more times we are going see it because the government has indicated clearly that its view is that matters should be debated for a very brief time.

So we had basically 11 hours of debate on a major set of rule changes. The Minister of State for Privatization yips away over there that there was lots of consultation. Sure there was lots of consultation, but it never went to a committee. Every major rule change that we have ever had to deal with in this House is a product of a committee report and this one is not. It is the first time the House has been subjected to major changes, certainly in the last 34 years, without a major committee report.

I want to go back to 1969. I mentioned this debate the other day in the course of my speech when major changes that imposed the time allocation rules in this House were adopted. That debate went on for 12 days: July 8, 9, 10, ll, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 22 and 24, 1969. Closure was moved on the 24th. There were a total of 38 hours of debate before the debate came to an end on that particular change of rules. What a contrast.

Here we have a government which has no particular legislative agenda at the moment, is in no need to rush us out of this House and yet is just absolutely convinced that the only way it can continue to run the country is to get the members of the opposition out of Ottawa, close this place down and get us away so that it does not have to listen to the criticisms of its dreadful policies.

Mr. Ferguson: They want to avoid Question Period.

Mr. Milliken: They want to avoid Question Period, they want to avoid criticisms of their policies, they want to avoid everything.

Let me turn to the rule changes themselves. This may be a little technical and perhaps a little tedious, but I think it might be helpful, particularly to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Solicitor General who was clearly very unhappy that I did not go through this the other day. So, to please him, I am happy to do so.

The first thing in the rule changes that we have opposed, and is opposed in our amendment, is the schedule that the government has suggested: three weeks on and one week off. I do not want to claim that it is always three and one; in some cases there are four weeks on and one away; fives weeks on and one away; and occasionally six. But there is clearly more time away than has been the case in the past. The number of sitting days is reduced to 134 from 175.

As members of the opposition we object to that. We feel that Parliament should be here more, not less, so that criticisms of government policies can be made, so the opposition can do its duty in calling the government to account. That is our principal objection to the policy. We acknowledge, and I think that all hon. members will acknowledge, that more time with constituents is not in itself a bad thing and, indeed, many of us are quite happy to spend time in our ridings. But we were elected to serve in this House. We feel that is our primary obligation and we are prepared to meet that obligation.

Second, the government is proposing a change in the rules relating to petitions. Instead of unlimited time for their presentation, the government has put a maximum of 15 minutes on them. I have got to point out that if you take a quick look at the statistics for the period from April 1989 to February of this year, that is almost a two-year period, the average time per day on presentation of petitions in this House was eight minutes. Yet the government was so offended by members presenting petitions, because of course the petitions were so damaging to the government and its dreadful policies, that it felt it had to put a limit on it so we could not obstruct government business. It has insisted on a 15-minute time limit on petitions. That is the change in the rules in relation to those.

Then there is the issue of quorum. The quorum of this House at 295 members is 20 and it has been 20 for years and years, in fact since 1867. The House has grown in size since 1867 but the quorum has not increased. Yet this government with 160-odd members—it has had some defections I know, people are jumping off like rats from a sinking ship—cannot maintain a quorum in this House. In fact, the government decided that what it would do is change the quorum rules so that if there is a loss of a quorum on a day, instead of losing the item of business and having to reinstate it with a vote the next day, it would simply automatically have it go on to the Order Paper. That is the rule it has proposed and which we have suggested should be excised from this package. In other words there is no particular damage done if a quorum is not here on a particular day.

The only time there has been a lack of quorum in this Parliament was one Friday, a supply day. There was a quorum call and the government pulled all its members. The government Whip thought he would pull a trick. He said: "This is an opposition day", little realizing that opposition days are devoted to government business, the business of supply. So he pulled all his members and had them stay in the lobby. They did not come in and the House was adjourned for the want of a quorum. There they were on Monday morning with no business of supply on the Order Paper, and they looked so stupid. They were clearly embarrassed. The Whip was red-faced. The government House leader was embarrassed. He had to

move the business of supply again and have a vote and put it on the Order Paper. It took up about an hour of time.

I can understand why they would want to change the rule after such a humiliating experience, but it was generated by their own folly. It was an unbelievable exercise.

Mr. Boudria: It actually happened?

Mr. Milliken: It actually happened and it was their own stupidity and they blamed the opposition for that. They say: "The opposition is calling quorum on us all the time. Why should we have to keep 20 members in the House?" That is the argument they are putting forward. They have 160. Surely it is not too much to expect 20 of them to be here.

Then they have cut back on the throne speech. Eight days debate on the throne speech was too long. Since I was elected in November, 1988, we have not completed more than one throne speech. We had a throne speech in December 1988 for the short session that dealt with free trade. We debated it for a day and went on to the free trade debate and that was that. We never went back to it. The session of Parliament was prorogued. Then the second session started and we had a full eight-day debate on that. Apparently eight days was too long for this government. Their members obviously were not interested in discussing its policies because after all it is government policy that is announced in the throne speech.

An hon. member: But there wasn't much in that speech.

Mr. Milliken: The hon. member for Saskatoon—Dundurn says: "You can't blame them. I wouldn't want to debate the policies either. They are such a disaster".

Nevertheless, at least from their point of view, what they did was say that they want to cut that back; eight days is too long; six days will do. And so there is the rule change.

• (2250)

They did exactly the same thing with the budget, so I do not have to repeat myself; six days reduced to four. "We do not want to debate the budget too long, it is too embarrassing. The opposition is able to turn up too many problems, too many bad policies in our budgets if they are allowed to debate for six days. We will cut them back, we will cut it down to four days."

It was exactly the same thing with supply days. To have 25 supply days in a year is too many. The opposition can raise 25 embarrassing subjects; 25 embarrassing debates. The government looks stupid, the government looks incompetent, the government looks like it is blundering. They say: "We do not want that; we want to look good. So if we do not have those debates, we can introduce our own bills and discuss those instead. We will not look quite so bad". That is the attitude of the Tory government and that is what it has done. It has cut the supply days from 25 back to 20.

Then there is the closure rule. They moved closure tonight. I see the hon. member for North Vancouver, the chairman of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, does not enjoy my speech. I can understand why. He must find this very embarrassing. He should have had these rules referred to his committee. Then we would have had a decent discussion and had some public input on it. Unfortunately, his government would not co-operate with him to get them referred to committee. I am sorry he was unable to achieve that.

Curtailing debate or closure. Here we have a closure rule imposed on us today under Standing Order 52. For years and years and years, I think since the 1920s, the time for the adjournment on a closure debate was one o'clock in the morning. And so we will go until 1 a.m. or very close to it, tonight. But now the government says: "Oh, no, that is too late for our members. We cannot expect them to be in the House of Commons at 1 a.m. even if we choose to impose closure". It should be an inconvenience to the House to impose such a Draconian rule as the closure rule, but not to this government. It said: "No, we will just change the rules and move the time back to 11 p.m. It is much easier to finish at 11 p.m. That will make a shorter debate, and we do not mind cutting the debate back, cutting the opposition off on its chances of chastising and condemning our disastrous policies". So the government cut it back by two hours.

The hon. member for Ottawa Centre says, quite correctly, they should blush for that, and I quite agree.

Then we have the time allocation rule. The government decide that time allocation rules are too generous. What is the rule now, for those on the other side who have forgotten? The rule is that if they cannot get agreement with the opposition, they may propose a motion to limit the time for debate. The motion is debatable for two hours and thereafter the government may allow within the motion for not less than one full day of debate.

The government has cut away the two-hour debate. That is gone. No two hours of debate to condemn the government for moving time allocation. Then the additional day can be the same day it proposed its motion In other words, it has saved itself 24 hours out of the time allocation process. It has become a more Draconian rule than it was before.

How many times has the government used time allocation in this Parliament? Eight times. Fourteen times for closure, eight times for time allocation. Twenty-two times it has cut off or curtailed debate in the course of this Parliament. It is a record. No government ever before has been this Draconian in its treatment of Parliament, this high-handed in its treatment of this House.

Then we turn to curtailment of debate on third reading of bills. What was the previous rule? The first member speaking for the government had unlimited time. The second member speaking from the opposition had unlimited time, and thereafter all members had 20 minute speeches with 10 minutes of questions and comments. What is the new rule? It is 40 minutes for the government, 40 minutes for the opposition, five hours of time with 20-minute speeches and then 10-minute speeches thereafter with no questions or comments. That is the new rule, shorter, curtailed debate. Limit the opposition, cut them off, make everything squeezed up so it happens faster. We are not going to have any protracted debates anymore on second or third reading of any government bill because this government is trying to shut the opposition up. That is the effect of its rule change.

As the hon. member for Lambton—Middlesex says, it is the suppression of democracy.

Finally, we have the borrowing bill.

After cutting the budget debate from six days to four, it then proposed to limit the debate on the borrowing bill to two days. Everyone knows the borrowing bill is the government's instrument by which it borrows billions and billions of dollars from the Canadian public. It gives the government the authority to borrow this money.

Clearly, it is a bill on which members may want to speak and address the general financial policies of the government. It is considered an extension in many cases of the budget debate, but it does not have to be. It could be moved on its own.

Yet, this government has included a rule that limits debate on the borrowing bill at second reading to two days. There is no need for closure or anything. It is just two, short, ordinary days in this House.

In this pile of changes, every single one is designed for one purpose; that is, to reduce the opportunities to the opposition to participate and criticize the government in this House. I know that every change on its own is relatively minor. The parliamentary secretary knows what I am saying is true. I know he wants to agree with me, but he is reluctant.

If he agreed with me, he would be in the Prime Minister's bad books. What we have here is a situation where each of these small changes, minor perhaps in itself in each case, adds up to a significant and substantial curtailment of the rights of the members of this House, particularly those in the opposition who want to criticize the government.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Solicitor General wanted a detailed explanation of the changes. I hope that the speech I have given tonight has explained those changes in detail. Each of the changes I have listed was contained in the original amendment that we proposed to the government motion. We are asking that the government consider adopting this and scrapping those particular changes.

The others, we can live with. We do not like them all, but we can live with them.

There is one other that we have offered a change on. The subamendment that has been moved tonight is on the closure rule. We are willing to compromise.

Again, I hope that the parliamentary secretary will go out into the lobby to plead with the Prime Minister to make a change in this in particular and agree to the subamendment. Instead of ending the closure debate at one o'clock in the morning, we have agreed to move it

back to twelve o'clock midnight in order to help the government along and give us at least one extra hour of debate over what it is proposing.

I know that the parliamentary secretary does not mind staying up until midnight. I am sure he could convince some of his colleagues to do the same. Then, perhaps we would have at least the opportunity to get one additional hour when the government, on its own volition—and only a minister of the Crown can do this—moves closure.

It is a government initiative. If the government chooses to use closure, surely it is the one that should know it has to be here until 1 a.m. Not this government. It wants to end it at ll p.m. We are prepared to compromise. We will saw off at 12 p.m. and carry on in that way. I think it is a reasonable compromise. I hope that the parliamentary secretary will deal with his colleagues and convince them of the rightness of our thoughts.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I regret that the hon. member's time has expired.

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, I am extremely pleased to participate in this important debate.

After 25 years in this House, I feel I have some insight into the value of the rules and the purpose of those rules in attaining the goals of Parliament.

If we are going to evaluate these proposed rule changes that are before us, we have to evaluate them alongside the traditional goals of Parliament to see if the rules are appropriate in meeting those goals.

What are the goals of Parliament that have been pretty well agreed to by experts over the years? We must remember that Parliament, as a body, is now over 700 years old. It developed in Britain and in other Commonwealth countries as time went on.

The principle purpose of Parliament is, first of all, to scrutinize legislation. I say that in recognition of the fact that most legislation—about 90 per cent—that is presented in this House is presented by the government. It is only a small percentage that is put forward by the opposition because that is the way things work.

The government controls House time. One of the most important roles of Parliament is to scrutinize the legislation of the government.

• (2300)

Another important role is to scrutinize the administration of the government, whether the government is administering this country and the legislation of this country in an efficient way, in a sensitive way, in a way that is appropriate and meets the needs of the Canadian people. That is another important role.

A third important role of Parliament is to scrutinize the spending programs of the government. There is much concern in the country today about the large deficit, the large national debt, as to whether money is being spend wisely or not. Another important role of Parliament is to scrutinize the spending programs of the government.

Fourth and probably last is the role in scrutinizing new taxation proposals. Of course we went through a lot of that last year in attempting to scrutinize the government's proposals for the new GST, goods and services tax.

How do we go about doing the scrutinizing? We do it through debate by presenting opposing views, by picking holes in the legislation, by asking the government to explain. However, and this relates to one of the changes proposed by the government, in order to properly scrutinize long complex legislation—and legislation today is often long and complex; the bill on the goods and service tax was very long and complicated—it takes time.

As I said over and over again, the debate in this House is not necessarily to convince members on the other side of our arguments. The purpose of debate in this House, especially through the use of the media and television, is to convince the Canadian people of our arguments, to make an impact on public opinion outside this House. Then the public can go back and say to the government: "Look, we know you have a big majority in Parliament, but through the debate in the House of Commons we see that there is weakness in that legislation. We see that that legislation is bad for the Canadian people. We want you to change it". Then maybe you do get changes.

We have seen changes in legislation over the years because public opinion was aroused, but you cannot

bring matters to the attention of public opinion if you are only going to have a one-day debate or a two-day debate or if you use closure over and over again so that you do not really get into the subject matter of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I must say—and you would know this because you have been here a good deal of time yourself—that very often it is only after the second or third or fourth look at a piece of complicated legislation that you see new aspects, that you see things you did not see the first time that could be very harmful to the Canadian public.

We do the scrutinizing, first of all, through debate. We do it by proposing amendments. That means we must have sufficient time to propose amendments. We do it through questions in the Question Period. We do it through questioning after the various speeches of members in this House. A good reform was brought in a couple of years ago which allowed for a 10-minute question period after each member's speech to make him accountable for the things that he said. Before we had that particular provision, members very often got away with saying all sorts of wild and silly things. Nobody could pick them up on it.

It is true that at that time we could beg the permission of the member to ask a question, but if he refused nothing could be done about it. Now it is written into the rules and that is a good thing. That is another way we hold people accountable for what they say.

We also do the scrutinizing of legislation, of administration, of spending programs and of taxes through the committee systems. In the committee system we are supposed to go into greater detail than we are able to do in this particular Chamber.

The other advantage of course that we have in the committees is that we can invite experts of all kinds to come in and comment on the legislation and can cross-examine them, and there is more informal procedure.

By this system, by these tools, we are supposed to do our job. I might say that Parliament has been able to do this more effectively when there are minority governments.

I know there are down sides on minority governments, but when we have minority governments—and on three occasions while I have been here we have had minority governments: in 1965, my first election, in 1972 and in 1979—the government is hostage to the House, has to respond to the elected representatives of the people, and cannot get away with ramming things through. They always have to get the agreement of one of the opposition parties and maybe two of the opposition parties.

In assessing these rules we cannot assume that we are always going to have majority Parliaments such as we had following the 1984 and 1988 elections; large majorities in both cases. But we have to make the rules, keeping in mind that we will also have minority Parliaments. If the political situation continues as it is today, according to the polls, we are likely to have a minority Parliament after the next election. Right now there are five parties in this country which are doing very well in the polls, and this could result in a minority Parliament.

I said there were down sides to minority Parliaments. Sometimes elected representatives of the people put pressures on the government that it does not like to have. On the other hand, it makes the government very responsive to the elected representatives of this country and every member counts, even on the government side. I was on the government side in minority Parliaments and more attention was paid to me then as a new member than much later when we had a majority, because they needed to convince me that every bill was right. They had to do that with all members of the House.

Another thing that is necessary in making Parliament effective is a proper flow of information to members of Parliament as opposed to government members. When I say "government members", I basically mean cabinet. If backbenchers on the government side and especially members of the opposition are going to properly lock horns with ministers who have huge public services to serve them in their departments—offices filled with assistants, researchers, economists, sociologists and statisticians—if we are going to properly challenge ministers, we need to have enough information on our side. That is why it is important that the committee system function properly and that we get the right experts before those committees.

It is also important that we have a properly financed and operating parliamentary library with a parliamentary research staff and that we also have enough proper staff in our offices. It means that members should have an opportunity to get back to their constituencies to talk with the people in their ridings in order to get feedback

on the different proposals put forward by the government.

I referred to the goals of Parliament and the tools we need to accomplish those goals. Now let us look at the rule changes being put forward by the government to see if it will really advance those goals or not.

In the first place they will reduce the number of weeks that we sit in a year by eight weeks. Parliament will sit eight fewer weeks than we do now according to these rule changes. What does that mean? It means that we will have 40 fewer Question Periods, 40 fewer times to question the ministers, to hold them accountable, to make them answer as to why they are doing this with respect to their administration and why they are doing that, why are they spending money this way or that way. We will have 40 fewer times to question the government in Question Period.

It also means we will have less opportunity to debate bills, to put opposing views, and less time to refer matters to committee. It is true that the committees might sit when the House is not sitting, as they do now, but things have to be referred to committees.

From my experience what happens when we shorten the timetable of the House. I said I allow for the fact that we need sufficient time in our constituencies, but I think this is going too far. That particular measure to shorten the parliamentary timetable so that we sit fewer weeks does not help us accomplish the goals of Parliament.

Next, these new proposals before the House would shorten the specialized debate and shorten the budget debate. The budget debate now, according to the rules, should go for at least six days. It would shorten that to four days. The speech from the throne debate, in which we discuss the general policy of the government, would be shortened from eight to six days; again less time for members of this House.

One must remember that this is a very large country from Victoria, British Columbia, from Vancouver Island to Newfoundland, from Windsor to the Northwest Territories, and that there are problems which differ from region to region.

• (2310)

The fact that maybe 10 Liberals are able to speak and 5 NDP members are able to speak does not mean that we have a proper view with respect to legislation. Of the 10 or 15 Liberals who might speak 5 may come from Ontario, 2 from Quebec, and there may be only 1 or 2 from the outer reaches, from the Atlantic area or from the west.

Because of the kind of country we have, we need those eight days to debate the general policy of the country. We need those six days to debate the budget, which has impacts in various parts of this country and on different communities.

Also, they would reduce opposition days from 25 to 20. Let me explain for Canadians who do not quite understand. How we spend the time in this House is decided by the government. Except for the Question Period each day when we are allowed to ask questions for 45 minutes, the government decides whether it is going to call bill *a*, bill *b* or bill *c*. If it wants to avoid a controversial measure it can very well do so. For example, if it has found that bill *a* has provoked a lot of criticism in the country, it can avoid it altogether and call bill *b* and it can then call bill *c*.

The opposition, although the government consults with the opposition, has no power in determining government bills, the business debated in the House. In order to compensate for that, we have had 25 opposition days where the opposition can decide on the subject matter to be debated whether or not it is embarrassing to the government. On some of those opposition days we can demand a vote of confidence or just a vote on the subject matter of the opposition motion.

The government is going to reduce that from 25 to 20 days. Again, how does this meet the goals of Parliament as I described them? Next it will cut the length of speech time. For second and third readings of bills, after five hours the time would be cut in half, from 20 minutes to 10 minutes. Mr. Speaker, and you would know this as an experienced member of this House, there are many issues that you cannot deal with in 10 minutes.

I can recall very well, in trying to put the arguments forward with respect to the abolition of capital punishment, that there was no way that I could deal with all the arguments for that particular controversial measure and at the same time in my speech deal with the arguments

raised against so that I could rebut those arguments. There is no way one can do it in 10 minutes.

I know that we have had 10-minute speeches at the end of debates for a certain time, but this is going much further. As I say, it will restrict members of the House to properly scrutinize the government's legislation, to properly scrutinize its administration, its spending program and its taxes. Again, I do not see how that change meets the goals of Parliament.

The government is also putting forward new rules that would facilitate the use of the guillotine. The guillotine is another type of closure, a way of closing off debate. I have to remind you, Mr. Speaker, and the Canadian people that this government has used closure and the guillotine more since 1984 than it has been used by all governments since Confederation. Since 1984 it has closed down debate by the use of closure and guillotine more from 1984 to this date in 1991 than was the case from 1867 to 1984.

On many occasions we only had two or three days of debate on very important bills. Then I can remember in the committee on the unemployment insurance bill, which was again a massive social change for this country, the government put closure on the length of time the committee could sit and listen to witnesses. Of course, we had to turn down many people and many groups who wanted to participate in that discussion because they were going to be hurt very much by the cutbacks to the unemployment insurance system.

As my colleagues have said, there are some positive things in these rule changes. On the whole, the purpose of these changes are to cut back the rights of Parliament, and in particular the opposition, in scrutinizing legislation. It also hurts the government backbenchers. If we sit less, we have shorter speeches. A government backbencher wants to put on the record the views of his area, of his constituency or of his region with respect to a bill, whether he comes from northern Ontario, Cape Breton, northern Saskatchewan or from a big city like Vancouver. He may not have the opportunity to do so and, if he does get the opportunity, he only has 10 minutes. It not only hurts opposition members but it also hurts government members. They will learn it because they may very well be in opposition after the next election. They will be extremely saddened by what they are trying to do tonight by the use of closure, again ramming through these rule changes.

The rules of Parliament traditionally have been developed by consensus. In this case that was not done. The rules of this place, unlike ordinary legislation because ordinary legislation can be divided along great policy lines, great philosophical lines, should be based on a consensus. It is not always easy to get unanimous agreement so it should be based on consensus.

I see that I have three minutes left. There are things that could be done which might radically change the face of this House and make it a really effective Parliament in which to do the sorts of things I referred to at the beginning of my remarks. I personally believe that if we change the rules so that a government could not fall unless there was a specific want of confidence motion or a specific motion put down by the Prime Minister that Parliament be dissolved, we would get amendments to legislation, improvements to legislation, which would be beneficial to the Canadian people.

If as members of Parliament both on the government side and on the opposition side we knew that we could sometimes defeat legislation without defeating the government, that we could amend government legislation without defeating the government, I think we would have better legislation. It would be an end to that old rule, that old tradition, that old convention we have that every time we defeat a government bill or we radically change a government bill the government must resign and seek a new election. I think the day of threat that the government has of dissolving Parliament if we do not support its legislation should be over. There should only be an election if the opposition very purposely puts a clear motion of want of confidence in the government. The government should only be able to dissolve Parliament if it puts before the House a motion to dissolve Parliament and go to the people.

It is true that if it has a majority it will easily pass that, but that is what we would be debating. For example, let me refer to the bill whereby the government decided to count as income for unemployment insurance severance pay and retirement income, which a lot of members on that side did not like as well. I can remember the member for Annapolis Royal and other members opposed the legislation. We would have been able to amend that legislation and make it better legislation. I think it would have been better for the government in the long run. The former Minister of Employment and Immigration lost her seat in Kingston basically because of that particular legislation. There were a lot of former public servants, members of the RCMP, of the correc-

tional service and so on, who just did not like that legislation.

There are many things that could be done. For example, with respect to the length of speeches, if we had a rule somewhat similar to that of the United States where at the end of your time—and let us say the time is 20 minutes as it is now—you had not finished your speech, you would be able to table a paragraph on the record to complete the speech. I think that would be very helpful.

I see that my time is up. Let me simply conclude by saying that most of these rule changes that are being proposed to this House will not help Parliament do the job that it is supposed to do for the Canadian people. This package of rules changes is just another knife in the back of democracy.

Mr. Ron Fisher (Saskatoon—Dundurn): Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to be speaking on this motion in this debate. Within a couple of hours it is going to be arbitrarily passed, because of course of the motion of closure. This may very well mark one of the last 20-minute speeches that many of us will be making in this Parliament, including myself, as this legislation goes through.

There have been all kinds of references to the rules in this House, references to some of the more minor ones, references to some of them which are more profound.

• (2320)

I had a very interesting experience with some of the rules of the House in the wee small hours of the morning during the debate on the gulf war. I will get to that in a minute. I committed a breach, within a very short period of time, of two rules of this House which the present Clerk reminded me of at the time, and I thank him very much for that. Actually, if you break the rules once you get a warning, if you do it twice, there is a penalty. I will not go into a description of what the penalties are, but if anyone cares to ask me—if anybody is watching on television, as I am sure they are, they were certainly watching at 3.30 in the morning in the middle of January—what the penalties are I will be only too pleased to let them know.

On the surface of it, it would seem that those two rules were rather trivial and yet, if one looks at what they represent in this House, they are very profound as well. The first rule I broke was to walk down the aisle between what was, at that time, Madam Speaker and the person who was speaking. I was reminded by Mr. Marleau of having broken a rule and I was not aware of it. After he mentioned it to me I was.

I was speaking to one of the Clerks at the table and the Clerk on the other side had the information which I was seeking. So I walked around to the other side of the table and I broke the second rule which was to walk between the Speaker and the Mace. There is a penalty for that too, although the first time is a warning. It seems rather trivial, but I think they are both the epitome of what this House is all about and why we have rules at all.

In the first case, I was extremely impolite. I had walked between the person who was speaking and you, Mr. Speaker, the symbol of authority in this House. In the second case, I walked between what is your symbol of authority and yourself. Both represent something which is of long tradition and which I really do believe sort of summarizes what this place is all about: civility, tradition and respect; respect for ourselves, respect for the job we have, respect for the House, respect for the people whom we represent and respect for the country of which we are all a part.

Of course, there is a reason for those rules beyond the respect for everything I have just mentioned. There is not an organization in the civilized world and certainly the parliamentary procedures, the general rules which we are talking about, whether they apply to your local hockey association or your local Rotary Club or the House of Parliament or what, do have such a civilizing and modifying affect on our behaviour. In a general sense, without going too far beyond, I guess the present context of this House, which is the British parliamentary system, many of the rules which we have adopted are part of tradition.

But what on earth is wrong with tradition? Someone mentioned that they thought it would be better if Mr. Speaker were to be wearing a suit as they do in the United States. Mr. Speaker, there are reasons why you wear what you wear and, without going into it, I think if anyone cares to realize what that is and the authority that it represents that is fine too.

The basic assumption of all these things, whether it is in your local hockey club or in the House of Parliament, is that the majority shall rule and, within this House, we certainly recognize that those on the other side of the House have the majority. However, absolutely essential within that concept is also the necessity that the minority be heard. That is the bearing on which these rules have so much importance.

The rules of the House have evolved in this House and elsewhere to protect the rights of the minorities. It means that in the case of the opposition in the House of Commons, the rules have evolved, although I would suggest in the first four years of this government some extremely good changes were made. The McGrath commission made its report and some very good changes were made which made it much more possible for the minority, for the opposition in this House to be able to be heard.

I would suggest that if the major proclivities of the present government had been in effect at that time, there certainly would not have been those kinds of rule changes. A good proportion of what we are talking about right now is an attempt by this very same government to revert to the days before the McGrath commission, to take back some of the ability the opposition has, some of the ability which the minority in this country has to be able to express themselves and to be able to function in the manner which the tradition of the British parliamentary system has dictated the opposition should be able to do in order to protect the minorities within the country.

Probably one of the most significant things that has been said in this debate in so far as why the government would possibly want to make these changes came from some member opposite who said that it really was a shame that during Question Period it was primarily the opposition which was able to exercise any kind of activity during Question Period, that really it was an infringement upon the rights of the backbenchers of the government side, not to be able to get involved in Question Period.

That too is part of tradition. Question Period is not for the government. Question Period is not to give government backbenchers an opportunity to get involved. Question Period is an extremely valuable tradition which probably, on the basis of the proclivities of this present government, would never have been instituted in the British parliamentary system if all governments had thought this way. Sometimes, I guess, if you were on the government side, and even sometimes I wonder when I am on this side, how on earth the parliamentary system ever evolved to the point where there was a Question Period.

What it signifies is that over time, through tradition, those who cared about the rights of people, those who cared about the rights of minorities, generously decided that yes, indeed, they would give the opposition the ability to be able to question the government. Certainly the parliaments of the world are far richer for that evolution having taken place and for that ability to have come about.

The very fact that someone in the government on the opposite side would even suggest—I do not know whether they are a member of the cabinet or not—that the backbencher should be able to be far more involved with Question Period, I think is symptomatic of how this government would really like to be able to throttle the opposition. It would like to control it and it would like to be able to cut it down.

In an attempt to do that, in addition to all the things it has have done since 1988 when I came to this House and of which we are all aware, it has used closure many times. In almost every instance, it has used closure so it is certainly no surprise that in ending this debate, it would be bringing in closure.

The very idea that the government would even have done that is so much in opposition to what this whole parliamentary system is about, that it should have brought in closure as many times as it did; that it would even suggest that there should be less of an ability of the opposition to debate things as they are now, which it is certainly doing within this legislation, is just something that I cannot understand. A government which five or six years ago brought in rather exemplary changes is now bringing in these kinds of changes.

• (2330)

This government, when in opposition, was able to ring the bells, holding up this House for 14 days over something with which it disagreed. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, and I will not speak for anyone but the New Democratic Party, but I suspect there may be other parties in this House who at the time of the introduction of free trade, of the changes to the Unemployment Insurance Act, of the GST, would probably on all those occasions and even more have willingly rung the bells for 14 days had we had the opportunity. But once these people got into power, ringing the bells for 14 days, holding the House up for 14 days for what they thought at the time was a good cause, and certainly what we

would have thought was a good cause, was not something they allowed the opposition any more.

The longest the opposition can ring bells now is for 30 minutes at any one particular time. That too gives us a comparison of how well the previous governments, how judiciously they viewed the ability of the opposition to function compared to what this government does. It is not any surprise that they have done this.

Some of the changes which they are proposing are changes to the calendar, where ostensibly we will be sitting for three weeks and having one week off. I am not convinced, in spite of all the arguments from the other side of the House that if these rule changes are brought in and that is one of them, that that is the way this House will conduct itself. At the present time we have a calendar. I do not know how long that particular calendar has been in effect in this House, but we have one. We are all aware of it. I do not think there has been any six-month period since I have been here when we have adhered to the calendar.

In 1987, at a time when presumably there was a similar calendar in effect, the government called the House back in emergency session to deal with an immigration problem in August. The House sat continuously until September 1988, in spite of what the calendar said.

I have a suspicion that in spite of all the fine arguments made on the other side of the House that this House at times will be sitting more than three weeks and may very well, despite the calendar, be away from this House for more than one week at a time.

Other changes being brought in are adjustments to business within the days of the calendar. There is a suggestion that the presentation of petitions will be limited to 15 minutes a day.

Previously someone else pointed out that on average the length of time taken for petitions has only been eight minutes a day anyway. I guess that is one change of which we probably ought to be glad and something of which we should be only too willing to take advantage. There are times, when presenting petitions from my constituents, I felt I really would like to be a little more explicit about their concerns. I am sure that the expansion of the length of time for presenting petitions to 15 minutes from the average eight is something that will be very welcome.

Many previous speakers have referred to the restructuring of the committee system. It is, again, just part of the government's methods of being able to limit the ability of the opposition and of the minority to function as well as they have been operating up to this time, particularly since the implementation of the McGrath commission, with those changes having been made and the ability of the committees to function having been expanded by the government in a previous session of this Parliament. I suppose they are now backing off on that expansion.

I suppose the government members find that, in spite of the fact they thought it was helpful for the Canadian public to be able to function in a more democratic way, they themselves find it is not all that effective for them. I am sure it is an embarrassment for them when the committees do their work well. I was, myself, a member of one of the committees where that happened. When these changes go through that is something that will certainly not be able to occur as well within this House any longer.

There is a suggestion that only technical witnesses will be able to be heard. If we have a committee that is looking into the social problems of this land does that change mean that someone who is poor and who, I would suggest, would probably be one of the more technical witnesses a committee could possibly hear from, would be excluded because he or she is not a social worker?

Does this change mean that, if a committee were to examine a subject that concerned labour, they would not be able to bring a working person to the committee so that the members would be able to hear them? I would suggest that someone who is a working person and whose daily life is being affected by changes within the Commons ought to be heard by a committee and not only by the Minister of Labour or the Deputy Minister within the department.

There has been a suggestion that one of the only ways in which the Canadian public will be able to get their views across will probably be through the Senate committees because so far, at least, the government has not gone to the extent of limiting the ability of Senate committees to be able to hear witnesses and operate in a much freer way.

I am also told that the new system, which is certainly going to be passed here, will require fewer meeting rooms. I would suggest that perhaps, Mr. Speaker, through your good graces, you would put pressure on the government to re-establish the Reading Room, also part of the tradition of this House, presumably with fewer rooms being required. Perhaps the Reading Room could be restored to its original splendour.

I have already referred to reduced speaking time. This may be the last 20-minute speech that I will be able to give in this House for a considerable amount of time. It is worthwhile mentioning that, because I can remember that, when I was working on the legislation that changed the unemployment insurance, I had the opportunity to speak for 40 minutes on one occasion.

That sounds like a long time, but even that was an insufficient amount of time to be able to get the concerns of the people I was representing across the House to the government; namely, those who were going to become unemployed and those who find themselves restricted as far as employment is concerned. Certainly, the reduced amount of time is not going to be able to give the members an opportunity to represent themselves.

In conclusion, I see that my time is almost running out. The rule changes are not going to cure what is wrong with this House, which began in 1984 with this present government.

If the government really wants some changes in this House, let it listen to the people, as it has not done on almost every occasion. Listen to the people. The opposition will not have to be as strident or insistent in its work and this place will run much better.

• (2340)

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

An hon. member: I like your tie.

Mr. Harb You like it, eh? Made in Canada. The hon. member likes my tie and I am willing to take it off right now and pass it on to him if he can convince his colleagues to retract their initiative in terms of the House sitting arrangement.

I stand to state my opposition to the government proposition to reduce the number of days we are sitting in the House for quite a few reasons.

First, I find it somewhat outrageous at a time when we have all those very different types of issues before us as a country, as a nation, that we are cutting down on the number of days we are spending here in order to do very important business for our country.

If we are to compare ourselves to the private sector, for example, any corporation, in the private sector, and if management is to make such a proposition, I can assure you that in that time that company will be out of business.

The difference between us and any private sector company, of course, is there is no one really out there to measure the productivity of the House between elections. There are the people at large or the shareholders of the country who can measure our productivity around election time.

If the government is running out of subject matter, I might suggest a few tonight that the government can look at. It looked like it had run out of propositions, out of legislation and that is why it wants to cut down on the number of days.

I might suggest, for instance, for the government to look at the economy instance, and look at the possibilities of commitment to full employment at a time when we have over 1.6 million people who are unemployed. Look at the question of the high number of bankruptcies in our society. If we look at the western world and western nations, we are ranking pretty high out there. Look at some sort of an incentive encouragement to small business whereby we can encourage small employment and we can help small business to survive this tough economic time.

There are other questions such as the environment where the government can spend and continue with some sort of a commitment to deal with the issue of the environment, help clean up our rivers, our lakes and also to an extent the harbours in Atlantic Canada.

There is also the question that deals with national unity at a time when we are seeing the debate raging from coast to coast. I think it is only fair for us as parliamentarians to sit here and debate this issue seriously.

There is also the question of our social programs and the maintenance of our social programs. The latest statistic shows there are between 130,000 to 250,000 people who are homeless, who do not have homes. Finding a solution to that is only fair and it is something that the government should take very seriously and deal with it.

There is subject matter such as education and literacy at a time where we have high illiteracy rates, approximately 38 per cent according to the latest statistics, and the drop-out rate when it comes to our youth is approximately about 30 per cent which means, in other words, in our society nowadays for every 100 students who enter school, approximately 30 of those who drop out before the age of 18. That to me is a priority. It is a priority for our society and should be a priority for our House and for our government.

If my colleagues across tell me: "Well, we are running out of subject matter to deal with", these are a very few and I am sure if they are to provide the opposition parties with the time necessary, we can, in fact, help

them out even to draft legislation to deal with those issues.

The reason why we want to reduce the time that we are sitting here to allow MPs to go back to their constituents and meet with them, I think, is a legitimate one, and I would have loved to have spent 100 per cent of my time with my constituents. But the fact of the matter is that we were elected to perform our duties inside of the House and also as well outside the House with our constituents.

Certainly there is a need to find some sort of a balance. There is no question about it. That is why we have constituency offices and capable staff in our constituency offices who can be our representatives at the constituency level. Of course some of my colleagues will say there is no substitute for a good MP. There is no doubt in my mind that might be right to a large extent, but people understand that we have a very important job to do here, and they expect us to be here.

I am also quite unhappy about the way it was handled. As my colleague mentioned a little earlier, the House is going to be limited to a maximum of 15 minutes a day to introduce petitions. To use the GST as an example, if we were to introduce all those petitions at once in the House of Commons it probably would have taken us quite a few days. My understanding is that in excess of 200,000 Canadians from all across the country signed petitions against the GST. They want the government to know about their views, and they expect their member of Parliament to present those petitions. I believe it is only fair to allow a member of Parliament enough time to introduce those petitions in the House.

As my colleague indicated, the average time it took in the past couple of years was approximately eight minutes. The time allocation of 15 minutes perhaps might not be a bad idea, but as an over-all arrangement I am against it because I do not think we should put a time limit on voicing the concerns of our constituents.

I could go on and state why the House should not be off for one week every four weeks. I basically get paid in order to serve my constituents. I would suggest my constituents and all of our constituents expect us to spend time in the House.

I truly believe that three years from now, when the Liberals form the government, my colleagues on the other side of the House will perhaps come back to haunt us by telling us: "We told you so". I am willing to take the risk and say: "Yes, but there is a price for democracy". I truly believe that it is the wrong thing for the government to do at a time when perhaps we should look at every free bit of time to deal with the issues of the economy, the Constitution, the environment, education, illiteracy and so on.

After I have gone through this presentation, I hope my colleagues across the way will have a little meeting with the House leader and the Whip and come back here just before twelve o'clock and reverse their decision. Then we will go home happily.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The first question is on the amendment to the amendment standing in the name of Mr. Boudria. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment to the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Call in the members.

The House divided on the amendment to the amendment, which was negatived on the following division:

(*Division No. 415*)

YEAS

Members

Allmand	Anawak
Assad	Bevilacqua
Boudria	Caccia
Catterall	Copps
Dingwall	Ferguson
Flis	Gaffney
Gagliano	Grey (Beaver River)
Harb	Harvard
Hopkins	Jordan
Keyes	Kindy
Lee	MacLellan
Marchi	Marleau
Mifflin	Milliken
Phinney	Prud'homme
Rompkey	Speller
Vanclief—31	

NAYS

Members

Anderson	Andre
Angus	Beatty
Belsher	Benjamin
Bjornson	Blaikie
Blais	Blenkarn
Bosley	Boyer
Breaugh	Brightwell
Cadieux	Campbell (Vancouver Centre)
Cardiff	Chadwick
Champagne (Champlain)	Clark (Brandon—Souris)
Clifford	Cole
Collins	Cook
Cooper	Corbett
Danis	Darling
DeBlois	de Jong
Della Noce	Desjardins
Dick	Dobbie
Dorin	Duplessis
Edmonston	Fee
Ferland	Fisher
Fontaine	Fretz
Gustafson	Harvey (Edmonton East)
Hawkes	Hicks
Hockin	Hogue
Holtmann	Horning
Hovdebo	Hughes
Hunter	James
Jelinek	Johnson
Jourdenais	Karpoff
Kempling	Koury
Langlois	Laporte
Layton	Lewis
Lopez	MacDonald (Rosedale)
MacDougall (Timiskaming)	MacWilliam
Malone	Martin (Lincoln)
Mazankowski	McCreath
McDermid	McDougall (St. Paul's)
McKnight	Merrithew
Mitges	Monteith
Murphy	Oberle
Plourde	Porter
Pronovost	Redway
Reimer	Ricard
Richardson	Riis
Robitaille	Saint-Julien
Schneider	Scott (Hamilton—Wentworth)
Shields	Siddon
Skelly (North Island—Powell River)	Sobeski
Sparrow	Stupich
Tardif	Tétreault
Thacker	Thompson
Turner (Halton—Peel)	Vankoughnet
Venne	Vézina
Vien	Weiner
White	Wilbee
Wilson (Etobicoke Centre)	Worthy—112

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I declare the amendment to the amendment lost.

The next question is on the amendment standing in the name of Mr. Dingwall. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Shall I dispense with the ringing of the bells?

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Call in the members.

The House divided on the amendment, which was negatived on the following division:

(*Division No. 416*)

YEAS

Members

Allmand	Anawak
Angus	Assad
Benjamin	Bevilacqua
Blaikie	Boudria
Breaugh	Caccia
Catterall	Copps
de Jong	Dingwall
Edmonston	Ferguson
Fisher	Flis
Gaffney	Gagliano
Grey (Beaver River)	Guarnieri
Harb	Harvard
Harvey (Edmonton East)	Hopkins
Hovdebo	Hunter
Jordan	Karpoff
Keyes	Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)
Kindy	Langdon (Essex—Windsor)
Laporte	Lee
MacLellan	MacWilliam
Marchi	Marleau
Mifflin	Milliken
Murphy	Phinney
Prud'homme	Riis
Rompkey	Skelly (North Island—Powell River)
Speller	Stupich
Vanclief—51	

NAYS

Members

Anderson	Andre
Beatty	Belsher
Bjornson	Blais
Blenkarn	Bosley
Boyer	Brightwell
Cadieux	Campbell (Vancouver Centre)
Cardiff	Chadwick
Champagne (Champlain)	Clark (Brandon—Souris)
Clifford	Cole
Collins	Cook
Cooper	Corbett
Danis	Darling
DeBlois	Della Noce
Desjardins	Dick
Dobbie	Dorin
Duplessis	Fee
Ferland	Fontaine
Fretz	Gustafson
Hawkes	Hicks
Hockin	Hogue
Horning	Hughes
James	Jelinek
Johnson	Jourdenais
Kempling	Koury
Langlois	Layton
Lewis	Lopez
MacDonald (Rosedale)	MacDougall (Timiskaming)
Malone	Martin (Lincoln)

Mazankowski	McCreath
McDermid	McDougall (St. Paul's)
McKnight	Merrithew
Mitges	Monteith
Oberle	Plourde
Porter	Pronovost
Redway	Reimer
Ricard	Richardson
Robitaille	Saint-Julien
Schneider	Scott (Hamilton—Wentworth)
Shields	Siddon
Sobeski	Sparrow
Tardif	Tétreault
Thacker	Thompson
Thorkelson	Turner (Halton—Peel)
Vankoughnet	Venne
Vézina	Vien
Weiner	White
Wilbee	Wilson (Etobicoke Centre)
Winegard	Worthy—96

• (0100)

Mr. Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

In accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 57, at this time it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith all questions necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

Pursuant to agreement announced by the Speaker on Wednesday, April 10, 1991, the Chair will now put the question separately on three groupings of the main motion.

Accordingly, the question is on the first grouping. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the proposal relating to Private Members' Business, namely those numbered 38 through 45 and 60 through 64?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

First grouping agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The next question is on the second grouping. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the proposals related to committees, namely, those numbered 46 through 59?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gagliano: Mr. Speaker, I think you will find that there is unanimous consent to apply in reverse the result of the first vote to the third and fourth votes.

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, I agree to apply the result of the vote in reverse.

[*English*]

Mr. Angus: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think the Whip of the Official Opposition mixed up the first and second vote that we took. Perhaps we could assume he was indicating that the preceding standing vote taken by the House would apply in reverse to the remaining motions, the one dealing with committees and the one dealing with everything else.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): That was my understanding. Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The House divided on the second grouping, which was agreed to on the following division:

(*Division No. 417*)

YEAS

Members

Anderson	Andre
Beatty	Belsher
Bjornson	Blais
Blenkarn	Bosley
Boyer	Brightwell
Cadieux	Campbell (Vancouver Centre)
Cardiff	Chadwick
Champagne (Champlain)	Clark (Brandon—Souris)
Clifford	Cole
Collins	Cook
Cooper	Corbett
Danis	Darling
DeBlois	Della Noce
Desjardins	Dick
Dobbie	Dorin
Duplessis	Fee
Ferland	Fontaine
Fretz	Gustafson
Hawkes	Hicks
Hockin	Hogue
Horning	Hughes
James	Jelinek
Johnson	Jourdenais
Kempling	Koury
Langlois	Layton
Lewis	Lopez
MacDonald (Rosedale)	MacDougall (Timiskaming)
Malone	Martin (Lincoln)
Mazankowski	McCreath
McDermid	McDougall (St. Paul's)
McKnight	Merrithew
Mitges	Monteith
Oberle	Plourde
Porter	Pronovost
Redway	Reimer
Ricard	Richardson
Robitaille	Saint-Julien
Schneider	Scott (Hamilton—Wentworth)
Shields	Siddon
Sobeski	Sparrow
Tardif	Tétreault
Thacker	Thompson
Thorkelson	Turner (Halton—Peel)
Vankoughnet	Venne
Vézina	Vien
Weiner	White
Wilbee	Wilson (Etobicoke Centre)
Winegard	Worthy—96

NAYS

Members

Allmand	Anawak
Angus	Assad
Benjamin	Bevilacqua
Blaikie	Boudria
Breaugh	Caccia
Catterall	Copps

de Jong
Edmonston
Fisher
Gaffney
Grey (Beaver River)
Harb
Harvey (Edmonton East)
Hovdebo
Jordan
Keyes
Kindy
Laporte
MacLellan
Marchi
Mifflin
Murphy
Prud'homme
Rompkey
Speller
Vanclief—51

Dingwall
Ferguson
Flis
Gagliano
Guarnieri
Harvard
Hopkins
Hunter
Karpoff
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)
Langdon (Essex—Windsor)
Lee
MacWilliam
Marleau
Milliken
Phinney
Riis
Skelly (North Island—Powell River)
Stupich

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I declare the second grouping carried.

The House divided on the third grouping, which was agreed to on the following division:

(Division No. 418)

YEAS

Members

Anderson
Beatty
Bjornson
Blenkarn
Boyer
Cadieux
Cardiff
Champagne (Champlain)
Clifford
Collins
Cooper
Danis
DeBlois
Desjardins
Dobbie
Duplessis
Ferland
Fretz
Hawkes
Hockin
Horning
James
Johnson
Kempling
Langlois
Lewis
MacDonald (Rosedale)
Malone
Mazankowski
McDermid
McKnight
Mitges
Oberle
Porter
Redway

Andre
Belsher
Blais
Bosley
Brightwell
Campbell (Vancouver Centre)
Chadwick
Clark (Brandon—Souris)
Cole
Cook
Corbett
Darling
Della Noce
Dick
Dorin
Fee
Fontaine
Gustafson
Hicks
Hogue
Hughes
Jelinek
Jourdenais
Koury
Layton
Lopez
MacDougall (Timiskaming)
Martin (Lincoln)
McCreath
McDougall (St. Paul's)
Merrithew
Monteith
Plourde
Pronovost
Reimer

Ricard
Robitaille
Schneider
Shields
Sobeski
Tardif
Thacker
Thorkelson
Vankoughnet
Vézina
Weiner
Wilbee
Winegard

Richardson
Saint-Julien
Scott (Hamilton—Wentworth)
Siddon
Sparrow
Tétreault
Thompson
Turner (Halton—Peel)
Venne
Vien
White
Wilson (Etobicoke Centre)
Worthy—96

NAYS

Members

Allmand
Angus
Benjamin
Blaikie
Breaugh
Catterall
de Jong
Edmonston
Fisher
Gaffney
Grey (Beaver River)
Harb
Harvey (Edmonton East)
Hovdebo
Jordan
Keyes
Kindy
Laporte
MacLellan
Marchi
Mifflin
Murphy
Prud'homme
Rompkey
Speller
Vanclief—51

Anawak
Assad
Bevilacqua
Boudria
Caccia
Copps
Dingwall
Ferguson
Flis
Gagliano
Guarnieri
Harvard
Hopkins
Hunter
Karpoff
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)
Langdon (Essex—Windsor)
Lee
MacWilliam
Marleau
Milliken
Phinney
Riis
Skelly (North Island—Powell River)
Stupich

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I declare the third grouping agreed to. Accordingly, I declare the main motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): It being 1.08 a.m., this House stands adjourned until later this day at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

The House adjourned at 1.08 a.m.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, April 12, 1991

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

SPRING ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons) moved:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order, when the House adjourns on the day of adoption of this motion, it stand adjourned until a time and a day to be set by the call of the Chair;

That, during such adjournment, the provisions of Standing Order 28(3) respecting recall of the House shall continue to apply; and

That, at any time during such adjournment, the Speaker may recall the House for the sole purpose of granting Royal Assent to any bill or bills, after which the House shall stand adjourned in accordance with this Order.

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to participate in this debate, a debate which I think many members of the House have been looking forward to for some time.

I say that because this particular session has been a long one. It has been one of tremendous interest. Some of the issues we have discussed have probably been some of the most important issues that parliamentarians have had the opportunity to discuss and debate in many a year. In the last couple of years I have seen issues that have been very difficult, very divisive, and have created tremendous interest and debate across the country.

Yet, having said that, we have come now to this adjournment debate with good spirit in the House of Commons. I am thinking of the debate that has occurred this last week. I would like to refer particularly to a column, in *The Ottawa Sun* today, by Douglas Fisher, where he talks about the debates that have occurred in this House over the past few days on the rule changes of Parliament.

• (1010)

He writes that this was not a debate for the so–called stars, this was a debate for the backbenchers. It was the backbenchers who very much led the way on this debate. It has been the backbenchers who expressed, often very eloquently, their dreams and aspirations for this institution, their concerns about how we as parliamentarians and this institution are viewed across the country.

Some of the interventions during this debate of the last few days have probably been some of the most interesting and thoughtful debates that I have seen in some time.

I want to come back to that in a few moments, but first I would like to give a thumbnail sketch of some of the bills that we have discussed in this particular Parliament.

Over the last couple of years, if my calculations are right, we have dealt with some 77 pieces of legislation from first and second reading, committee stage, report to third reading. We have dealt with a number of really important issues. It has been a very exciting parliamentary session.

I think back to the question of abortion, Bill C–43. It was an issue of great struggle for the members in this House. It was an issue of conscience which people on both sides of the issue have very strong feelings about. We saw the House struggle with that. We saw the issue passed in the House by a very close vote and then defeated in the Senate.

It is that kind of issue that, in many ways, has personified the type of Parliament and session that we all have had the "privilege" to participate in. It is that kind of issue that has forced us not to see ourselves purely as

partisans or as "participants in a sausage factory", a term that was used in the last few days debate.

We have been called, as parliamentarians, to look at some very difficult issues and determine where we individually stand, with the kind of perception and ideals we want to bring to our country. We have seen it in other debates. The question of Meech Lake was an issue this last couple of years.

Madam Speaker, you and I have very interesting perspectives, with you are a member from Quebec and I, a member from Alberta: one from the west and one from central Canada. We are faced with an issue that gets to the very core of our thoughts, ideas and dreams that we have for our country.

We saw the tremendous interest, the tension and the fascination that centred on that debate. Like you, Madam Speaker, I watched some of the meetings that were held on that issue. We can remember in particular the conference with the Prime Minister and the first ministers. We saw the dynamics that were alive there, and of course, saw its ultimate failure which has, once again, brought our country to a very important crossroads.

Maybe the last couple of years and some of the issues that we faced, discussed, thought about and struggled with have been a preparation for the debates that are going to occur in the near future.

The next issue we look at, as everyone knows, is going to be the whole question of the unity of our country, and the type of country that we want to pass on to our children and grandchildren. We heard the quip making the rounds: We now have new fathers and mothers of Confederation.

I think the last two years, as we have struggled with so many different issues, as we have tried to grasp such fundamental questions, have possibly prepared us for what is to come. There have been so many bills that we dealt with that pushed us, prodded us, and made us very conscious of our roles. I know that this preparation has been good for me personally. It forced me to think about my role as a parliamentarian, not as someone who is here to occasionally intervene in a debate or to rise from time to time and vote with my party, but, rather, I have been forced to examine my ideals, my dreams, my thoughts on so many different issues that have been before the House and before the country.

As a result of that I have been able examine myself as a parliamentarian and to prepare myself for what is coming over the next little while.

For me, one of the highlights of this whole Parliament is the one that I started talking about in the early part of my remarks, the rules package that we put before this House of Commons. I was a member of the McGrath task force, and before that the Lefebvre committee which dealt with the early stages of reform and I think set the stage or the groundwork for the McGrath task force.

I have had a particular interest in reform, and as Doug Fisher wrote in his column, I am one of those who have dreams and aspirations. I like the way he put it, and I hope I can find it in his column. He refers to members arriving in the House, and soon after developing an interest in the institution, developing some very strong attitudes about the kind of reforms that should be put in place. I was no exception to that. I was very fortunate to have been on the Lefebvre committee and then the McGrath committee. In both of those cases, we had an opportunity to look at this institution, to suggest often radical and very imaginative changes, and not only to suggest them, but to have an opportunity to spend time analyzing in detail the implications of those changes.

It was particularly interesting to go through that process, to see the McGrath task force complete its work in what is probably one of the best examples of members setting aside their partisan differences to work on a report they hoped would be adopted by the House of Commons.

In this debate on the largest reform package since McGrath, there were two speeches in particular that I want to refer to. I want to refer to the comments of the member for Surrey—White Rock—South Langley—which used to be Surrey—White Rock—Delta, and the speech given by the hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona, which was originally Winnipeg—Birds Hill. I refer to those two particular members because they did something I could identify with, and that was very simple, they served with me on the McGrath task force.

• (1020)

They carried into this debate some of the same perspectives and concerns that I did and so I listened closely to them. I said to the hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona after his remarks that when listening to him I

had a flash of what I had hoped Parliament could become.

I saw an opportunity for us to have some real excitement. What I envisioned at that point was that we could enter into a dialogue, not where he might give a 20–minute speech and I might give a 20–minute speech and another member might give a 20–minute speech, but that we could actually stand here in this Chamber and discuss back and forth, point for point, our concerns, hopes and aspirations for a particular Standing Order and the implications it might have for this Chamber.

The closest we can come to that would be in committee of the whole. That is about as close as we can come in this institution to a really dynamic, one–on–one debate, that is short, not wrapped up in speech but in dialogue.

I saw that in his debate. I felt it could well have turned into a dialogue that I know the country would have liked to watch. The country would have been impressed to see that parliamentarians on opposite sides of the House with very different philosophical roots and very strong partisan differences could suddenly set aside those differences, philosophical or partisan, and say: "This is what I want for this institution".

The particular interest that the member for Winnipeg Transcona and I have is the whole area of committees because both of us very much supported that part of the McGrath task force and I think both of us believe that committees can be the real driving force of this institution.

We wanted to see and we still want to see committees having a strong influence on legislation, and also on policy. We dream of the day when committees will actually play a part in the drafting of legislation, by way of pre–study. The member for Winnipeg Transcona, I think, came to the House in 1979, a year before I was, and I know he has the same confidence that I have in members of Parliament.

We believe that if members of Parliament are given an opportunity to look at an issue, to talk to their constituents and to other Canadians, we are going to see some top quality laws and policy directions or guidelines for our country.

The hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona in his remarks looked very carefully at this particular package that was before us as it related to committees. He quite rightly went through it with a very critical eye.

I told him after his remarks, or in fact I think it was before them, that when I sat down and did some of the initial drafting of committee reform, I had imagined him looking over my shoulder. If there was going to be one person who was going to be critical of that area, it would be the honourable member for Winnipeg Transcona. I knew he would look very carefully at the committees because he had a lot of confidence in what the McGrath task force had suggested. He had some concerns, but he did not want to in any way destroy the spirit of what had been established by that task force.

It was for me a fascinating experience to listen to his remarks. It renewed for me something that I needed to have renewed and that is a confidence in the people in this House and a confidence in this institution.

Now, at the end of the day, if we were to sit down and say: "Here are the issues, what do you agree on?", there may not be an awful lot. In some ways that is not as important as the fact that two members with such different approaches and positions can come together and look at an issue that is so important to us.

The other element that Doug Fisher mentioned in his column is in the headline: "It was a candid, sad debate". The sadness he refers to, and I have talked about the candidness he makes reference to being the quality of the speeches that were given on all sides of the House.

The sadness that Doug Fisher expresses is that the debate itself received so little media attention. This is understandable. The nature of the debate is technical and its scope narrow. It concerns, theoretically, only this House. But in fact, that is not the case. The rules under which we operate and the tone we set and establish in this place very much impact on the country, directly through legislation, but even more so indirectly, in terms of the flavour and tone of our debates and the perception that we send to the nation, whether it be through television or through reports of what goes on in this institution.

I agree with Doug Fisher. What we were faced with was a situation that really should have had the press gallery full. We should have had the people who cover this institution sitting up there, watching the heartfelt debate that was going on. If there is one thing that Canadians need to see, it is MPs at their best. Unfortunately, they so often see us at our worst, because 99 per

cent of what is covered in this institution is Question Period.

All members know that 90 per cent of Question Period or maybe more is show. It is the theatre. It is the place where we get up and take shots at each other, but few expect anything constructive to really come out of that hour. Yet, it is the entire focus of the Canadian public. The entire focus is on those 45 minutes of this House of Commons.

There is very little coverage of the work in committees. There is very little coverage of debates. There is precious little coverage of bills that pass through this place unanimously.

I have a regular experience in my riding when I go back and talk to my constituents and I, like other members, am criticized for our behaviour in the House. They may say to me: "Albert, we do not mean you, but the others". Well, the truth is that they mean me too. I am just as guilty as anybody else of tirades in the House, my hurled insults across the aisle. I am no saint. I am like everybody else.

People look at that and say: "Why do you not ever agree on anything". And I tell them that we do, regularly. There is probably not a week that goes by that we as a House do not agree unanimously on something. It may be to pass a bill at a particular stage or a motion. It may be to take an issue and refer it to a committee of this House for study. There are any number of things that we do unanimously. But of course because we do them unanimously, there is no tension, no confrontation. Therefore, there is no news.

I think it is really unfortunate, at a time when this country says to all of us: "We are looking for leadership".

• (1030)

I do not think by that they strictly mean the leaders of the parties. They want leadership from the hon. member for Edmonton, from me for Peace River, from Vancouver. They want leadership from individual MPs. They want us to be an example.

My point is that there is leadership in this House. It is not leadership restricted to a particular side of the aisle. There is leadership on all sides of this House. We saw that demonstrated in the debates of the last few days. We saw members expressing themselves eloquently, passionately, and thoughtfully.

I think if Canadians are given an opportunity to see that, then their confidence in Parliament will increase. The confidence of Canadians in their individual members will rise and then we will be in a position to go into the all-important debate of the coming few months with some of the credibility that all of us need.

When Doug Fisher wrote his column, he wrote it as a person who watches Parliament, an individual who served in this House for a number of years, and since then has dedicated his life to watching and reporting it. His perspective as such I think has always been a little unique because he is someone who has been here. He knows the turmoils, the tensions, and the greatness of the institution. That is why his particular column reflects so well the reality that we are facing today.

We have come as parliamentarians through a couple of years of tremendous issues, tremendous tension, tremendous soul-searching and yet I think we end on a high note. We end on a note that is serious, thoughtful and demonstrates the kind of leadership that Canadians want to see.

I want to look in particular at a couple of the reforms in this package that did not get discussed a great deal. I want to look for a moment at the question of pairing. In the British House there has always been a system of pairing. In the Canadian House we had a system of pairing. It was informal but it was practised for years and years and years.

Then, I think it was shortly before I arrived in 1980, pairing broke down in the House of Commons. Those pairing relationships were destroyed. As a result, I think the House lost something very important. It was not so much that individual members can be paired, but it was an acknowledgement of the value and the importance of individual members.

How do you get that from pairing? I think it is this way. Let us take an issue or bill that I am particularly interested in, a bill that I may have worked on for years, that I may have been pushing through with all of the influence I have to make it a reality. Then, through some accident, through some quirk, I am unable to attend the

vote. I could be sick. I could be caught by a snow storm in my riding 4,000 miles from here. There are any number of reasons that I may not be able to be in this institution at the time of the vote.

If there is a system of pairing, an hon. member on the other side of the House would agree to cover for me. He or she would rise in the House and say: "The hon. member for Peace River was not here and I agreed to pair with him".

Therefore, I have an opportunity, even in my absence, to express my position on the bill. The hon. member in rising will say I would have voted with my party but, because I paired with the hon. member who would have voted for it. We would have put it back to where it would have been had we both been here.

The importance of that is that it gives credibility to members. It is a recognition that what we are doing in here has partisan implications, is often partisan driven, but nevertheless it is an acknowledgement that I, in my absence, am still important.

In this particular package we agreed to a new pairing process. I do not know how much it is going to be used. I have no idea if it is going to be used regularly or very infrequently. That is unimportant. What is important is that we once again acknowledge that individual members' votes are important. They have a right to have those expressions placed on the record. Even if they are prevented, for reasons of health or weather or whatever we face in this huge country that we live in, those expressions are still there.

I think what it does do is express a relationship. It is an expression of equality. It is an expression that we, on both sides of this House, attach a value to one another's participation, one another's voting, and one another's importance in the institution.

There was an article in the *Ottawa Citizen* on March 8, 1991, and it refers to the whole question that I have been talking about this morning, the question of credibility of the institution and of individual members.

The headline said: "Reforms may aid credibility." I just want to quote three paragraphs from this particular article, and this is not a personal reference:

> In short, our elected leaders are making Parliament irrelevant. Thus, it is difficult to understand all the opposition politicians' complaints and moans about the common rules changes recently introduced by government House leader Harvie Andre. These reforms would do more to restore some credibility to the House and its occupants, than another roving committee of so-called great Canadians could.

In other words, this article is saying that the rules by which we govern ourselves are important. They do have an impact on how Canadians see us. We, as parliamentarians have been making Parliament irrelevant. I think it is unfortunate that is the kind of article that is written. Yet in fact, I think we would have to agree that it accurately reflects the feeling and attitude of a lot of our constituents.

We have to approach motions like these rule changes with sincerity and with honesty. We need to work together to make those reforms affect the House and the institution and our behaviour in a way that I think will help us re-establish our credibility.

We saw at the beginning of the debate some very strong statements about the rule changes. We saw very strong descriptive words being used, and yet in the end, after six days of debate, we saw a change in tone. Last night when we voted, and even before we voted, there were two things that happened which are significant.

Early yesterday afternoon, this House unanimously approved a House order that would allow us as a Parliament to adjourn today at 2 p.m.

• (1040)

We all agreed to that House order. It was passed through this House and as a result today we have a debate on the adjournment motion but we know at two o'clock that on division it is going to be passed.

I think that demonstrates what we as parliamentarians are trying to do together.

Second, there was a lot of controversy about what was going to happen to the votes. Yet if we look at what happened in the votes last night we find that parts of the package, particularly the Private Members' Business part, passed unanimously. I did not see that in any headlines this morning. It did not make a story. But in the midst of a fascinating debate and a fair amount of controversy we passed unanimously a part of the package, and we went further. We managed to work out among ourselves a voting pattern that would allow members to go home at about 1:15 in the morning.

Those are examples of co-operation that I think reflect well on the institution.

I say all that because we have been, in the last two years, through one of the most dramatic sessions of Parliament that we have seen in a long time. When we return on or about May 13, we are going to be into another very dynamic session of Parliament, but the dynamics of the next session are going to be even more important than the one we finished because in many ways what we will face will not be issues of great partisan import, but ones that will strike the very roots of our country.

When we enter into that debate, to a large extent all of us are going to be forced to examine the kind of country we want, the kind of co-operation that we can develop with people from other parts of the country than where we may live. We are going to be faced with an issue that will force us to examine our partisan differences very carefully. We are going to be forced to decide whether or not we as individual members are going to behave in a partisan way and score points off one another, or we are going to set aside those differences and try to build a consensus that will make Albertans feel comfortable in this country, make Quebecers feel comfortable in this country, or make maritimers feel comfortable in this country.

It will be a tremendous challenge for us because so often by habit or practice, we come into this House and immediately put on our partisan cloaks, get the fists up, and get ready to go at it. We are going to be forced to stop this because, if we do not stop, the price that the Canadian electorate is going to ask us to pay is more than our seats in the next election, whether or not we can survive that election. It is going to be much more than that. It is going to be Canadians saying to us, "why didn't you put the country ahead of your own personal ambitions?"

We are going to face a very difficult decision because, as we have been trained for years, we have by instinct trained and committed ourselves to behaviour that says we look first at the partisan opportunity and then, second, at the issue. Now I do not think that would be the case today. I think we are going to see that the issue we are going to face is an issue that we cannot afford to be deal with in such a way.

There are all sorts of rumours floating around as to what is going to happen in the next stage. I saw a report on *Canada AM* this morning suggesting that Parliament will play a major role in this next constitutional stage of our country. I hope that report is true. I do not know that. I do not have any inside information that allows me to say that. I hope it is true, because I cannot think of one single institution or vehicle that we could use in the entire country of Canada that better provides the opportunity to bring all the perspectives of the nation together in one place, to participate in discussions about the country than this one.

I can remember when I was first elected in 1980, sitting back just on the other side of the Chamber in the seat over there in the back row, one of my first impressions was sitting there and, for the first time in my life, being surrounded by people who represented every part of Canada. People from the Northwest Territories, people from southern British Columbia, people from the maritimes, from Quebec, from Ontario and from all over the country. People who had perspectives that were so different from my own, who had experiences that shaped their thoughts and their approaches to Parliament and laws, and were so different from my own. This was not so much because of partisan differences, it was because their part of the country was very different from the part of the country that I lived in.

If that television report this morning was true, if we, as parliamentarians, have an opportunity to enter into debates on the constitutional future of our country, we are going to face one of the most exciting opportunities we have ever had, at least in my 11 years in Parliament. We can take almost any issue that might reflect on this country and bring to it a perspective that is unique, that expresses very clearly the distinctions that exist between different people and between different regions. We, as an institution, as a collective group, have probably the best opportunity to search out alternatives, to search out a consensus that we can offer up to the rest of the country.

I must say that is what I thought I was elected to do. When I had this dream as a young boy of becoming a member of Parliament, this is what I thought would happen. I was going to come to Parliament. I was going to think about the great issues of the day. I was going to struggle with them. I was going to do some real hard soul searching. I was going to be part of the process that drafted the laws that directed the land.

I received a big shock when I arrived at Parliament. I discovered, while I was sitting over there, that I had very little to do with legislation. Even as I talked to members who were on the other side of the House, at that time members of the government, they would say to me the same things that I felt.

• (1050)

They, too, felt that they were not part of the legislative process. That is why the McGrath task force was a turning point; that is why the question of committees is so important.

As we have gone through the three stages of reform we have had in the last 11 years—the Lefebvre committee, the McGrath task force, this set of rules that we have just put into the House of Commons, and the next one that is yet to come—

Mr. Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I wonder if the hon. member could explain how someone who has just moved to impose 10-minute speeches on everybody else, for all time, sees fit to go on for some 50 minutes now while others are waiting for an opportunity to speak. It seems a bit inconsistent.

Madam Deputy Speaker: It must be Friday and the hon. member for Winnipeg Transcona obviously heard all the nice things the hon. member for Peace River had to say about him a while ago. But with the rules that do prevail today, the hon. member is allowed unlimited time.

Mr. Cooper: Madam Speaker, I apologize to my friend for being so long but it is an opportunity I have not had in a long time—

An hon. member: Make it your swan song, Albert.

Mr. Cooper: —to express, with unlimited time, some of the thoughts that I have developed over my 11 years as a member of Parliament.

My friend says I am one of the people who has restricted other members to debate for 10 minutes. Now, he knows that is not true; he knows that, in fact, what we did in this rules change was to simply change the eight-hour rule to a five-hour rule, so that we have gone from 20 to 10. He will also know that in the McGrath task force it was the first time in my memory that we had suggested that speeches be shortened.

There is a consistency, and that is to give more members an opportunity to participate in the debate.

What I wanted to do this morning was take the few minutes that I have to lay out the type of session that we have just gone through. I wanted to talk about the rule changes and the way they impact on the institution. I wanted to tie that to the issues we are going to face in the next few weeks. The importance of the issues that we are going to face cannot be overestimated.

I think all of us know that we are going to have other issues, we are going to have other bills to debate in this Parliament. But the really important issue that we are all going to face is the question of national unity. I hope, and I want to express it even stronger than that, it is more than a hope, it is a strong desire, that Parliament be the focal point of that discussion.

I would like to be able to get up in the morning knowing that I am going to participate in a debate that is going to impact on the nature of this country, and more than to participate, to know that I am going to have an influence on it.

From what I can hear happening, that is what is going to happen. That is what is going to be the case, that we as members, are going to be able to participate in that debate in this House and we are going to have a chance to influence it.

I know, in terms of committees, that whatever this House addresses, whatever bill or motion we discuss, will probably at some point be referred to a committee of the House. Again, another opportunity for us as members to participate and to be part of the process.

I obviously have lots of papers in front of me and I could easily go on for another several minutes.

Mr. Blaikie: Oh, please do. Please do.

Mr. Cooper: I do not want to monopolize the time. That is not my intention. I did want to lay out these thoughts this morning, and to express to the House some of the concerns, attitudes and ideals that I would like to see us, as a House, express and live up to in the next little while.

I want to thank the hon. members for the opportunity to participate. Madam Speaker, I thank you for that chance. I want to say to all of the members that I hope they have a good rest over the recess. Most of us will be working in our ridings, but I hope we take the time to rest a little bit, because we are going to need to take the

time for solitude to think and to reflect. I hope all members do that.

I wish everybody a good recess, and I look forward to the debates and the excitement that is going to happen when we come back on May 13.

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the parliamentary secretary for his grade 5 essay.

One should be a bit more generous and say grade 6 essay, and congratulate and give him high marks for his knowledge of geography, with high marks also for his self-congratulatory skills and in looking deeply and closely at a few trees. He saw a few trees. I do not know if he saw the forest.

One should give him high marks for delivering a 45-minute speech in the pursuit of bubbles, rumours and fantasies and for revealing the depth of the intellectual capacity of his government on whose behalf he has obviously spoken. Certainly, he deserves high marks for a masterful, political analysis of the situation today in Canada.

If that is what the cabinet of the Government of Canada can produce on the Adjournment Debate, then everybody understands why we are in trouble.

In reply, I would say that rarely in the history of Parliament has the government asked for an adjournment of Parliament immediately after returning from an Easter recess. I could hardly believe my ears when the parliamentary secretary wished us a happy recess and a good rest.

We have just come back from a recess. What is he talking about? Does he realize that we just had Easter and that we just got back from a recess?

Why are we having an adjournment? If there is a good reason, we would like to hear it. Canadians are entitled to hear it, but we did not hear it in the 50-minute speech of the parliamentary secretary.

To be quite fair in this debate, as we always try to be, I would add that Canadians would find nothing wrong with the government deciding to adjourn today and resume next week with a brand new session and a speech from the throne. Unfortunately, that is not the case.

At the same time, the country is in trouble because of high unemployment, dissatisfaction in Quebec and in the west, understandable unrest amongst native people in Oka, James Bay, Alberta and British Columbia because of the lack of a federal role when it comes to proposed major construction of river dams in three provinces, and the dissatisfaction of the public with the way we manage our forests. We are in deep trouble because civil servants are overworked and understaffed—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Unfortunately I must interrupt the hon. member who of course will have the floor after Question Period.

[*Translation*]

It being 11 o'clock, pursuant to Standing Order 30(5), the House will now proceed to Members' Statements pursuant to Standing Order 31.

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 31

[*English*]

THE CONSTITUTION

Hon. Alan Redway (Don Valley East): Madam Speaker, if we are going to address all of Canadians' constitutional concerns, we will have to take a look at the Charter of Rights and Freedoms as well.

Many Canadians feel that the Charter is fine the way it is. But there are some who want to add to it the right to private property, or the right to medicare or the right to shelter. Others believe that the Charter should spell out our responsibilities and our obligations as well as our rights and freedoms. Still others want to eliminate the "notwithstanding clause". There are those who believe that Charter rights should apply only to Canadian citizens and not to refugee claimants or fugitives from foreign justice and others who want to delete references to official bilingualism or multiculturalism.

Whatever we do, we are bound to be unhappy at times when the Charter protects a right that some of us would rather it did not.

* * *

GASOLINE ADDITIVES

Hon. Ralph Ferguson (Lambton—Middlesex): Madam Speaker, I rise today to call on the government to introduce legislation to support the use of ethanol and to ban MMT in Canadian automotive fuels.

We have heard this government on many occasions promise time and time again that it would set up a special program to encourage the use of grain alcohol as an octane booster for gasoline.

It took us six years to ban lead, and despite the government's so–called commitment to ethanol and the environmental impact, it allowed MMT, an insidious neurotoxic substance to replace lead in Canadian gasoline.

I am aware of several people who have worked in garages, car dealerships, muffler shops and gasoline bars, and one teacher who taught auto mechanics in a high school in Saskatchewan, who have serious neurological health problems. Two of these people have gone public. Some of our Canadian scientists have been calling and warning of these health effects for several years.

I have documents dated 1990 from medical schools and universities, as well as other institutions outlining in detail the truly horrible effects that allowing the continued use of this neurotoxin can have on the Canadian people.

This insidious substance accumulates in the bodies and the effects may not appear for several years. Because our children—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Unfortunately, I must interrupt the hon. member. The hon. member for Delta.

* * *

CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY

Mr. Stan Wilbee (Delta): Madam Speaker, I take this opportunity to remind members of the House and all Canadians that April is Cancer Month.

In Canada we estimate that over 100,000 new cancer cases will be diagnosed this year and that approximately 50,000 people will die of this disease.

The government is taking steps to change this. In collaboration with the provinces and the Canadian Cancer Society, the Department of National Health and Welfare is working to improve cervical and breast cancer screening programs in Canada. The department is also helping to fund the work of the Cancer 2000 task force "Strategies for Cancer Control in Canada".

I would like to applaud all those involved in the fight against cancer and their efforts toward reducing the burden of this disease on Canadians. I particularly pay tribute to the Canadian Cancer Society and the work it is doing.

* * *

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West): Madam Speaker, it is another GST moment. Strange but true, case number two, the youth "tax credit caper".

If you are under 19 years of age and earn under $30,000, you do not qualify for a GST tax credit, even if you are a non–dependent. The only way the Conservative government will let you have the credit is if you have a child.

Today non–dependent Canadians under 19 can receive unemployment insurance; they can receive welfare; they can vote. But they do not get the same break under this regressive tax as other people do. It is a clear case of discrimination.

The Conservative government's hand is out for a large chunk of taxes from the often small pay cheques of youth, and will gladly accept GST to boot. But a tax credit? Forget it.

Stay tuned, the saga does continue. Coming up, the GST insurance.

* * *

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona): Mr. Speaker, the Candlelighters Childhood Cancer Foundation of Canada is a national organization which represents 31 parent support groups from across Canada whose families have children with cancer. The difficulties these families face are enormous, given the emotional, psychological, financial and logistic problems that arise when a child suffers from cancer.

In providing the family support needed as treatments occur for their children, parents must often quit their jobs or take extensive leaves of absence. As presently regulated, these parents are not eligible for unemployment insurance unless they are diagnosed as suffering from extreme emotional distress. This approach has proven itself to be inadequate and potentially detrimental to an employee's career status.

As a result of this situation, Candlelighters has proposed a federal caretakers allowance through the unemployment insurance program which would provide benefits in the same manner as individuals receive benefits for maternity and quarantine leave. Many other nations already have such a program in place and a Canadian initiative in this regard would be a worthwhile, progressive step that would make the lives of many distressed Canadians slightly more bearable.

I have written to ministers on this and the answer I get is that it would set a—

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. member's time has expired.

* * *

REFUGEES

Mr. Geoff Scott (Hamilton—Wentworth): Madam Speaker, I am sure that every member in this Chamber wishes that she or he could personally do something, anything, to help the Kurdish refugees before they die on the muddy mountainsides of Iraq and Turkey. Even hardened news reporters can be heard dissolving at scenes like the sight of a three-year old girl, barefoot, ankle deep in mud, wearing a thin little dress and shivering in the steady drizzle. Days, even hours, count with these children.

Canada must urge the involvement of the United Nations at the highest level, and fast. We must break the bureaucratic and political logjam, and cut through the complexities of agencies like the World Food Program, UNICEF and others. I am urging that a special representative of the Secretary-General or some United Nations emergency contingent oversee relief efforts immediately.

If only for the sake of these kids, we have to get the United Nations effectively and quickly involved. Above all, we have to get rid of that monstrous mass murderer, Saddam Hussein, to permit the relocation of the Kurdish people in their own homeland.

* * *

UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr. David Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): Madam Speaker, I rise today to express my frustration and dismay with the Government of Canada regarding the recent unemployment statistics which have been released for the Island of Cape Breton, part of which is my constituency.

The figures released by employment and immigration state there is 22.2 per cent unemployment, which is the official record, whereas in some of the communities it ranges between 40 and 50 per cent.

I have called upon the Government of Canada, and in particular the Minister of Employment and Immigration, as well as the minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, to put in place programs which will address the very serious situation on the Island of Cape Breton.

I believe there is an obligation, both legal and moral on the part of the Government of Canada to attempt to do everything humanly possible to alleviate the fear, the frustration and the anguish of a people who have been singled out by the Government of Canada for such bad economic policy.

* * *

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Madam Speaker, National Volunteer week is from April 21 to 27. During that week, communities in all regions of the country will pay tribute to their volunteers and use the opportunity to celebrate caring for others and compassion, which hold a fundamental place in the life of Canadians. With their generosity and dedication, volunteers contribute to the betterment of their fellow citizens and strengthen the whole fabric of society.

Despite that, the great importance of what they do is not yet recognized by all. To better understand the real contribution of volunteers, let us consider it in economic terms. If a monetary value were assigned to all the hours freely given by members of Canadian volunteer organizations, it would amount to approximately $13.2 billion a year. That is impressive to say the least.

Three cheers for Canada's volunteers!

[*English*]

FORESTRY

Ms. Lynn Hunter (Saanich—Gulf Islands): Madam Speaker, Canada's cut and run logging of the past will become the exploit and sell out industry of the future unless action is taken immediately.

Canada's forest lands are being alienated, subdivided, sold off and urbanized by major forestry companies.

MacMillan Bloedel, the company which spends millions to lobby for clearcutting 3,000 hectares in both the Carmanah and Tsitika valleys, is now marketing 3,000 hectares of its Managed Forest Lands on Galiano Island in the Gulf Islands as an "investment in paradise".

This is profiteering and real estate speculation of forest lands on which they have received preferential tax assessment, paid no royalties or stumpage fees.

• (1110)

Forest lands must be managed for the public. Economic self-interest by multinationals cannot be allowed to destroy communities, jobs and the environment.

If Canada is indeed serious about protecting its forests and its international reputation, the respect for communities, for jobs and for the environment must be part of the business plan.

It is the responsibility of governments to ensure that message is delivered.

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NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Mr. Scott Thorkelson (Edmonton—Strathcona): Madam Speaker, I would like to draw the attention of the House to National Volunteer Week which is being held this year from April 21 to April 27.

This week, communities across the nation are paying tribute to those many Canadians who donate their time and energy to ensure the well-being of fellow citizens and to support the causes in which they believe.

Thirteen million Canadians, men and women of all ages, from all walks of life and from every cultural background make volunteering an integral part of their lives.

Whether working on their own or through organized groups, they play a strong and vital role in ensuring that our society is more open and compassionate. Through their dedication and commitment, they help shape and strengthen our communities and are one of the most valuable natural resources this country has.

Volunteering fosters community spirit and promotes a sense of belonging. It connects individuals with their neighbours, with others sharing common interests or concerns and with Canadians nation-wide.

The strength of the volunteer spirit in Canada is a remarkable achievement. This nation truly owes a debt of gratitude to its many volunteers.

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[*Translation*]

TRIBUTE TO LOUIS LABERGE

Mr. Marcel Prud'homme (Saint-Denis): Madam Speaker, Louis Laberge's leaving the presidency of the Quebec Federation of Labour will be a dramatic occasion for all those who, during his 27 years at the helm of this dynamic union, got to know him and love him with his faults and good qualities.

But we already have the assurance that he will remain on the scene as full-time president of the Quebec Workers' Solidarity Fund, which he was so instrumental in creating in 1983 and has more than 100,000 shareholders and $350 million in assets. This fund is his pet project and he will certainly put his whole heart into running it well.

Nicknamed the grey eminence, but more affectionately known as our national "Ti-Louis", Mr. Laberge is an old friend. I was fortunate to know this bubbly, colourful personality in the 1950s when, with my father whom he called Dr. Hector, he sat on Montreal City Council. I was able to appreciate his energy, his fighting spirit and his dedication to all the causes he believes in.

Elected president of the QFL in 1964, the same year I was elected member of Parliament for Saint-Denis, Ti-Louis has become the likable but rough 67-year-old lion who will still make his presence felt in the labour

federation as president emeritus, although he says that he will leave the reins of power entirely to his successor and friend, Fernand D'Aoust, who opposed him for the presidency in 1964. I also have high regard for Mr. D'Aoust and I wish him an equally successful career at the head of an organization that is full of vitality.

I am pleased to wish Mr. Laberge and his wife, who has always supported him so well, all the best.

I am even more pleased that the new QFL headquarters will be in my riding of Saint–Denis, at the corner of Saint–Denis and Crémazie. This will bring me even closer to him. Long live Ti–Louis Laberge!

Madam Deputy Speaker: Unfortunately, I must interrupt the hon. member. The hon. member for Edmonton East has the floor.

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[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Ross Harvey (Edmonton East): Madam Speaker, Dr. James Plambeck of the University of Alberta's Chemistry Department has estimated that Mitsubishi's giant Al–Pac pulp mill on the Athabasca River will produce about 60,500 cubic metres of effluent every day.

Scores of thousands of people downstream from the mill draw their drinking water from that river. Who will guarantee all those thousands that they will suffer no ill effects from swallowing what has been estimated to be an average of a tablespoon of straight mill effluent every day?

As for the Minister of Environment, he will know that the scientific review panel report of the company's revised proposal has been thoroughly discredited as bad science.

Therefore, I call on the minister to exercise his undisputed authority to halt the mill's progress, at least until baseline studies are done on the Athabasca River system and other crucial conditions set in the original federal–provincial review have been met and completed unless he, too, is willing to drink a tablespoon of mill effluent every day.

[*Translation*]

QUEBEC GAMES

Mr. Denis Pronovost (Saint–Maurice): Madam Speaker, the 26th Quebec Games finals will go down in history for the exceptional involvement of the entire population of the localities of Shawinigan, Grand–Mère and Shawinigan–Sud.

Under the skilfull direction of Mr. Michel Béliveau, president of the organizing committee of the 1991 Quebec Winter Games, at least 4,100 volunteers from the heart of the Saint–Maurice valley worked for 10 days to make this major sporting event a success.

I want to thank in particular the government of Canada, and the hon. Minister of Employment and Immigration, for its outstanding financial support.

My congratulations to all the people of the central part of the Saint–Maurice valley for this great success.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint–Léonard): Madam Speaker, today, as a matter of fact this afternoon, the government will be closing down this Parliament while 1.4 million Canadian men and women are out of work and 500,000 Canadians depend on food banks for their daily meals.

In Quebec, Madam Speaker, 5,000 businesses had to file for bankruptcy in 1990, and 14,000 cases of personal bankruptcy were reported. In Montreal, 223,000 people are jobless and the unemployment rate, which rose to 14 per cent, is the highest in the country.

In Quebec City, there are 24,000 people out of work; in Trois–Rivières, 9,000, or 16 per cent of the population; in Sherbrooke, 8,000; in the Chicoutimi–Jonquière area, 8,000 also. In the province, 335,000 people are on welfare and 3,000 others join them every month.

Major job losses are reported, Madam Speaker, at Air Canada, VIA Rail and CP and plant closures were decided by General Motors, Pratt and Whitney and Canadair just to name of few. Fourty–one thousand jobs were lost in the manufacturing sector in 1990. That is a disaster!

Madam Speaker: Unfortunately, the hon. member's time is up.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*English*]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Deputy Prime Minister. This government insists on closing down Parliament because it says it needs more time, more than a month, to write a new throne speech. This is a desperate attempt to put a fresh face on its tired and failed old policies.

Surely the government does not need another month to know that it has a very serious and crucial economic problem, and it is that there are more than 1.4 million people looking for work in this country.

Will the Deputy Prime Minister give us a commitment today that the new throne speech will contain an immediate program of full employment so that there will be at least a glimmer of hope for the more than 1.4 million Canadians who are out of work due to the discredited economic policies of this failed and tired old government.

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised at the context of the hon. member's question. It was my understanding that in the negotiations among House leaders, there was a genuine desire, after the passage of the resolution that would incorporate new rules in the House, there would be a period of time when we could get ready for the new session of Parliament.

It is quite normal to have more than one session in any Parliament. It has been the decision of the government to come forward with a Speech from the Throne which will reflect some of the concerns that affect the nation with regard to national unity, economic opportunities and the continuation of the good policies that have built a stronger Canada.

The hon. member will recognize that the figures this month indicate that for the first time in five months, there has been a net increase in total jobs created in this country. I think that is a positive sign.

There should be no surprise about the fact that we were going to go through this bit of a downturn. It was clearly indicated in the budget speech presented by the Minister of Finance. We expect a turnaround to occur in the second half as the Minister of Finance predicted. In his seven years as Minister of Finance, his predictions have always come true to form.

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Madam Speaker, the Deputy Prime Minister talks of a bit of a downturn. Why does he not admit, as the Minister of Finance was finally forced to admit, that we are in a desperate and serious recession caused by this government's economic policies.

[*Translation*]

Madam Speaker, the tragic situation workers find themselves in nation-wide does not seem to be taking a turn for the better.

In Trois-Rivières, the unemployment rate is 16 per cent. That means 9,000 people out of work.

In Sherbrooke, there are 8,000 jobless people, and another 8,000 in the Chicoutimi area.

So, I would like to ask the acting Prime Minister this: Can he reassure the Canadian people and promise them today that the throne speech will contain full employment policies which will have an immediate impact?

Why does he not give a little hope to the Canadian people who are unemployed because of old and tired policies? Can he give us a positive answer today for the benefit of the jobless?

• (1120)

[*English*]

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the old and tired policies are the policies that are advocated by the hon. member. They are policies which are throw-backs to the past which simply did not work when he was in government. We are not going to go back to that type of policy.

I remind him of the fact that under his policies back in the early 1980s, we had 14 per cent unemployment, we had 22 per cent interest rates and we had a disastrous recession in 1981-82.

What we have now is a set of policies that are designed to get us out of the recession that we are in today. They are designed to get interest rates down. We are seeing some signs of recovery in that. I need only remind the hon. member of what has happened in the housing

market. We are seeing a substantial increase in housing sales from a level of about 2,500 to a level of close to 6,000 from January to February.

I quote from Mr. John Winter, who is a leading retail analyst in Toronto. He says: "I think March will be better than February and, quite frankly, I think we have seen the bottom of this slump." This is consistent with what we have been saying as a government. It is consistent with what the Royal Bank and what the Conference Board have been saying.

If the hon. member would quit walking around with a little cloud over his head, only talking doom and gloom, he might be able to see that as well.

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Madam Speaker, I do not know why this minister is revelling in the problems caused for millions of Canadians due to the policies of his own government for which he was taking credit.

Why is the minister continuing to rely on the same policies to get us out of the recession that he admits got us into the recession? If the minister will not give us a commitment today for new policies of full employment, I ask him to tell us what his government is doing right now for the more than 1.4 million Canadians who are standing in the unemployment lines all across this country. Give us an answer right now. Give Canadians some hope.

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I do not know what the hon. member is thinking about when he says I am revelling in the difficulties that Canadians are having. I am not revelling at all. I do not like it at all. What I do know is that the policy prescriptions that we are following are the right ones to get us out of the recession that we are in today.

We saw, from 1984 right through to the spring of 1990, where those policies brought us record growth, that Canada was number two, only after Japan, of the major industrialized countries. There were 1.6 million jobs created in that period of time. So these policies are working.

I say to the hon. member, if he has any ideas, if he has any alternative policies, let us know and let us have them, but I have yet, in the six and a half years that I have been Minister of Finance, heard anything from the Liberal Opposition as to what alternative policies it has. Canadians are looking for more than just straight negative opposition, what they are looking for is a positive policy approach.

* * *

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Fred J. Mifflin (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration.

In Atlantic Canada, unemployment insurance recipients are experiencing extraordinary delays in having their UI claims processed; in many cases, from 10 days to 2 weeks. This is devastating in an area where unemployment is running over 20 per cent. For those people whose only source of livelihood is their UIC cheque, it is totally unacceptable, even tragic.

I would ask the minister to explain why this is happening and what is being done to rectify it.

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, I sympathize with the hon. member's question and its intent because we have had some processing problems in some of our offices. What we have been trying to do as a result is do more through the mail and more on the telephone, and we have improved our claims processing. We are putting more people in our offices to ensure that we can speed up the processes for getting cheques to people as rapidly as possible.

Sometimes it comes as well from people coming in to us with incorrect information which delays the process and takes up some of our personnel time. But we are doing the best we can to ensure that the backlogs come down, and they are being reduced very quickly.

Mr. Fred J. Mifflin (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception): Madam Speaker, whatever the reason for this delay, there is hope that we are witnessing a temporary interruption and that this greatly reduced level of service is not something that can be expected on a long-term basis. That is the concern. So I would ask the minister to undertake to assure this House that her department will not accept a degradation of service for UI claimants as a regular occurrence.

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, far from it being a regular occurrence, the service throughout our department has improved quite considerably over the last two or three years. I answered the first question dealing with the difficulties that the hon. member pointed out and I am quite prepared to accept that, but over time we have improved the service. Not only that, the programs we have put in place are programs that enable people to get back to work faster and to get trained for other jobs. Even in the Atlantic region which the hon. member represents, where I recognize there are particular difficulties, there is a mismatch between the training that people have and the jobs that are available because there are some jobs available. I would point out that in the month of March across Canada, there were 2,000 more jobs than there were the month before. There was an increase in the unemployment rate because of more people coming into the labour force.

To reinforce what my colleague said about the economy turning around, we are seeing more jobs being created and there were more created last month.

* * *

DE HAVILLAND

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. Aerospatiale, which is part of the consortium that is going to purchase de Havilland, already had its president as its official lobbyist in Canada. On April 5 Fred Doucet became an official registered lobbyist for Aerospatiale.

Could the Deputy Prime Minister tell us what possible advantage Aerospatiale could expect to gain by having a former fundraiser for the Prime Minister, a former chief of staff, and in fact a man who got married at 24 Sussex Drive, as its official lobbyist?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, that question would be more appropriately addressed to Aerospatiale. He can certainly phone them up and ask them. I think that would give him the best answer.

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Madam Speaker, we are in a nation where there is a great deal of distrust and questioning about the political process. The whole country is, and the Deputy Prime Minister knows that.

I think they would be wondering whether there is more concern about producing jobs for the Prime Minister's cronies than the 26,000 people who are going to be affected by this purchase.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am sure the hon. member has a direct question to pose to one of the ministers.

Mr. McCurdy: Yes, Madam Speaker. Is the Deputy Prime Minister aware of whether or not this close friend of the Prime Minister has in fact approached the Minister of Industry, Science and Technology, or the Prime Minister, to discuss with him how they are going to preserve those 26,000 jobs that are likely to be affected by the de Havilland purchase, or is it in fact more important to see that the former Conservative cronies get jobs?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I really cannot add any more to the obvious answer provided by the Deputy Prime Minister, and that is to phone those who signed the contract, but I say to the hon. member that when the Prime Minister came into office he said he would bring in a lobbyist registration act. That has come into effect and is in force. It is that information that is now public and I would suggest that the hon. member work on the basis of that type of knowledge rather than the kind of innuendo which he is so capable of throwing around here.

* * *

• (1130)

BANKRUPTCY ACT

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

It has been seven years now that this government has promised improvements to the Bankruptcy Act of Canada. God knows, we have waited for decades of successive Liberal governments to bring in appropriate changes to the Bankruptcy Act of this country that would give a measure of justice to those workers who have lost their jobs and to those suppliers who have not been paid as a result of bankruptcies.

Yesterday, after six months in office—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Normally, the first questions asked by the New Democratic Party would have the possibility of one question and two supplementaries.

I am really trying very hard to see the connection between the first question asked and the one being asked by the member now. Maybe he would want to rephrase his question and put it now.

Mr. Rodriguez: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague for Windsor—St. Clair pointed out that there is a danger of 26,000 jobs being lost in de Havilland.

My question deals with job losses.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Then the hon. member will put his question now.

Mr. Rodriguez: I understand why they are so sensitive about this on both sides.

Can this government tell the people of Canada in what month, in what year and in what decade can we expect to get the changes to the Bankruptcy Act that will provide justice to workers who have lost their jobs as a result of bankruptcies?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, the government does share the concern expressed by the hon. member.

I can assure him that it is a matter that is under very active consideration. I hope that in the not too distant future we will be able to respond to the very valid point that the hon. member made. I just ask him to be patient a little longer.

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JUSTICE

Mr. Stan Wilbee (Delta): Madam Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Justice.

Recently, there was a very significant court case in British Columbia. The Gitksan-Wet'suwet'en people, we understand, are going to take this to appeal. Eventually, it will end up in the Supreme Court.

There is a large number of people in British Columbia and in other parts of Canada who feel that it would save a lot of time and money if this appeal was directly referred to the Supreme Court.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. member will put his question now.

Mr. Wilbee: Madam Speaker, my question is to the justice minister.

Can this case not be referred directly to the Supreme Court, rather than going through the various appeal processes which will involve a lot of funding and a lot of time, which is unnecessary at this time?

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Madam Speaker, technically and theoretically it is possible to refer questions to the Supreme Court of Canada.

We have not had a formal request to do so. We are undergoing discussions with parties to the case. We are no longer party to the case since the claim against us was dismissed.

I would point out, though, that it is unusual to refer a matter as factually complex as this to the Supreme Court of Canada. I think all the parties would want to consider what was the best way to clarify the issues. It is a case of very complex fact in law.

Our disposition is to be as co-operative as possible. We are having informal discussions, but as yet have had no formal request from any of the parties.

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DE HAVILLAND

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Acting Prime Minister, and it is with regard to the proposed sale of de Havilland.

It has been confirmed this morning in writing by the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. Mr. Fred Doucet, the former chief of staff and friend of the Prime Minister, has been hired as the chief lobbyist to lobby both the government and Investment Canada on behalf of the consortium of Aerospatiale and Alenia.

Given that the government thus far has failed to stand up for the Canadian aerospace industry or provide any details whatsoever of the proposed deal, how can Canadians now have any assurance whatsoever that the interest of the workers at de Havilland, our aerospace industry and research and development will take precedence over the interest of a former chief of staff and long time personal friend of the Prime Minister?

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): The people of Canada can have trust and confidence that this will bring net benefit to Canada because the previous arrangement brought tremendous net benefit to Canada. They have moved from 2,800 jobs

in 1974 to a level way beyond that. They have developed a strong order book. They have got a good distribution network. This was all done when Boeing took over.

As we move to a different purchaser, we will ensure that net benefit to Canada is there again.

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Madam Speaker, the question is, as the minister put it, a question of trust.

I return to the Acting Prime Minister and ask him very simply, will the allegiance of the government lie with the workers of de Havilland and the aerospace industry, or will the allegiance of the government lie with a former chief of staff and long time personal friend of the Prime Minister? Whose side will the government be on? Let us have some confidence and trust for a change on behalf of Canadians.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister may want to answer, but it is very difficult for the Chair to accept that this is a question regarding the administration of government. The decision was made by a private company and not by the government. I do not see how it is a question regarding the administration of the government.

The hon. minister may want to answer. If not, I cannot allow the question.

I have heard the comment made by the hon. member for York West and I do not think he meant to imply any impropriety from the Speaker. I am sure that he will want to rise right away and withdraw the comment.

Mr. Marchi: I concur with your sentiments and I think you are absolutely right.

* * *

TELESAT CANADA

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Madam Speaker, my question is also to the Deputy Prime Minister.

It concerns Telesat Canada. In 1985, the Prime Minister laid down the law: No government-owned corporation could hire lobbyists to lobby cabinet. Now we hear that Telesat Canada, the government-owned satellite company, is paying the Prime Minister's former assistant, Bill Fox, and a recent Conservative Party president, Bill Jarvis, to lobby cabinet and to overrule a CRTC decision.

Will the Deputy Prime Minister now stand in his place and respect the rules laid down by the Prime Minister and put an end to this abusive process?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Madam Speaker, the government does not own the company. We are a shareholder, we have an interest in the company, but it is a private company.

Whatever they do is their business. It is Telesat's business. The government will act in its own best interest and in the interest of the nation.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): The majority shareholder in this corporation is the Government of Canada, and therefore it is a government corporation.

I want to ask a supplementary. First of all, cabinet itself could be in a very difficult position. By overruling the CRTC it increases the value of Telesat. Then it will privatizė it. At the same time, of course, Tory friends will be rewarded by doing the lobbying.

I want to know this time whose side the Prime Minister is going to be on. Is it the side of the Tory lobbyists or on the side of the people of Canada, for a change?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Madam Speaker, Telesat hired communications consultants to help them prepare their case. I know they did hire them because they happen to be good.

Now, they will do what they feel is appropriate and the government will do what we have to do in the best interests of the nation.

* * *

WOLVERINE COPPER TUBING

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Deputy Prime Minister.

Another Canadian manufacturer has just been deep-sixed by free trade. Wolverine Copper Tubing of Annacis Island, British Columbia, has suddenly and in the middle of contract negotiations closed its doors and is moving production south of the border, throwing 180 British Columbians out on the street. Wolverine is an Alabama

based, U.S. company that is, I might add, the sole manufacturer of copper tubing in Canada.

• (1140)

What actions, if any, has the government taken to forestall this closure and to protect the Canadian jobs that are at stake? If the minister has not taken any actions, what actions is he prepared to take?

Finally, why was Investment Canada allowed to sell out our Canadian manufacturing industry to foreign interests, when this is the obvious result?

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Madam Speaker, I think the hon. member should know that there is a similar Wolverine operation in my home riding of London, Ontario, and it makes the same products. I do not know what he is talking about when he says that the sole supplier has disappeared.

Mr. Merrithew: Get your facts right.

Mr. Hockin: More important is the effect of the free trade agreement. If the hon. member will look at the increase in manufacturing jobs in British Columbia in 1988, 1989 and 1990 in anticipation of the trade agreement, the net benefit is on a huge positive side, not a negative side.

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): Madam Speaker, Wolverine owns three plants. I say there is one down and two to go.

John Quarles, President and CEO of Wolverine in Alabama, has cited economic reasons for the closure. In a recent telephone conversation he said: "We are fighting those high Canadian interest rates and the GST, and we just can't make a go of it".

Will the minister not admit that this government's tragic monetary policy, its high interest policy and its over-valued Canadian dollar, combined with the GST, are killing our manufacturing industry and mothballing our economy?

Will he also not admit that the impact of these measures, when we combine them with the free trade agreement, is encouraging a virtual exodus of manufacturers out of Canada?

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Madam Speaker, I certainly will not admit such a thing. As a matter of fact the exact opposite is the case.

Mr. Merrithew: Right on.

Mr. Hockin: The old manufacturers' sales tax which built in a cost of operation 4 per cent or 5 per cent more than Canadian operations should ever have to carry has been totally removed. What has happened is that the Canadian manufacturing establishment has benefited to the tune of 3, 4 or 5 per cent with the removal of the old federal sales tax.

In terms of the free trade agreement, we have put in place accelerated tariff reductions in a number of areas to benefit industries similar to that and a number of manufacturing industries in British Columbia, all to show that the manufacturing sector in many cases wants an acceleration of this agreement and nothing other than that.

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REVENUE CANADA

Mr. Jim Jordan (Leeds—Grenville): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Revenue.

The minister will know, if he has examined the figures, that one-day shopping trips to the U.S. over the past two or three weekends show that the volume has reached alarming proportions. I would like to ask the minister about the new policy, which I understand is currently being drafted by cabinet to address these concerns.

What is the thrust of this new policy likely to be? When is the new policy likely to be announced?

Hon. Otto Jelinek (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member touches on a very serious problem that affects not only the federal government but, more important, the provincial and municipal governments, the private sector and labour itself.

From a Customs standpoint, the hon. member will know that we have moved ahead in accelerating the use of technology, adjusting work forces to conform to demands and putting in a pilot project to make a more efficient and effective way of collecting taxes and duties. That is on the Customs side.

On a broader side, the government is working toward creating and taking the leadership in creating a program that will bring in the private sector, that will bring in labour, that will bring in the provinces and that will bring in the municipalities so that we can deal with this on a society-wide basis and make sure that we come up with a resolution that will resolve this matter sooner, rather than later.

Mr. Jim Jordan (Leeds—Grenville): With reference to the reply I got, Madam Speaker, I want to remind the minister that facilitating the entry of Americans into Canada at border points is a good idea. We agree with that, but that is only one issue.

Addressing the attraction to shop in the U.S. on a regular basis by Canadians is a very different issue.

My supplementary question is for the same minister. With an estimated annual $1 billion in lost retail sales in Ontario alone for the current year, not to mention the thousands of lost jobs in the retail industry, can the minister tell me what concrete and immediate plans he has to address this tendency for more and more Canadians to do their regular weekly shopping in the United States?

Hon. Otto Jelinek (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I touched on that question in my first response but, to be more specific about it, as far as the customs operations are concerned I repeat that we are accelerating the use of technology through automated cash registers to make way for a more efficient and effective way of collecting duties and taxes.

We have put in recently in British Columbia a pilot project which is going to relieve the congestion at the border, revitalize the tourist industry in British Columbia, and allow for expanded commercial traffic in that province. We are going to be monitoring that and hopefully be expanding it to other parts of the country.

I have finished meeting on a bilateral basis with mayors from border communities this last week. We look forward to continuing to meet with them to come up with a marketing program that will allow Canadians to realize that by going south of the border to shop they in fact are hurting themselves, Canadian retailers and the Canadian economy as a whole.

Oral Questions

ABORIGINAL PROGRAMS

Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Nunatsiaq): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State for Multiculturalism and Citizenship. It concerns the aboriginal representative organizations program.

Over the past few years funding for this program has been cut and the program actually expired two weeks ago, on March 31. The minister of state has not yet made a decision on whether to extend or renew this program.

Will the minister tell the House today whether and when he intends to renew this program?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to indicate that yes, the program has made a very important contribution to the vitality and to the sustenance of the community.

We are currently in the process of reviewing very carefully what was in place. With my colleagues in caucus and cabinet, we are now examining where we go from here, but I am not in a position yet to reveal the details this morning.

Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Nunatsiaq): Madam Speaker, let me quote from the Main Estimates about the program:

> This program provides program funding to Inuit, Métis and non-status Indian and status Indian representative organizations which work to enable aboriginal people to participate in the political, social and economic life of Canada.

I have a supplementary question. The 32 aboriginal groups who use this program need to assure their clients and their banks that their funding is forthcoming and they cannot afford to wait for the minister to make up his mind.

Will the minister agree to release the funds available for this program today so these aboriginal organizations can get on with their important work?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Madam Speaker, we are very understanding of the situation that the groups find themselves in today. They have been very important and supportive of our desire to

create a society where equality is the call word, where equality is the cornerstone of our citizenship.

There are at the moment very important considerations on certain elements that were in the budget. We are now very carefully reviewing those elements. We have been as forthcoming as we can and have indicated to all of our client groups, not just the aboriginal representative organizations program that we have been very supportive of, whatever continuing support that we have been able to make in the interim pending a further decision of the caucus and the cabinet.

* * *

[*Translation*]

WILDLIFE RESERVES

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Forestry. We can read in *La Presse* of Thursday, April 4, 1991: "For lack of an agreement with Quebec on a conservation strategy, the Algonquins of Lac Barrière are threatening to set up barricades on Highway 117 and again block logging roads in La Vérendrye Park Wildlife Reserve to prevent any wood cutting." My question is this: Can the minister tell us today whether it is in his jurisdiction to implement a forestry regime in this wildlife reserve in Quebec?

• (1150)

[*English*]

Hon. Frank Oberle (Minister of Forestry): Madam Speaker, I can tell my hon. colleague that while we do have active programs in place to assist native people with the development of their resources on the reserves, if native people aspire to use resources that are on public lands under provincial jurisdiction it is the province of Quebec that would be the principal authority to deal with the native people on this particular issue.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Rod Laporte (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture.

Farmers in western Canada have a deadline that is rapidly approaching. They must decide whether to sign up for GRIP, for revenue insurance, for crop insurance, or in fact for nothing at all. An important part of that decision is whether or not deficiency payments will be tied to any or all of these programs.

Will the minister tell Canadian producers today whether or not they must sign up for any of these programs in order to be eligible for deficiency payments?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, as I am sure the hon. member knows—and I would appreciate if he would convey this to his producers—we did establish a set of principles that were agreed to by the provinces which would govern us in the development of a third line of defence package.

Largely, the principles reflect the multifaceted nature of the problem and the fact that it would be in everyone's best interest to get as many people as possible into the long-term safety net process. That is important from the standpoint of the producers, as well as the provinces, and particularly those who have yet to commit fully to the Net Income Stabilization Account, which is very key and vital to the long-term stability of the agricultural community.

One of the principles is that to the extent possible any transitional assistance should be tied to the long-term safety net program and delivered to that program if possible. It is within the spirit of those principles that we are attempting to develop that plan.

Mr. Rod Laporte (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre): Madam Speaker, the government says that GRIP is voluntary. If it is voluntary then deficiency payments should not be tied to it. If the payments are tied to GRIP then the government should have the decency at least to let producers know that.

I ask the minister again, very simply, are deficiency payments tied to GRIP or are they not tied to GRIP? Farmers have a right to know so that they can make a proper decision based on market matters as opposed to what this government is doing with respect to programs.

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's concern. We will hopefully be in a position to indicate

the kind of a program that will meet the criteria, the principles that were developed.

He may very well be overstating the case when he suggests that there is an element of compulsion. Certainly there will be some incentives. I think that is what the hon. member would want because, in spite of some of the reservations he had about our approach in principle, his party and he himself supported the over-all principle of a long-term safety net which was largely developed by the producers themselves.

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OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Acting Prime Minister.

Last week the minister for federal-provincial relations, in an interview with a major Canadian newspaper, said that Ottawa might give the provinces more control over official languages.

Considering the poor record of most provinces with respect to minority language rights and the critical and sensitive nature of this issue with respect to national unity, would the Acting Prime Minister say whether such a proposal is actually being considered and, if so, would he give the assurance that his government will not propose or entertain any measure that would weaken the language rights of official language minorities in this country: the francophones outside Quebec and the anglophones in Quebec? Would he give the House that assurance?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, there certainly has been no decision made on that particular issue.

The issue of the Official Languages Act and languages indeed has become part of the whole national unity debate. There are many commissions, inquiries and committees that are studying all aspects ancillary to national unity. Certainly the Official Languages Act has been one that has been discussed.

As the Prime Minister has said in the House and outside the House on many occasions, we hope to receive the recommendations and the data that is being collected, through the Spicer commission and indeed our own joint parliamentary commission, plus the many examinations that are being undertaken by the provinces. We will deal with this information and hopefully come up with a package that will in effect reflect the attitudes and the views of Canadians.

This is an open and transparent process, and it would be in everyone's interest to ensure that the views of the public being collected right now will be looked at, studied, and honoured in some respects.

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Madam Speaker, these public musings or thinking are not really assuring the language minorities in this country, and the Acting Prime Minister has not given me the assurance I was asking for.

The minister for federal-provincial relations also said that the national consensus on official languages has eroded. Under the Official Languages Act, 1988, which was supported by all parties, Part 7 provides that the government should promote both official languages and enhance the vitality of the minority language communities in this country.

When will the government take steps to implement that part of the Official Languages Act and turn back the erosion referred to by the minister for federal-provincial relations? When will this government take strong measures to support official bilingualism?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, the government's record is very clear in that regard.

The hon. member and his party cannot have it both ways. They cannot, on the one hand, insist on an open and transparent process and then, on the other hand, reject and condemn any views and opinions that come thereto.

Really what we are doing at the present time is collecting the views and opinions across the country. The position of the federal government has been made very clear. We brought in amendments to the Official Languages Act that would conform to the constitutional requirements. That is the position of the government.

However, to deny people the freedom of expression of thought on any or all aspects devoted to national unity I think would not serve the best interest of democracy. I am sure the hon. member would be the first person in this House to condemn that.

HEALTH

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for the Status of Women. I have repeatedly asked her colleague, the minister of health, to remove the Meme breast implant from the market until proven safe.

The minister continues to hide behind mysterious studies which his department supposedly has. Yet, there is ample evidence that links the Meme implant with cancer. This is cancer month, I might add.

If the Minister of National Health and Welfare will not act, what steps will the Minister responsible for the Status of Women take to protect Canadian women from this dangerous product?

Hon. Mary Collins (Associate Minister of National Defence and Minister responsible for Status of Women): Madam Speaker, as the hon. member knows, the Minister of National Health and Welfare has responded to this question over the past two days. He has indicated that he has recently had one of his officials looking at the results of the most recent federal drug administration studies on this issue. He has also indicated that if there is any information that would factually lead to any link between the Meme breast implant and an increased incidence of cancer of course he will take the appropriate action.

I have asked the minister personally to ensure that I am kept informed, that the review is thorough and that it will take into consideration all possibilities, and I will be monitoring the situation very closely.

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean): Madam Speaker, I guess I am somewhat disappointed, but I would have hoped that more concrete action would be taken.

The government is clearly hiding behind the questionable Kerrigan report. Why is this government relying on a study authorized by Dr. Kerrigan, a doctor who has used the Meme implant in her own medical practice and was therefore clearly involved in an obvious conflict of interest?

How can the Minister responsible for the Status of Women allow this placing at risk of Canadian women in this country today? I ask the minister please to respond. Why?

Hon. Mary Collins (Associate Minister of National Defence and Minister responsible for Status of Women): Madam Speaker, as the hon. member knows, there has been a number of different studies undertaken both in Canada and in the United States.

From the health and welfare perspective, there is no factual link from the evidence they have received at this point.

• (1200)

If factual evidence should come forward that would show that link, of course we would take any appropriate action that is required.

* * *

LABOUR CANADA

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Transport. Earlier today I gave him a background briefing on a matter regarding a verbal decision by Labour Canada that a Canadian Airlines flight attendant had no reason to invoke her right to refuse to work in an unsafe condition.

Given that the city the flight attendant was scheduled to fly into and stay in for 13 hours was not only suffering a cholera epidemic, but saw terrorist bombings of 30 buildings, including the Canadian embassy on the very day that she was scheduled to be there and that 10 of her colleagues actually stayed there, in spite of Labour Canada saying it was safe, I want to ask the Minister if he will do what Labour Canada has refused to do and ensure that flight attendants are able to invoke their right to refuse, especially in foreign countries where they continue to be employees under the control, pay and direction of their employer.

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. friend for providing me with the information. I have requested that my officials look into this matter on an urgent basis and as soon as I have some answers I will get back to my friend.

I appreciate that this is not a very good situation. We have a task force studying the flight crew duty time and we will take this into account too.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

ORDER IN COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS

TABLING OF APPOINTMENTS

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table in both official languages a number of Order in Council appointments which were made by the government.

Pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 110(1), these are deemed referred to the appropriate standing committees, a list of which is attached.

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PETITIONS

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table in both official languages the government's response to several petitions.

[*Editor's Note: See today's Votes and Proceedings.*]

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

10TH REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Len Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present the 10th report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and in doing so, I would like to make the following remarks.

The tenth report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts which I have the honour to table today deals with the problems encountered by the Canadian Coast Guard and the Department of the Transport in the modernization of a large ice-breaker, the *Louis St. Laurent*.

The modernization project has gone through a rapid cost escalation, including a major cost overrun, from a planned expenditure of $51 million to a projected $139 million and is some 20 months behind schedule. The project was not let out to tender at Cabinet request. The committee has tried to put these problems in perspective and examine the larger questions of improved planning and reporting of major capital projects in Transport Canada and in other government departments.

For example, Transport Canada has agreed that a more thorough assessment process is required prior to all future ship modernizations or major repairs and the committee has made a recommendation to this effect.

With respect to non-tendering, the committee repeated an important recommendation made in several earlier reports to the House, namely that maximum use be made of competitive tendering for contracts.

The committee has asked Transport Canada to respond to the recommendations by June 28, 1991 and has requested a government response to two of the recommendations at an earlier date pursuant to Standing Order 109.

62ND REPORT OF STRIKING COMMITTEE

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present the 62nd report of the Striking Committee. This report deals with the membership of a legislative committee.

Pursuant to Standing Order 113(1), upon such presentation, such reports are deemed adopted.

[*Editor's Note: See today's Votes and Proceedings.*]

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

AUTHORIZATION TO TRAVEL

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, I have with me today two requests by committees to travel, but I am advised that on one of them there have not been the proper consultations between the members of the committee and the leadership of the Liberal Party.

By drawing the attention of the House to that, I would hope that the people who are involved will have those consultations so we can proceed with that motion before the House rises at two o'clock.

I understand there is consent for the second motion, on which there have been consultations. I move:

That the two researchers from the Library of Parliament assigned to the Standing Committee on Agriculture, Sonja Dackers and Len Christie, be authorized to travel to Winnipeg for the period May 5, 6 and 7, 1991 for the purpose of attending a workshop on sustainable agriculture on behalf of the committee.

Mr. Dingwall: Madam Speaker, with regard to that particular motion, I believe you would find unanimous consent on this side.

With regard to the remarks made earlier by the parliamentary secretary, there has been no consultation with myself, the chief opposition Whip, the industry trade critic or his office with regard to the motion which he was going to raise.

I just alert him to that because if it can be arranged before 2 p.m., we can have another look at it. We give consent to this particular motion.

Mr. Harvey (Edmonton East): Madam Speaker, on behalf of my gigantic caucus, I too would like to indicate our consent to the motion with regard to travel by the two researchers.

I note once again that this is an act of good faith on the part of the NDP caucus.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The House has heard the motion presented by the hon. parliamentary secretary. Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

* * *

PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS

CONCURRENCE IN 26TH REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands): Madam Speaker, I move:

That the 26th report of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections presented to the House on Wednesday, March 20, 1991 be concurred in.

He said: Madam Speaker, I just want to summarize the report.

The Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections received a request from the hon. member for Perth—Wellington—Waterloo to amend the Standing Orders to permit joint sittings of standing committees so that two or more committees could meet together, have a joint meeting, hear witnesses and prepare a transcript of the proceedings.

The purpose of the amendment to the Standing Order that the committee has recommended in the 26th report is to do exactly that. It simply adds the words necessary to effect the change requested by the hon. member for Perth—Wellington—Waterloo.

The committee is of the opinion that this will enhance the ability of committees of this House to function effectively.

I am moving this today in light of the fact that we are in the midst of changes to the Standing Orders. This could be printed with the reprinting that will take place as a result of the division last evening.

I note that the report was agreed to by all members representing all parties on the standing committee.

Mr. Harvey (Edmonton East): Madam Speaker, I just note that our caucus too is in full agreement with the motion of concurrence.

Mr. Cooper: Madam Speaker, the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections must truly be on a role.

It had the 21st report which was part of the reform package that was adopted unanimously last night. Because of our interest and encouragement of the committee system in this Parliament, we on the government side are happy to give our support and endorsement to this particular amendment. We urge the adoption of this amendment unanimously.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

* * *

• (1210)

PETITIONS

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. Fred J. Mifflin (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception): Madam Speaker, I rise in accordance with Standing Order 36 to present a petition duly certified by the clerk. It is from from 65 of my constituents in the Deep Bight Southwest Arm area, which represents nine communities.

The petitioners are concerned that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation has historically been a key element in the government's commitment to cultural integrity and national unity. They are calling on Parliament to ensure that CBC programming remains intact and that local programming in Atlantic Canada is maintained, particularly, a program which is near and dear to our hearts in Atlantic Canada, called *Land and Sea*, which has consistently over 20 years celebrated the special nature of the Atlantic region.

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): Madam Speaker, I have three groups of petitions to submit today. The first one is from a number of residents in my constituency of Okanagan—Shuswap and the communities of Lumby, Enderby, Falkland and Vernon in particular.

These petitioners are very concerned about the recent reductions in RCMP services, not only in our community, but essentially in all communities in British Columbia and, in fact, right across Canada.

They are urging the government to consider restoring proper funding to the RCMP so that it can fulfil its mandate and role and provide a visible police force for communities across British Columbia and to re-examine the decision to force the provinces to either increase funding for the RCMP, which is in many cases much more than the communities can afford, or face the decrease in services and the closing of detachments as has already occurred.

COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): Madam Speaker, the second group of petitions is from residents, I might add, right from one end of British Columbia to the other. This group of petitioners, about 709 names, are urging the Minister of Communications and this government to consult with all affected parties, specifically those citizens living outside of Canada's urban areas, who will be impacted severely by the possible deregulation of long distance telephone services.

They are urging the Minister of Communications to hold local hearings in the smaller communities throughout the province before deciding the fate of Canada's telecommunications system.

That is on behalf of residents throughout the province of British Columbia in regard to the UNITEL application for long distance services.

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): Madam Speaker, the last petition is from a number of citizens also throughout the province of British Columbia who are protesting the recent cutbacks in CBC services, the recent reduction of $108 million in funding to the CBC and the loss of 1,100 jobs, and the reduction or closure of regional television stations.

They are asking the government to reconsider its priorities in terms of this decreased funding for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

AIR CANADA

Mr. Ross Harvey (Edmonton East): Madam Speaker, I have a series of petitions signed principally by residents of the city of Edmonton, but as well by residents of other centres in Alberta, duly authorized by the clerk, pursuant to Standing Order 36.

The petitioners note that over 200 Air Canada employees at the Edmonton International Airport and Edmonton reservation office will be losing their jobs because of cutbacks by Air Canada in its expenditures on employment.

They note that the affected employees provide services that are essential to Air Canada passengers in Alberta and, therefore, call upon Parliament to express its profound opposition to the further centralization and retrenchment of its regional services by Air Canada, our former national air carrier, as they note, and urges the Parliament and the federal government to request Air Canada to revoke the proposed lay-offs.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

(Questions answered orally are indicated by an asterisk)

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 448, 472 and 481.

[*Text*]

BREAKWATER CONSTRUCTION AT THE KUSKANOOK SMALL CRAFT HARBOUR IN KOOTENAY LAKE, B.C.

Question No. 448—**Mr. Arseneault:**

1. Did the government award a contract for breakwater construction at the Kuskanook Small Craft Harbour in Kootenay Lake, B.C., and, if so, (a) from which department were the funds allocated (b) from what specific budgets were the funds obtained (c) what are the overall amounts of the budgets (d) how much money is left in the budgets (e) what was the procedure for determining allocation?

2. What is the (a) estimated number of boats which use these facilities (b) breakdown (pleasure, fishing, etc.) of activities held at these facilities?

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): I am informed by the Departments of Fisheries and Oceans and Public Works as follows:

1. (a) The Department of Public Works, on behalf of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, contracted the breakwater construction project in two stages as follows:

Amount	Contractor
$798,593	L.J. Construction
$913,359	Currier Contracting Limited

The public tendering process was used to award both contracts.

(b), (c) The project was funded from two sources; the Small Craft Harbours' Harbour Revitalization Program ($225.3 million over 4 years, expiring March 31, 1991) and the Small Craft Harbours Regular Program ($67.4 million for 1990/91).

(d) The funds allocated to those two programs are totally depleted.

(e) All funding for both programs has been allocated based on regional project priorities.

2. (a), (b) Once the infrastructure is completed, the harbour will be able to accomodate approximately 175 vessels, most of them recreational.

MR. RYSZARD PASKOWSKI

Question No. 472—**Mr. Kilgour:**

With respect to Canadian Security Intelligence employee Ryszard Paskowski, (a) did CSIS inform him of the nature of his mission in Rome in 1986, and if not, for what reason (b) did CSIS attempt to persuade him to tell Roman police authorities that he was on a private visit, and if so, for what reason?

Hon. Pierre H. Cadieux (Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Ryszard Paskowski was never an employee of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS). After his first arrival in Canada in December 1984, and before his departure for Rome in 1986, he did provide information to the Service about the alleged activities in Canada of a foreign intelligence service. This information could not be verified and as stated in the House by the Honourable James Kelleher, when Solicitor General, on January 22, 1988, CSIS ended its relationship with Mr. Paskowski before he left Canada voluntarily for Italy in August 1986.

The relationship between the Service and Mr. Paskowski has been thoroughly examined by the Security Intelligence Review Committee (SIRC) and no wrong doing of any kind by the Service in relation to Mr. Paskowski was found.

EL SALVADOR—POLICE INVESTIGATION INTO ASSASSINATION OF SIX JESUITS AND TWO WOMEN AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL AMERICA

Question No. 481—**Mr. Robinson:**

Did the Canadian government send an RCMP Officer and a staff member of the Canadian embassy in Costa Rica to conduct a technical review of the Salvadoran police investigation into the assassination of the six Jesuits and two women at the University of Central America at some time in the last two years and, if so, what was the content of any reports submitted to the Canadian government from this delegation?

Right Hon. Charles Joseph Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): In a statement at the OAS November 30, 1989, the Canadian Permanent Observer stated that Canada would consider any request from the authorities of El Salvador for help in the investigation of the assassination of the six Jesuit priests and their employees. At the request of the Salvadoran government, the Canadian Ambassador, accompanied by the RCMP Liaison Officer and another officer of the Embassy in San Jose accredited to El Salvador, visited San Salvador from January 4–6, 1990 for meetings with the government, the Church and the University of Central America. The Embassy officers later met British, Spanish and American officials, as well as the Salvadoran Special Investigative Unit and two criminal investigators from Scotland Yard. They concluded with the assessment that the investigation, to that point, was proceeding in a serious and professional manner. The Salvadoran government made no specific request for assistance, and,

since the investigation soon moved from the forensic to the judicial phase, it did not lend itself to Canadian technical intervention. No recommendation for further action was submitted to the RCMP.

[*English*]

I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

[*Translation*]

Madam Deputy Speaker: The questions as enumerated by the hon. parliamentary secretary have been answered. Shall the other questions be allowed to stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*English*]

Mr. Harvey (Edmonton East): Madam Speaker, do the questions that are held now, if we do in fact prorogue today or at least at some point before we next sit and consider this matter simply disappear or do they carry over to the next session?

Madam Deputy Speaker: No, the questions would have to be resubmitted if we begin a new session of Parliament.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

SPRING ADJOURNMENT

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Andre (p. 19433).

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Madam Speaker, there was one specific passage in the parliamentary secretary's speech with which I agreed. That was when he referred briefly to the necessity of being prepared for what is coming. That is the way he put it in his speech.

It seems to me that he has a point because he and his colleagues in the Progressive Conservative Party should be prepared for what is coming, particularly in the province of Alberta where there is a surprise in store for the Progressive Conservative Party.

It is no great political secret that should an election take place today the government party would be really lucky if it were to be able even to form the Official Opposition. The parliamentary secretary is quite right in urging in his speech to prepare for what is coming.

As to what we may charitably call the analysis he made, he seemed to be reporting from another planet. It was a report of a situation that from this side of the House we see in completely different terms. Let me explain. If we had not just returned from an Easter recess one would understand, perhaps, the necessity of calling an adjournment. We have just come back from one and I suppose Canadians will be wondering why all of a sudden another recess is necessary.

I do not think Canadians would object and we certainly support the idea of adjourning today and starting a new session next week with a Speech from the Throne because the public business and interest requires that this Parliament be active, be present, be alert and extract during Question Period from the government the information that the public eventually learns from the media the following day.

We are adjourning at a time when the country is in deep trouble because of high unemployment, 1.4 million people are unemployed. There is dissatisfaction in Quebec and in the west. There is understandable unrest among native people in Oka, the James Bay region, Alberta and British Columbia. There is rampant dissatisfaction among civil servants who are overworked, understaffed, and economically straitjacketed by this government, with an increasingly frustrated public facing ever-shrinking government services.

We are in trouble with workers in industrial Canada living in anxiety about the uncertainty of the future. We are in trouble because of growing cynicism with a political party whose record is a long, long list of unkept promises. That fact also has an impact on the credibility of the entire political institution no matter the party to which you belong.

We are in trouble because of foreign competition. We are in trouble because our productivity does not seem to be keeping up with that of other nations. We are in trouble because of poor leadership. We are in trouble because of this government's privatization of publicly-owned assets. I must remind you of the situation of de

Havilland in Toronto, in particular, a real failure of the privatization policies of this government as carried out recently.

• (1220)

We are in trouble because of a government that is unable to win the support of Canadians at large and that has hit rock-bottom levels in popularity. We are in trouble because the Prime Minister is seen as the greatest disaster ever to hit this great nation. We are in trouble because the party in power, having lost the confidence of the people for good, can, from a constitutional point of view, carry on and govern until November of 1993. We are in trouble because of a mutilated VIA Rail, a demoralized postal service, and a frustrated CBC.

We are in some pain and difficulty, to put it mildly, about the uncertainties that surround the free trade agreement that is being discussed with Mexico. We are in trouble because of a continuous crisis in the fisheries in Atlantic Canada. We are in trouble in urban Canada because tens of thousands of refugees are waiting endlessly to learn about their fate in this country.

It is against this background then that, at a time when Canada is obviously facing these difficulties, the government decides to close down Parliament from mid-April to an unspecified date sometime in mid-May perhaps. Are we going to close down for repairs or are we going to close down for restoration? It seems to me that it is more likely we are closing down for sale, judging from the propensity of this government for dismantling public institutions that it has shown over the last six years or its propensity to retreat from governance and to give away federal responsibilities at a drop of the hat, as we have seen through the Meech Lake accord experience.

An adjournment debate should actually have a clear purpose: to the government to justify and explain to Canadians the reasons for adjourning. I ask you to examine the speech by the parliamentary secretary, who was obviously speaking on behalf of the Crown, the ministers, and Cabinet, to judge for yourselves the substance of the speech he gave, and, at the same time, to let Canadians decide on the merits and reasons for adjourning.

You may recall that this session of Parliament started on April 3, 1989, almost two years ago, actually. At that time, the Governor General read his Speech from the Throne. That speech is an important document for parliamentarians and Canadians because it sets out the agenda, so to speak, for the lifetime of the following session. Therefore, that Speech from the Throne contains a number of promises.

The government might have had a good reason for adjourning if the business it set out to conduct had been completed. Unfortunately, though, that is not the case. There is a great deal in the Speech from the Throne of unkept promises, unfinished business, proposals lost by the way-side, so to speak.

Let me illustrate that by going over some of these unkept promises. To begin with, you will find in the Speech from the Throne a statement that says: "Legislation will also be introduced to ensure an appropriate environmental assessment review process." Here, condensed in a very few words, is a very important concept. It is a promise to give Canadians a law that would protect the environment by way of measuring the impact a project or a policy could have on the environment before

It is a very important initiative, which saw the light of day in the form of Bill C-78. It is so important that, even in *Hansard* of October 16, 1990, the Minister of the Environment said, and I quote: "We have to get Bill C-78 through the House".

Mr. Speaker, that bill has not even come back from committee and has not been examined in committee since Christmas. That bill is going to die, as they say, on the Order paper.

Let me give you another example, to do with water. In the same Speech from the Throne is the following commitment, and I quote:

> These initiatives are part of a new environmental agenda, which will also include the commitment to improve the quality of our water through new legislation.

This promise in the Speech from the Throne resurfaced recently in the Green Plan.

So, what do we actually have? We have a report by the Pierce commission, initiated by the Liberal government in 1984 and completed in 1985. We had, in 1987, a booklet entitled *The Federal Water Policy* in which a policy is outlined. Then, in the Speech from the Throne of April 3, 1989, we have a commitment to improve the quality of our water and a commitment in the Green Paper.

Mr. Speaker, after six years of Progressive Conservative government, that is where we are, with a repetition of commitments on water and these commitments have not been carried out.

In the same Speech from the Throne is a very important statement, which reads as follows:

> The government remains committed to a national child care program.

That commitment has not seen any political expression, in the form of programs, policies, or budget, you name it. Commitment is on paper; it is gone.

Mr. Speaker, it is a zero result from a statement in which many of us who appreciate—and I am sure that many within the government members also appreciate the social importance of a national child care program, which has now been allowed to disappear into the landscape.

There is a reference to refugees in the Speech from the Throne. Unfortunately, the refugee question is, as I mentioned earlier, still a crisis.

In the same Speech from the Throne there is a commitment to revitalize the Citizenship Act. Action on that commitment has unfortunately been zero.

There is a commitment with respect to native people in the Speech from the Throne and, despite the promise of funds, there have instead been cuts to communications and core funding of native organizations.

There is a commitment to a new copyright legislation. The delivery on that commitment has also been zero.

Therefore, we must analyze the situation of unfinished, unkept promises.

• (1230)

One also has to go beyond the Speech from the Throne and beyond what has not happened in the field of an environmental assessment review act, so that today, as we speak, instead of the promised law, we have an Order in Council, which was passed by the Liberal government in 1984 and attempts to regulate that particular environmental situation.

On gun control, there is, again, unfinished business. There is a proposed law in the pipeline from which the government seems to have backed out.

On the question of estimates, because of this open-ended adjournment, there will be three, four, five, six or more weeks ahead of us in which the scrutiny of government expenditures on the part of committees will not take place. That scrutiny is probably the essence of parliamentary activity. It is the essence of the role of elected representatives who are, instead, asked to go back to their ridings. I must stress, in this connection, that the timeframe and the window of opportunity to examine expenditures of budgets of any government department closes at the end of May.

This is the crucial time, because the estimates are produced in March. So you can see that April and May are, for interested parliamentarians, the key months in which to carry out that kind of job on behalf of the Canadian public. That kind of opportunity is almost wiped out.

Might I add, Mr. Speaker, and bring to your attention that the budget debate is incomplete. The House has not approved the budget of the Minister of Finance, so we are adjourning with a budget that has not been voted on. We are asked to adjourn with important unfinished business, called approval of the budget.

Mr. Speaker, I must tell you more, and bring to your attention what is left unattended to. While we are being asked to adjourn, the important issue of the free trade agreement with Mexico and the United States is on the move. It is in the news and in the works, so to speak.

While President Bush negotiates and discusses with Congress the well-being of American workers, with an eye on their future jobs, social security, and protection of the environment, this government is told to go on vacation.

Does it make sense? While the American political and governmental system is fully absorbed by the question of the proposed trade agreement on the North American continent and the voters' collective attention to ensuring that it is the best possible agreement for the interest of the American workers, we are not paying attention to the collective interest of the Canadian workers, the environment, and the long-term social consequences of this agreement, because it is felt that Parliament ought to close down and that members of all parties ought to go home.

I ask you, does it make sense to you, Mr. Speaker? It certainly does not make sense to us on this side of the House, because this proposed agreement is such a vital issue that yesterday the Secretary of State for External Affairs tabled a special paper dealing with the question of issues that relate to the impact on workers on the part of this proposed agreement.

Mr. Speaker, evidently there is a lot we do not know, a lot at stake, and a lot, therefore, that ought to be discussed in public, with the public interest in mind.

You can see, therefore, that I am concluding, in this analysis, that I am rapidly coming to the conclusion that it is actually the height of irresponsibility to adjourn now. It is the wrong time for closing down the Parliament of Canada at this juncture, for the variety of reasons I have given you in the course of my presentation.

What we can see here is a decision to govern by decree by a government that is giving signs of profound tiredness, that is running out of ideas, and that is, in a sense, conveying the wrong message to the public, something the government should never do no matter what its political stripe. The government is conveying the notion that it is letting the public interest down because it does not want Parliament to sit.

Therefore, this is a sad day for parliamentary democracy at a very difficult time and a very difficult moment in Canadian history.

Mr. Ian Waddell (Port Moody—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand up in the House and wind up this session of Parliament and to speak for my party, the New Democratic Party, hopefully expressing some of the wishes, the visions, the frustrations, and the hopes of many Canadians.

Before I came into the House today, someone asked me what I could say about this government that is positive. I said I was sure that, if I thought deeply enough and for a little while, I would be able to think of something positive. I can think of a lot of positive things about Canada. I am very positive about Canada and about Canadians.

I must say that, if you examine what the Throne Speech said a couple of years ago and the blueprint it drew for this government and for Canada, and if you look at where we are now, I think the government has failed miserably in the economic area and in the constitutional area. I want to highlight that point in my speech.

I think we have seen economic and constitutional mismanagement on a grand scale, to the point where our very country is in danger. This is very serious indeed. We need an alternate vision in this country, a public policy, in both the constitutional area and in the economic area. In a sense, they are both intertwined and I want to speak about them in my speech.

I have said this before, during the Meech Lake debate, and hope to say so again this summer and especially next year, when the constitutional debate will heat up. We need an activist federal government to keep this country together. We need a federal government that will show the greatness that is there for Canada, both in English and in French, and to provide for the blossoming and exploding native culture and reality in this country, which is a good thing, and the new multicultural element of the new peoples who are of neither English nor French background and have come to this country.

This country is on the move, but this government is not. This government is mired in an ideological past.

I want to say one thing before I get into some concrete examples such as the free trade deal with Mexico, which we have discussed in this House during the last couple of weeks, or the aerospace deal, involving the loss of a major company, which we discussed in the House of Commons today in Question Period, or indeed one of the events that occurred this week in the House, namely, the re-ratting, if you like, of a Bloc Quebecois member back to the government ranks, and I want to say something about that.

• (1240)

I actually see the Minister of Justice in the House, so perhaps I could take a bit of crack there.

Ms. Campbell (Vancouver Centre): Don't let me cramp your style.

Mr. Waddell: Then I want to finish by talking a little about what we members have to do for our constituents in the months that lie ahead while Parliament is not sitting.

First of all, I want to say something about the changes to the rules of Parliament. I know we have had a long debate on this issue, and the issue has been settled. But I warn the government and I say to my fellow Canadians that it keeps restricting the rights of Parliament and keeps cutting it back. We all suffer in the long run because Parliament is still the one institution in this

country where the ordinary Canadian can go to their MP and can obtain some justice for a cause. That MP can get up and put a question right to the Minister of Justice or to the Prime Minister in full view of the national press. I am afraid we are restricting the rights of parliamentarians more and more.

As I have said, we have had that debate and I regret what the government has done with the rules of Parliament.

Let me say something about the failure of what I said was the economic policy of this government. We are about to get into a free trade deal with Mexico, but Mr. Speaker, I say to you, should we not examine the results of the first free trade deal that we got into with the United States before jumping into an expansion of that deal? We in the NDP do not accept, unlike the Liberal Party, it now seems to me, the premise that a North American free trade deal is inevitable.

Looking at the past deal with the Americans, it seems to me that we have lost 226,000 jobs, investment is down, there is no adjustment program for the workers and, worse still, we have not received secure access to the American market. The Prime Minister himself was complaining about that just last week with regard to the pork dispute, on which we were overruled by the Americans. We must define more clearly the dispute settlement mechanisms in the existing free trade deal before entering a new one.

The Free Trade Agreement is not working. The Americans say that they can just use the extraordinary measures clause, which was included in the agreement only in extraordinary circumstances, like such as corruption or something like that, and now the Americans seem to be using this clause. This is a very serious situation indeed. Let us not jump into a new trade deal without looking into the old one.

We are also concerned about what the real motives of this trade deal are. I want to quote the Leader of the Official Opposition in Mexico, Cuauhtèmoc Càrdenas, who was, in my view, robbed of an election victory by the present President of Mexico in a corrupt election. Here is what Mr. Càrdenas said in a recent speech in Vancouver, British Columbia: "Their free trade agenda is simple and narrow. Mexico will sell its cheap labour to attract foreign capital, which, in turn, will guarantee the survival of one of the last remaining authoritarian political systems in Latin America".

Mr. Speaker, do you think that it is as the Prime Minister told us, that they are going into the free trade deal to raise the standard of Mexican workers? Not on your life. The Americans want to go into that free trade deal with Mexico for cheap labour. The workers receive about 4 per cent of our wages. They exploit women in these factories on the Mexican–American border. The environmental standards are atrocious. The health and safety standards are atrocious.

We have already seen evidence of companies like General Motors in Canada and General Electric in Canada moving jobs out of Canada as a result of our deal with the Americans, into the Maquiladora free trade zone on the Mexican border. This action is a forerunner of things to come and this is why we should not get into that deal.

One does not have to be a brilliant economist to figure this out. Here is the agenda: the PR, the Mexican governing party, stays in power with its corrupt administration and top–down redistribution of wealth. All the wealth is at the top. The Americans get a low–wage place in which to invest and use American capital and Canada gives its cheap, raw resources. That is why we are seeing the deindustrialization of Canada. So let us not get into this kind of deal. This is going to be a major item on the agenda during the next few months.

I also mentioned another area of economic mismanagement, where the French and Italian companies, backed by the Italian and French governments are about to buy de Havilland. There are 3,000 jobs at stake. Not only that, the continual development of the Dash–7 aircraft, which Canada does so well, and the continual development of high–tech in the aerospace industry, which is one of the high–tech industries that we have and one of the top high–tech industries in the world.

We in the NDP want to see a viable aerospace industry. We have to be realistic and I acknowledge that. We do not want to pour millions of dollars down a hole, but it seems to me that, if there is a takeover by the French companies, backed by their governments, the Canadian government should at least have a share in the new company. It should have what is called "the golden share" so that they can make sure the research and development stays in Canada and can make sure these European companies will not just buy the Toronto

company, de Havilland, in order to close down one of their competitors.

This take-over is crucial for Canadian jobs and this government will not get involved because they believe in the pure free-market economy. Well, if they keep going they will turn Ontario into a province with the economic level of industry that New Brunswick has. This could be a real tragedy.

They tell us to look at Investment Canada and ask can Investment Canada not protect us. Well, under this government, Investment Canada has a score of 914 to zero. I counted it up and there are 914 approvals and zero rejections.

I say that high-tech, investment, and aerospace are the kind of industries Canada has to stay in; we cannot give them away. I am worried about what is happening with de Havilland, with the trade deal, and with the loss of jobs. I think there has been economic mismanagement of this economy on a large scale by this government.

Before I close, let me say something about the constitutional matters. I am afraid we have a Prime Minister who is a deal-maker, who is not speaking for Canada.

I was pleased this week, as we all were, that one of the Bloc Québecois, the Separatist group from Quebec went back to the government. We would have liked him to perhaps go somewhere else, but he did reject separatism. I see this country in great danger, but I see a beginning of an opening through which we can once again reconcile French and English in this country.

The Prime Minister has a reputation as a deal-maker, as someone more interested in making a deal than in what the deal says. He is not a nation-builder, like previous Prime Ministers have been. The premiers, in their own way, have to speak for the provinces. Mr. Mulroney does not speak for Canada. We need leaders in this country who will speak for Canada. There is no price, in terms of federal powers and national social programs, that he will not pay in order to get a deal.

The Prime Minister has blamed the failure of the Meech Lake accord on everyone else but himself: it is Mr. Wells' fault; it is Elijah Harper's fault; or it is the NDP's fault. Well, I suggest that he look to himself for the fault.

I would like to quote what the distinguished Canadian, Tom Berger, has said on this matter:

> English Canadians had a greater commitment to the idea of Canada than our leaders did. That is why Meech failed; not because of cranky opposition by the people of English Canada to the distinct society clause. They sensed, even if they did not understand the details, that Meech Lake was another chapter in the Mulroney government's dismantling of Canada's federal system. Traditional Canadian deference to our political establishment was missing in the Meech Lake debate.

Let me wind-up by saying this. In the months ahead we will have to change our economic policy, stop the deindustrialization of Canada, and protect Canadian jobs. We must have an economic vision of this country that does not have us just throwing our resources into cheap labour in Mexico.

• (1250)

We have to develop high tech here in Canada. We have to emphasize the environment. We have to emphasize education. We have to emphasize national institutions. We need a national government, not just a Quebec government or a B.C. government or a government in Ontario. We need a national government that can tie all this together. We cannot decentralize all the programs to the provinces. We need national social institutions like medicare programs and day care. That is what makes Canada a civilized society. We need that and our people want that and they are demanding leadership.

The Prime Minister should call an election. Do not just adjourn this Parliament, call an election and face the Canadian electorate and they will have a message for him. They will get rid of these scoundrels very quickly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I have received written notice today from the hon. member for Scarborough East that he is unable to move second reading of his bill during Private Members' Hour today.

[*Translation*]

Therefore, the order for second reading of Bill C-329 will be moved to the bottom of the priority list for Private Members' Business.

[*English*]

Since there will be no business before the House between two and three o'clock p.m., the House may then wish to adjourn.

Questions and comments. Debate.

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, as was pointed out, today we are debating a motion to adjourn Parliament for four weeks. This is a sad commentary on the preparedness, the competency and the commitment of the government that it wishes to adjourn Parliament at a time when the country and the world are faced with so many serious problems.

This country is in a serious recession, with very high unemployment, the unity of the country is under attack in many of the provinces, instability in the Middle East and eastern Europe, and starvation in Africa, all of which affect world peace and security. We have many unresolved aboriginal issues, issues that came to the forefront last year in Kanesetake and Kahnawake and other places in the country and were to be dealt with. But, here we are, almost a year later, and not much has been done.

It appears that the government does not have any agenda, any program or any policy to deal with these issues and, therefore, it adjourns for four weeks.

To begin with, let us look at the economy. We have the worst recession since 1982. The recent unemployment figures indicate that 10.5 per cent of Canadians are unemployed. This amounts to approximately 1.4 million Canadians out of work. Retail sales have taken tremendous drops. Housing starts are way down and bankruptcies are way up.

One could argue that perhaps this recession, this situation that I have just referred to, is a result of the usual business cycle, but there are many, many experts who would argue that even with the business cycle things would not be as bad as they are if the government had not deliberately adopted certain policies which made the situation much worse.

We can, first of all, refer to the goods and services tax which, whether you agree with it or not, nearly everybody, nearly every expert unanimously said this was the wrong time to bring in a tax like that at a time when the country was going into a recession. We have people out of work, people with their salaries frozen and they are faced with additional taxes. What do they do? Of course, they cut back on their retail buying and their investing. This only hurts the economy further and drives it into a still deeper recession.

Another matter that no doubt has affected the lay-offs and unemployment is the free trade agreement. It was contemplated by the government and by the Economic Council of Canada that the free trade agreement would very seriously hurt many of our industries and there were recommendations that adjustment programs be put in place to compensate for those adjustments that would take place. That has not been done, with the result that we have many industries, and I will refer to some of them very specifically in a few minutes, that have closed down and moved their operations to the United States. This has particularly hurt the industrial areas of this country: southern Ontario, Montreal and parts of the larger cities in the west.

When employment was increasing in 1984, 1985 and 1986, the Prime Minister claimed responsibility. I can recall very well when the unemployment figures came out in those days, he got up and boasted that the jobs being created were due to his policies and his programs. He said that he created those jobs. It was not the private sector, it was not the result of international markets, it was not the result of worker productivity, but it was the Prime Minister who was responsible, according to his statements of those days. If you look in *Hansard* you will see them.

The upward trend in creating jobs started in 1983 and not in 1984 or 1985. It accelerated in those years, but it started in 1983. Nevertheless, let me make this point. If the Prime Minister had the answers in 1984 and if he was really responsible for the creation of those jobs in 1984, 1985 and 1986, where are the answers now? If he had the answers then, if he had the policies, if he had the solutions that led to the creation of jobs, surely now is the time when he should put those solutions to work.

It is obvious that he did not have the solutions and that he was not responsible for that job creation from 1984 to 1987. He was simply riding the trend. He was simply riding the surge of the business cycle which, at the time, was an upward trend.

If he had the answers, if he had been responsible, if he knew how to create jobs, if he knew how to cut back on unemployment, today is the time that he would do it and we are not seeing it being done.

We have had several budgets. We had a budget last year from the Minister of Finance in which he predicted that unemployment was going to increase, and he introduced certain measures without any effect. The rate continued to rise. He has now come forward with another budget with no real solutions. His solution, the solution of this Conservative government is very similar to the solution of other Conservative governments in the world, the governments of Ronald Reagan in the United States and Margaret Thatcher in Britain, which is a hands-off, *laissez-faire* approach to the economy, that everything will right itself and that if you leave it alone it will take care of itself. Well, that has never been the case in this particular country.

In Canada we have always had a mixed economy, a good balance between the public sector and the private sector. The private sector thrived under those circumstances. The public sector contributed to education, to training, to public infrastructures such as transportation, ports, railways, communications and other things that are necessary, helped the private sector do its job. The greatest eras of prosperity that we had in this country were during those periods of Liberal government when there was a mixed economy.

It is true that we had problems from time to time, but when we had those problems we did not take a hands-off attitude or a hands-off approach, we intervened.

While this recession is taking place, what does the government do in the budget? It cuts the training program by $100 million, it cuts transfers to the provinces for post-secondary education, it makes cuts in health care, VIA Rail, and so on. These are the very things you do not cut during a recession.

The government argues that because we have a huge deficit in this country, there must be cuts if we are going to prevent an additional burden on our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren. There are some things that cutting will only contribute to the deficit because you cut back on your capacity to produce. Cutting back on training and education short-changes the future with respect to trained workers and trained professionals able to produce the wealth that is required to give us a prosperous economy.

It is very shortsighted for governments to cut back on training and education, and it is very short sighted to do that during a period of recession. By doing that the government simply sabotages our capacity to produce more down the line in the years to come. That is a silly approach to dealing with the deficit, it makes the deficit worse rather than better.

• (1300)

Up until now I have spoken generally about the recession that is now with us. I would like to talk about Montreal, the city I come from, which has been hit particularly hard by the recession.

Montreal now has the highest unemployment rate of any municipal area in Canada. That is a new record for Montreal. The unemployment rate in Montreal is now higher than any of the great cities in the Atlantic provinces, which always in these kinds of times had higher unemployment rates. Montreal has the highest unemployment rate of any city in Canada and it has the highest poverty rate of any city of Canada.

Recent studies have indicated that one out of four individuals in Montreal live below the poverty line and that there are 290,000 more individuals in Montreal living below the poverty line than in all four Atlantic provinces. That is a serious, serious situation and should be dealt with.

This week I put a question to the Minister of Finance, asking if he would bring in a joint development program with the city of Montreal and the province of Quebec to do something about this disastrous situation. He said they were already doing things. Well, the things they are already doing are peripheral, marginal, and they are not really attacking the core of the problem.

What I would like to see for Montreal is a type of development program that we have for Atlantic Canada, ACOA, or that the government has for northern Ontario or for western Canada with the Western Diversification Program. Montreal needs a special institutionalized program at this time to turn around the situation in that city because major industries have closed.

I want to refer, just to show how dramatic it is, to the situation in Montreal and the plants that have closed there during the last two years.

During the last two years, Gattuso has lost 88 jobs in St. Laurent; Valmet-Dominion Company, 200 jobs; Black and Decker, 150 jobs; Marconi, 380 jobs; Pascal's, 180 jobs; Bristol Myers Squibb in Candiac, 124 jobs; CBC in Montreal, 160 jobs; Eaton's, 60 jobs; General Motors, last year it was 1,700 but that was temporary. They have been called back, but now notice has been given they will be laid-off again; Catelli, 63 jobs; Steinberg's, 150; Clairol Canada, 228; CNR, 2,000 jobs; Miracle Foodmart in Montreal, 350; Canadian Marconi in Montreal, 130; Goodyear in Valleyfield, not far from Montreal, 800 jobs; Dominion Textiles, 20; Twincraft in St. Laurent, 60; Rolland Papers, 293; Nationair 25; Canadair, 300; Noranda Mines, 125; Culinar, 256; Circo Craft, 211; Domtar, 1,300 jobs; Pratt and Whitney, 1,200 and Air Canada, 2,900 jobs eliminated across the country with a large number in Montreal.

I put that on record because if you just mention figures in general, people lose the impact. The individuals who work for those companies I just referred to know how serious it is, because now they are on unemployment insurance or on welfare or on the bread line. That is not the way this country should operate. Government should respond to those situations and try to do something about it. Unfortunately, it is not being done.

In recent days, the opposition has brought to the attention of the House and Canadian people the critical situation faced by aerospace workers in Toronto as a result of the sale of de Havilland by Boeing. As you will recall, Boeing bought de Havilland a few years ago with the consent of this government and are now selling it to a French and Italian firm which has an aircraft in competition with the Dash-8 aircraft being produced by de Havilland in Toronto.

I raise this issue because it is very important for Toronto where there are 3,000 jobs—approximately 3,000 jobs with de Havilland— threatened by the sale of de Havilland by Boeing to the French and Italian firm, but in addition to those jobs in Toronto there are people who supply de Havilland with materials and with other supplies they need for the production of the Dash-8. Of those materials that are provided by other Canadian firms to de Havilland, 48.7 per cent come from Quebec, amounting to $82.5 million.

In other words, the greatest amount of subcontracting and sub-purchasing towards the production of the Dash-8 aircraft comes from Quebec and, in particular, the Montreal area.

So it is not just Toronto that is affected by this sale. It will now go to Investment Canada for approval or disapproval. That sale not only threatens the jobs of many aerospace workers in Toronto, but also throughout the country and, in particular, in Quebec where 48.7 per cent of the supplies for the Dash-8 come from.

Quebec's large portion of the supply business with de Havilland is attributable to the engine manufacture of Pratt and Whitney Canada in Longueuil. The Dash-8 Pratt and Whitney's PW-100 series engines represents 16 per cent of the aircraft's selling price. I just put that on the record to show how important this is.

I have referred to the critical situation of the economy in this country while this government goes on recess for four weeks and how that recession is impacting on Montreal.

I also want to refer to the constitutional crisis. As I said, we are faced with movements in Quebec and in other provinces, the Reform Party in the west, which would divide this country and turn it into a country unlike the one we have known for well over a hundred years. The government is adjourning at a time when we should be taking action, when leadership should be shown to deal with this threat to our national unity, with this threat to our way of life.

It is troubling that leadership is not being shown by the Prime Minister and by the government in dealing with this matter.

This morning I put to the government certain musings that were stated last week by the Minister for Federal-Provincial Relations, who is a Senator, who in an interview with the Montreal *Gazette* said that it may be necessary to transfer responsibility for official languages to the provinces.

We know that the provinces have a very poor record in dealing with the language minorities. We not only have the situation of Bill-178 and Bill 101 with respect to the anglophone minority in Quebec, but we have historically the policies of the Ontario government cutting back the rights of francophone minority, measures taken by the government of Manitoba in past years to crush the rights of francophones in that province and so on and so on.

Provinces have not had very good records with respect to their language minority.

The initiatives to protect those language minorities have come from the federal government following the royal commission on bilingualism a few years ago, and so far the movement has been progressive with respect to the protection of language minorities by the federal government. We would hope that the federal government, in order to get a new constitutional deal, will not sell out the language minorities in this country.

• (1310)

A very important issue to me, which has been left on the table as Parliament adjourns today, is the question of gun control. About a week or so ago, I tabled in this House a petition with over a half a million names, asking the government to put on the restricted list paramilitary semi-automatic rifles, the same kind of rifle that was used by Marc Lepine to shoot down 14 women at the Ecole Polytechnique in December of 1989. That semi-automatic is a type that is used by many police forces, by many assault groups. It can fire up to 30 bullets. It has no place for sale over the counter as a hunting rifle.

The government tabled Bill C-80, which we thought was an improvement with respect to gun control. That bill was then set aside and it looks like it is going to die because the session will be prorogued. A parliamentary committee has come up with proposals, some of which are good, some of which are not so good, but here we are adjourning this session, more than a year and a half after the massacre at the Ecole Polytechnique, and still we have got nothing on gun control.

Mr. Speaker, you indicated to me that my time is coming to an end. I simply wanted to put on record that the government is adjourning at a time when there are many critical issues to deal with in this country. This government has lost the support of the Canadian people. It is at the lowest rate in the polls that any government has ever been in Canadian history. The Prime Minister has lost the support of the Canadian people. This motion to adjourn today for four weeks demonstrates again why they have lost that support. The country is faced with serious problems, but the government does not know how to deal with them so it decides to adjourn. What a sad day for Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mark Assad (Gatineau—La Lièvre): Mr. Speaker, before we adjourn prematurely, I would like to congratulate our colleague, the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, who is extremely concerned about the state of the economy in Montreal. He talks about it often and I know that he is very interested in it.

My colleague, Mr. Allmand, knows the situation of the textile industry and clothing manufacturers in Montreal—and I know something about it because I visited some manufacturers in Montreal. This industry is in a steep decline. Forecasts are that in five or six years—and these are not my figures, Mr. Speaker; they come from various associations of clothing manufacturers in Montreal—the industry will literally be wiped out in Montreal. You know that in the past, Montreal was one of the great centres in North America.

I would like our colleague to tell us what remedy he thinks this government could give the textile industry and at the same time whether he thinks this premature adjournment should not be considered an admission of failure.

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is right. The textile industry was always very important in Montreal. It has given employment to thousands of people in Montreal.

But you know that during the free trade debate in the 1988 election, the industry itself said many times that this agreement with the United States would threaten their industry and many jobs in it.

[*English*]

The warnings that were given to us during the free trade debate are now coming to pass. Industry after industry, in the clothing business and in the textile business in Montreal are shutting down or moving to other countries. Workers who found jobs there for years and years are left without any work at all. My good friend

has approached me. He has been in touch with many of those industries in Montreal. We intend to meet with them as soon as possible to get their views on how we can turn the situation around. I think this is very important. Our party leader has agreed as well that something has to be done and has approved of our meeting with them.

I would not want to start making recommendations at this point before we meet with the industry, but we have agreed to meet with them at the earliest possible date. We will be making suggestions in this House to the government to save a very important industry, the clothing industry.

There are some very basic necessities that every individual needs to live. We need food, we need housing, we need education but we need clothing. We all need clothing. We need shoes and clothing. Why should that clothing not be produced in our own country? Why should we have to go abroad for most of our clothing? It is ridiculous. This is a principal industry and one that should be helped to expand, modernize and compete in the world.

[*Translation*]

Hon. André Ouellet (Papineau—Saint-Michel): Mr. Speaker, I would have one comment to make following the excellent speech from our colleague, the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, who showed to what extent this government has abandonned the Montreal workers, failing to implement the recommendations of the committee headed by Mr. Laurent Picard, which had suggested a series of specific measures to pave the way to Montreal's economic recover. Unfortunately, years later, this report still has not been acted on. It could have helped bring economic renewal to Montreal, but it was not taken seriously. It has not even been given fair consideration by the Canadian government.

We are now faced with a truly alarming situation in Montreal. A recent study by the Quebec Planning and Development Bureau has shown that at the present time there are some 188,000 jobless people on the island of Montreal. Such a situation is absolutely unbearable! We all know to what extent Montreal is the engine of the Quebec economy. If the economy of Montreal were to collapse, the whole province could be affected.

So, I commend our colleague for his speech and I would like to ask him to tell why, in his opinion some of the main recommendations of the Picard report have not yet been implemented?

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Danme-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is right. In 1986, the Conservative government appointed Mr. Picard to chair a commission on the economic situation in Montreal. The commission studied the problem for several months and published a report containing 86 recommendations. It suggested creating high technology industries in Montreal and focussing on international trade.

But, Mr. Speaker, four years later, most of these 86 recommendations have been ignored, totally ignored by the government which itself created this commission chaired by Mr. Picard.

But other commissions have also made recommendations. There was the commission with Paul Lacoste, former rector of the University of Montreal, for the United Way in Montreal in 1990, which made similar recommendations, which recognized that the unemployment rate in Montreal was a disaster. These recommendations were also ignored by the federal government for what was under federal jurisdiction.

• (1320)

[*English*]

I could go on. There were other reports as well. There was a 1989 report by federal economist Jules Leger which referred to the growing number of unemployed and the poverty in Montreal. It made certain recommendations. Nothing has been done about that either.

It is not just a tragedy for Montreal, but it is a tragedy for all of Quebec and for all of Canada.

Government Orders

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, REGIONAL AND NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

AUTHORIZATION FOR STANDING COMMITTEE TO TRAVEL

Mr. Cooper: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sorry to interrupt the exchange but, as you know, during Routine Proceedings today under Motions, I had indicated that there were two travel motions, one of which we had to complete consultations on.

I want to advise the House that those consultations are now completed. It is my understanding that there would be unanimous consent for the following travel motion:

That the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, Regional and Northern Development, be authorized to travel to Toronto from Wednesday, April 24 to Friday, April 26, 1991 in order to attend the conference Reaching for Success: Business and Education Working Together; and

That the necessary staff accompany the committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Does the House give unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS)

[*English*]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

SPRING ADJOURNMENT

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Andre (p. 19433).

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): On a very short comment or question.

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park): Mr. Speaker, what we heard from the hon. member from Montreal are the same woes that we hear in Toronto city.

The unemployment list is getting longer. The food banks are getting longer. Bankruptcies are growing. The refugee backlog is getting worse. The self-exiled class are not given work permits, et cetera.

Just 45 minutes ago, we met with the building industry from Toronto. It made a comparison of the recession of 1981–82 and the present recession. In 1982, the second year of the recession, there were 14,122 units sold as compared to 1990 when only 8,180 were sold.

I would like to ask the member whether he feels, according to what is happening around Montreal, which recession had a greater negative impact on the people, especially the poor and the unemployed.

Mr. Allmand: Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out when we were in government and faced with the recession of 1981–82, we were an activist government and believed in government intervention to help the situation.

We did not believe in the *laissez-faire* approach to the economy. I can recall very well that we put more money into the construction of housing. We set up funds so that first-time home buyers could buy homes. This was a program which was cancelled by the Conservatives when they came to power.

If they really want to do something, and housing is one area that stimulates the economy and gives people one of the basic needs that they have, shelter, they could at least recognize that fact and come forward with a new budget or a new Speech from the Throne and put money into housing. I understand the housing construction people who were here today recommended that CMHC lower its downpayment requirement from 15 per cent to 5 per cent.

There are things like that which would help the housing industry and the economy to get back on its feet. It would help people to get housing at the same time.

We have to believe in a mixed economy and not in a hands off, *laissez-faire* approach.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, today, more precisely in a few minutes, Parliament will adjourn for quite a while without even dealing with one of the most important problems for my riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

Mr. Speaker, on July 13, 1990, I informed the government opposite in a press release about unemployment in our riding and the whole eastern Ontario region and I then appealed to the government opposite to look into this issue which I thought would get worse.

So with my colleagues, the members for Stormont—Dundas and Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, we showed at that time that eastern Ontario had lost nearly 3,000 jobs.

I must tell you, Mr. Speaker, that at that time we certainly did not expect the situation to become as serious as it is today, although it was already serious then.

In 1990, the summer of 1990, my colleagues and I showed the government that, for example, in Hawkesbury, 85 jobs had been lost with the closing of Canadelle Inc. or Wonderbra if you prefer; 78 with the closing of Laser International; 23 laid off at Mercedes Textile; 38 at Sun Wheel; 20 at Rail Car in Alexandria; 75 at Tradition Windows; 100 lost their jobs in the shoe industry and 30 at Alexandria Molding. The same thing happened in the Cornwall region, so well represented by my colleague from Stormont—Dundas. They lost over 1,000 jobs. The Renfrew region, represented by the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, lost some 1,600 jobs.

All in all, then, we could find and identify 3,127 jobs that had been lost for the people in our region. But, Mr. Speaker, it went from bad to worse. At that time, we asked the government to intervene. We asked the government to help the people of Eastern Ontario who needed work.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we saw then that the government did not care about it, so much so that the Minister of Supply and Services, who is the political representative for Eastern Ontario, ridiculed our complaining about the lack of employment in our region. Even the constituents of the minister responsible for Eastern Ontario were angry about what he did.

[*English*]

I have here an article from *The Ottawa Citizen* of July 19, 1989, in which a municipal councillor from the constituency of Lanark—Carleton, which is represented in this House by the Minister of Supply and Services, was indicating to us that the problems being raised by the opposition members were indeed serious.

I would like to read from the article:

> Dick's statements raised the concern of Coun. Dennis Staples who said council should contact the MP for a meeting and show him the "very real" concerns of the town.
>
> "The economic situation in Smiths Falls is not exactly rosy," said Staples.

Faced with the inaction of the government in this area, my colleagues and I tried a second initiative to convince the government of how much we needed help. We asked the municipalities whether or not they agreed with us that the economy of eastern Ontario needed help. This is what they said. The Township of Pakenham adopted a motion asking the federal government for help. The Township of Lavant, Dalhousie & North Sherbrooke, the Township of Grattan, the Townships of Head, Clara and Maria, the Corporation of the Village of Chalk River, the Town of Gananoque, the Village of Merrickville, the Town of Prescott, the City of Brockville, the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, the Village of Chesterville, the Township of Roxborough, the City of Cornwall, *le comité de développement économique des comtés de Prescott–Russell, la ville d'Alexandria, le canton de Hawkesbury–Est, la corporation du village d'Alfred*, the Corporation of the Township of Lancaster, the Corporation of the Township of Kenyon, the Village of Maxville, the Village of Lancaster, *la corporation de la ville de Hawkesbury, le canton de Plantagenet Sod, le canton de Longueuil,*

• (1330)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, I could list some more for several minutes. All those municipalities asked the government opposite to assist the economy of Eastern Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, my riding is only a few kilometers away from Parliament and I sometimes get the feeling that the Peace tower is casting a shadow over the problems facing my riding, however hard I try to disperse the cloud or shadow obscuring the issue.

The fact is, at the moment 50 kilometers from here, in Hawkesbury, in my riding, the unemployment rate stands at 16.6 per cent.

[*English*]

The Minister of State for Youth is in the Chamber as we speak, and I know that he knows my constituency. His own is all things proportional, not that far away, some distance, but nevertheless not as far as many Members of Parliament's constituencies. I have an article here from the *Hawkesbury Express* in my riding. It says:

> Sixteen per cent record high. Jobless rate could get worse.

Here is what it says:

> There are now 1,946 people receiving unemployment insurance benefits in the county. That translates into an unemployment rate of 16.6 per cent, says Fernand St. Jacques, manager of the local Canada Employment Centre.

Those are not statistics that I am inventing, Mr. Speaker. That is the hard economic reality of the riding that I have the honour and pleasure to represent in this House of Commons.

[*Translation*]

The situation there is very serious Mr. Speaker. I have been asking this government, for quite some time now, for an economic development plan for our area. I have to say, that we received a bit of good news recently. Apparently, under the auspices of the Community Futures Committee, we will have, in Hawkesbury, a program intented to improve the infrastructure, hoping to encourage Cité Collégiale to open a satellite institution in Hawkesbury. Now, I have something to tell the New Democrats, and I am sure they are all listening to me with interest from the other end of the room, Mr. Speaker. I can see how interested they are in this issue. I hope they will put a word in for us to their kissing cousins at Queen's Park, because they are the ones responsible for bringing Cité Collégiale to Hawkesbury.

I had the opportunity, recently, to discuss this matter with the Minister of State for Small Businesses who was telling me that the key is to improve education opportunities for our young people, and I agree with him. As he said so well, Mr. Speaker, we must make post-secondary institutions available to improve the schooling of our young people and enable them to find jobs. However, the ball is now in the court of the Ontario New Democrats, and they should know that all the people of Eastern Ontario are expecting them to act on this issue.

Some ministers on the other side have offered their help to convince the Ontario New Democrats. I wish to thank right now those who will. There is no time to loose. We must act now and with all our might.

[*English*]

Aside from this community college initiative that I have just been describing, we are still losing more and more jobs.

A few weeks ago, in consultation with Employment and Immigration Canada, we managed to find funds to retrain people under the Job Re-entry Program. I was really proud that day. I was really happy. I drafted a press release, announcing all these new initiatives that were going to be established and the different high schools in the riding that would be participating in training these people who were unemployed—all of them women, by the way—to reintegrate them into the workforce. Was I ever pleased with this initiative. I phoned the local press to tell them about these grants we were getting that would give jobs, at least temporarily, to 125 women who would be retrained.

The reporter said he guessed I had not heard the news. Then he told me that that afternoon, Ivaco Steel laid off 140 workers.

After the effort was over, there was a net loss of 15 jobs instead of any gain. I was not exactly pleased. As a matter of fact, I was very discouraged.

[*Translation*]

A few days later, Canadian Pacific Forest Products announced it was closing its forest research lab in Hawkesbury.

[*English*]

CIP Research and Canadian Pacific Forest Products have had a research lab in Hawkesbury for 88 years. They have now announced that they are shutting it down. I regret that very much. Up until now, I have been trying to work in co-operation with the employees of that institution. It is not closed yet because there are still a few days left. Not very many, might I add.

I have been trying to convince Canadian Pacific Forest Products to delay the closing for a while, only a few months, because this is important.

Second, I want Canadian Pacific Forest Products to let the employees of that plant have the factory either at a reduced rate or no rent at all for a period of time in exchange for future considerations, preferred shares and so on, in the company that the employees are trying to

establish to keep this research lab alive in our community.

I am still awaiting an answer from Mr. Paul Gagnier, the President of Canadian Pacific Forest Products. If by any chance anyone in Canadian Pacific Forest Products happens to be watching the television right now, perhaps they can tell Mr. Gagnier that I am waiting for his answer.

What we are hoping to get here is funding from the federal government for a market study—and that is available because there are programs under the Workers' Adjustment Program—in order to determine whether or not the employees could successfully run that plant themselves under the conditions I described a few moments ago.

I succeeded in reaching a few people. One of them is a University of Ottawa professor who is giving his time to the employees of this plant. His name is Dr. Walter Baker, and I should probably take this occasion to thank him publicly for what he is doing. Dr. Baker is voluntarily helping the employees get themselves together to make a pledge to invest their severance pay, and everything else that they can muster, into a corporation. That would then be utilized as a further show of good will to convince everyone that they are trying their best to keep their jobs alive at Canadian Pacific Forest Products.

What we need, then, to keep at least that particular institution open is, of course, the funding from the government in order to do the needs study for the jobs. I understand that is moving along. But we also need the co-operation of Canadian Pacific Forest Products. They have not said no yet, and they have not been overly critical, but I will say right now on this Friday, April 12, 1991 that there is only a week left before the plant closes. We need answers from them in terms of keeping the plant open for a little while so that then we can get the federal government involved to try to preserve the jobs.

I should also congratulate the employees for their initiative under the leadership of Mr. Ron Dynes of Canadian Pacific Forest Products, who is trying to get his colleagues at the research centre in Hawkesbury to keep this factory open.

[*Translation*]

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, let me add just a few words about youth unemployment in my constituency. I just told you the unemployment rate is about 16 per cent in my riding, 16.6 per cent to be exact, and according to the manager of the Employment Centre, there is a distinct possibility that the unemployment rate might rise again before the end of this recession. I too hope that this recession will end soon. However, I think, and the Conference Board agrees with this, that we will have to wait a few more months before we see the end of it.

In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, we could at least encourage our young people who will have to face some very tough times this summer. The Challenge '91 program the government offers is a good one. I have received in my office a lot of grant requests. With this money, farmers and small business people, as well as public and para-public agencies, will be able to hire young people this summer. Mr. Speaker, I have for about half a million dollars of requests on my desk.

But from what we have heard at this point, only $77,000 was put aside for my constituency; that is not much money. I talked to the Minister of State for Youth and want to thank him. Without going into details, I hope we will be able to encourage these young people in difficulty. And if at all possible, Mr. Speaker, since the youths need our help so badly, maybe we could find funds to at least encourage a greater number of them.

• (1340)

[*English*]

Finally, I see that the Minister of Transport is sitting in this Chamber at the moment and I have said this to him before, but I simply want to alert him to the blow that the area is recently seeing approach, regarding one of the largest transport companies in the country, which is based in my riding and known as GTL or the Glengarry Transport Group.

Most Canadians will recognize that the name Glengarry has been made famous through two ways. Glengarry is the home of the Glengarry Highlanders and is the name of that very large transport company in Canada. Well, I am not breaking any secrets by saying that Glengarry Transport is in very big financial difficulty. It was in the newspapers today, yesterday, and a few days ago.

Between Glengarry Transport and the affiliated companies, namely Intercan Leasing, the subsidiary company of Glengarry, —and I believe that is the name—there are approximately 7,000 trucks in this country. I hope we do not lose that industry or any part of that company. It is based in Alexandria and has offices in Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto and Kingston, so a number of Members or their constituents would be affected if we lost that industry. I hope and pray that we do not. We do not need any more bad news than we have received already.

So, in closing, I only want to repeat

[*Translation*]

—that the constituency of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell and eastern Ontario need hBelp and they need it now; a 16.6 per cent unemployment rate in Canada is unacceptable and when it happens 50 miles from Parliament, Mr. Speaker, it is a disgrace.

I dare hope that the government, in the course of the next weeks and months, will listen not to the complaints voiced by the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, but by the voters, the Canadian men and women who suffer and need help.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Questions and comments. I recognize the hon. member for Bonavista—Trinity—Conception.

[*English*]

Mr. Fred J. Mifflin (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception): Mr. Speaker, I compliment my colleague from Russell—Glengarry—Prescott on an excellent presentation.

By way of comment, realizing that we would be having this debate today, but not realizing that it would be so short, I did take an opportunity to go over the Speech from the Throne for the 34th Parliament, Second Session. There are four small comments that I would like to make.

First of all, I noticed that we talked about—and I will quote from the speech: "Canadians who fish for a living find their catches reduced by predatory overfishing outside the 200-mile limit. My government will intensify its international efforts to put an end to these practices." That statement was written on April 3, 1989. The community that was being referred to, the European community, had a quota that was set at 13,000 tonnes and they set a quota of 160,000 tonnes, which is 12 times greater and their catch was equivalent. I do not have the figures for 1990 but I think they are roughly the same. So, I am aware that the government is trying but they will have to try harder to achieve some success in this regard.

The second point I would like to make note of is that there is talk about improving the government's record on unemployment insurance. Two years ago, I and my constituents from Bonavista—Trinity—Conception had great faith that something great was going to be achieved.

Well, let me just give you the record. At that particular point in time, as this was written, U.I. worked this way: the employer paid 43 per cent, the employee paid 31 per cent, and the government paid 26 per cent. In 1989 the government contributed $3 billion out of $13 billion.

In less than two years, to cover the cost of the government's withdrawal, which has happened in the two years, for every $100 of employable earnings from an employee the premium rate rose from $1.95, when this was written, on April 3, 1989, up to a total of $2.80 now. That is an increase of 85 cents or 45 per cent.

An employer's contribution rose from $2.73 to $3.92. That is another increase of 45 per cent to make up this $6 billion we expect to lose because of the government's contributions. Well, I have not been impressed with the achievement in that regard.

The third point: There is talk, and I quote;

> It will be replaced with a fairer sales tax that will ensure the Canadian economy is fully competitive and that will maintain a stable source of revenue to finance essential programs.

I am sure reference has been made to the goods and services tax here and I am not going to waste your time and the House's time in the precious few moments that remain by saying what Canadians believe the goods and services tax has done over this period of time. It has caused great divisions in the country and I am sure has largely been responsible for leading to the "made in Canada" recession we are now suffering.

My final point, Mr. Speaker, is this: In preparing Canada's future, talk about education and health. I want to end on this very sombre note and I am referring to the province of Newfoundland and to the five-year freeze in

the transfer payments to the provinces. In total, the freeze will be worth about $30 billion.

In 1990 there was an announcement that there would be a two-year freeze of federal transfer payments and that freeze cost Newfoundland $19 million in 1990 and 1991 and $34 million in 1991-92. In the last federal budget, as you would recall, Mr. Speaker, this freeze was extended for a further three years.

This freeze, then, plus the other federal restraints to transfer payments in the past six years since this government has been in power will have cost Newfoundland about $500 million by the end of 1992 and, in 1991-92 alone—this coming fiscal year—about $140 million.

When these financial burdens are transferred to the province they can be absorbed by richer provinces like Ontario and perhaps Quebec, but Newfoundland is not a wealthy province and we cannot absorb it.

So, Mr. Speaker, on those four promises that were made two years ago, I am disappointed, constituents from Bonavista—Trinity—Conception are disappointed, and all Newfoundlanders and Atlantic Canadians are disappointed.

[*Translation*]

Hon. André Ouellet (Papineau—Saint-Michel): Mr. Speaker, I was most disappointed by the comments of my honorable colleague from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell who concluded his speech by reminding us of the difficult financial situation of one of the most important transport companies in Canada: The Glengarry Transport. I was disappointed because I was also reminded that we had had here in Parliament a debate on that very subject a few years ago when the Conservative government, contrary to advice by all those concernd in the transportation sector, insisted on proceeding with its deregulation.

We, in the Liberal Party of Canada, were opposed to this government policy and we warned it that deregulating transportation would be detrimental to several Canadian carriers, that Canadian trucking companies could not compete sucessfully with their American counterparts and that we were placing them in an excessively difficult situation because, as we pointed out at that time, both industries could not compete under the same set of rules since regulations in the United States were different from those in Canada and that in the long and the short term, deregulation would result in a considerable amount of job losses in the transportation industry in Canada and that several Canadian firms would have to close down their operations.

Now, we know what happened at CN Transport, a company that the government sold off in a fire sale.

M. Boudria: It was a giveaway!

Mr. Ouellet: My collegue, the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, says it was given away for nothing. That is practically the case! It is one of the most surprising transactions I have ever seen, to say the least. In fact, some people questioned this transaction, which favored totally insolvent investors. These people became owners of a Crown corporation only to sell it off a few months late. They laid off thousands of CN truck workers. These lost jobs clearly that the government's Crown corporations privatisation program was a complete failure.

Today, the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell spoke of another transport company established in his constituency suffering the same disadvantages of deregulation. I can only feel very disappointed by this situation.

I would like, in the few minutes that I have left, to come back to the unemployment problem in Montréal. I made a little while ago some comments on certain remarks made by my colleague, the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce. I cannot help but share his views to the effect that the Tory government did not fullfil its obligations following the release of the Picard report's. Clearly, this government do not have the political will to maintain Montreal as one of the main industrial centers in Canada and the federal government has totally given up its responsibility toward the Montreal naval shipyards as well as the train engines that were made for years and years in the East of Montreal and the transportation area since the Dorval—Mirabel issue, which was a priority in the Picard Report, has still not been resolved four years and a half later.

The great promises of the conservative government have not been achieved and the whole Montreal transportation industry is paying the price.

• (1350)

[*English*]

Mr. Fred J. Mifflin (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to continue what I was saying in my comments to the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

In the few moments that are left to me I want to reiterate the importance of the main resource, that is the fishing industry, to Newfoundland and, indeed, to my riding; its impact and how it relates to the transfer payments. Life has been difficult for us because of the federal government's fiscal freeze.

Historically Newfoundland and Labrador have been subject to economic forces that unfortunately have been beyond our control. Our traditional dependence on the resource-based export industries means that external forces have a tremendous impact on the province and our economy.

If I put it another way, Newfoundland has become excessively dependent on fiscal transfers from the Government of Canada because of the limited development and the lack of diversification that is possible in the economy. An increase or decrease, depending on the over-all economic performance of the Canadian economy and indeed the philosophical approach the federal government shows with respect to regional disparity, has a driving and an overriding effect on Newfoundlanders and their economic way of life.

Relevant to our discussion this morning and this afternoon, in the past few years and coincident with the declining economic performance in Canada, the future of the fishery, which is the economic backbone of our province and indeed, of most of Atlantic Canada, has been seriously eroded.

Anyone who sat in this House over the last two and a half years would not be surprised to hear that. I want to give some indication of how much.

Over the past few years there has been progressively greater quota reductions, and the result is that the groundfish landings have declined by over 60,000 tonnes in the past few years. That is a tremendous decrease. A major contributor to the decline of our groundfish continues to be foreign overfishing inside and outside the 200-mile economic zone. The government of the day, whether it is Liberal, whether it is Conservative, whatever it is, that government has to become aware of the necessity to take some Draconian measures to restore the fishing industry to a reasonable level, like it was before.

I could go on for a long time, but I want to make the point that we must be the only country in the world that allows foreigners to harvest the very national resource on which the living of our region and that of the country depends.

I have to refer to the days eights years ago when people talked about a 400,000 tonne total allowable catch. That is the measure of what we do in Newfoundland. TAC it is called, 400,000. We are looking at less than 200,000 today. This is a very simple point. It can be confused with all kinds of caveats and all kinds of perturbations and all kinds of arguments. The fact remains that the foreign overfishing that has taken place inside the 200-mile limit, which is condoned and indeed encouraged by the Government of Canada, is the same level of foreign fishing that took place when the total allowable catch was twice what it is now.

You do not need a Ph.D. in fishing resource industry to understand that there is something dramatically wrong with that. There will be a price to pay. If we cut down the foreign fishing inside the 200-mile limit we may suffer some loss of trade. That trade-off has to be made and it has to be made soon. That is probably the most important thing that we can achieve in my mind, as far as the fishing industry is concerned, in the next couple of years until this Parliament completes.

The second problem is foreign overfishing outside the 200-mile limit. I am personally, and I know a lot of my colleagues are and I believe some members on the other side, in favour of extending Canadian jurisdiction to the nose and the tail of the bank, which is outside the 200-mile limit, but it gives Canada control of a resource that we own. How does a fish know if it is inside or outside the 200-mile limit? Can it be done? They said that we could not increase the three-mile limit to twelve miles. It was done. They said that we could not increase the 12-mile limit to a 200-mile limit. It was done.

They are telling me that I cannot increase the 200–mile limit to the nose and the tail of the bank. It can be done and I am sure someday it will be done.

I thank you for your indulgence. I think it is a great privilege to have the opportunity to finish off the last session of this Parliament as the last speaker, and I thank you for the opportunity.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): It being two o'clock, pursuant to the order made Thursday, April 11, 1991, the motion actually in front of the House is deemed to have been put and adopted, on division.

Motion agreed to.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Shall I call it three o'clock p.m.?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): It being three o'clock p.m., pursuant to order made earlier this day, this House stands adjourned to the call of the Chair.

The House adjourned at 2 p.m.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, May 8, 1991

The House met at 5.40 p.m.

Prayers

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker: I wish to inform the House that pursuant to order made on Friday, April 12, 1991, I have recalled the House today for the sole purpose of granting royal assent to a bill.

* * *

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

Mr. Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed Bill C-91, an Act to amend the Financial Administration Act and other Acts in consequence thereof.

* * *

THE ROYAL ASSENT

Mr. Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Rideau Hall,
Ottawa

May 8 1991

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that the Hon. John Sopinka, Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of Canada, in his capacity as Deputy Governor General, will proceed to the Senate Chamber today, the 8th day of May, 1991, at 5.45 p.m., for the purpose of giving Royal Assent to certain Bills.

Yours sincerely,
Judith A. LaRocque
Secretary to the Governor General

THE ROYAL ASSENT

[*Translation*]

A message was delivered by the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod as follows:

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Deputy to the Governor General desires the immediate attendance of this honourable House in the chamber of the honourable the Senate.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker with the House went up to the Senate chamber.

• (1750)

And being returned:

Mr. Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that when the House went up to the Senate Chamber the Deputy Governor General was pleased to give, in Her Majesty's name, the Royal Assent to the following Bills:

Bill C-91, an Act to amend the Financial Administration Act and other Acts in consequence thereof—Chapter No. 24.

It being 6 p.m., pursuant to order made on Friday, April 12, 1991, this House again stands adjourned to the call of the Chair.

The House adjourned at 5.53 p.m.

[The Second Session of the Thirty-fourth Parliament was prorogued on Sunday, May 12, 1991, by proclamation of His Excellency the Governor General.]