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Monday, February 7, 1994

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, February 7, 1994

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

HOUSE OF COMMONS STANDING ORDERS

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada) moved:

That the Standing Orders of the House of Commons in force on January 28, 1994, be amended as follows:

PART A.

I. That Standing Order 73 be amended

1. By deleting sections (1) and (2) thereof and substituting the following therefor:

“(1) Immediately after the reading of the Order of the Day for the second reading of any public bill, a Minister of the Crown may propose a motion that the said bill be forthwith referred to a standing, special or legislative committee. The Speaker shall immediately propose the question to the House and proceedings thereon shall be subject to the following conditions:

(a) the Speaker shall recognize for debate a Member from the party forming the Government, followed by a Member from the party forming the official Opposition, followed by a Member from each officially recognized party in the House, in order of the number of Members in that party, provided that, if no Member from the party whose turn has been reached rises, a Member of the next party in the rotation or a Member who is not a member of an officially recognized party may be recognized;

(b) the motion shall not be subject to any amendment;

(c) no Member may speak more than once nor longer than ten minutes;

(d) after not more than 180 minutes of debate, the Speaker shall interrupt the debate and the question shall be put and decided without further debate or amendment.

(2) Every public bill, except for bills referred to a committee before being read a second time pursuant to section (1) of this Standing Order, shall be read twice and referred to a committee before any amendment may be made thereto.

(3) Unless otherwise ordered and except for bills referred to a committee before being read a second time pursuant to section (1) of this Standing Order, in giving a bill second reading, the same shall be referred to a standing, special or legislative committee.”

2. By renumbering sections (3) and (4) thereof as sections (4) and (5) respectively.

II. That section (1) of Standing Order 74 be amended by deleting the word “When” and by substituting therefor the words “Unless otherwise provided by Standing or Special Order, when”, in paragraph (a), by deleting the words “or second speaker” and substituting therefor the words “, second or third speaker” and in paragraph (b), by deleting the word “two” and substituting therefor the word “three”.

III. That the Standing Orders be amended:

1. By inserting, immediately before Standing Order 76, the following:

“At Second Reading

76. (1) The report stage of any bill reported by any standing, special or legislative committee before the bill has been read a second time shall not be taken into consideration prior to the third sitting day following the presentation of the said report, unless otherwise ordered by the House.

(2) If, not later than the second sitting day prior to the consideration of the report stage of a bill that has not yet been read a second time, 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*. When the same amendment is put on notice by more than one member, that notice shall be printed once, under the name of each member who has submitted it.

(3) When a recommendation of the Governor General is required in relation to any amendment of which notice has been given pursuant to section (2) of this Standing Order, notice shall be given of the said Recommendation no later than the sitting day before the day on which the report stage is to commence and such notice shall be printed on the *Notice Paper* along with the amendment to which it pertains.

(4) An amendment, in relation to form only in a government bill, may be proposed by a Minister of the Crown without notice, but debate thereon may not be extended to the provisions of the clause or clauses to be amended.

NOTE: The purpose of this section is to facilitate the incorporation into a bill of amendments of a strictly consequential nature flowing from the acceptance of other amendments. No waiver of notice would be permitted in relation to any amendment which would change the intent of the bill, no matter how slightly, beyond the effect of the initial amendment.

(5) The Speaker shall have the power to select or combine amendments or clauses to be proposed at the report stage and may, if he or she thinks fit, call upon any Member who has given notice of an amendment to give such explanation of the subject of the amendment as may enable the Speaker to form a judgement upon it. If an amendment has been selected that has been submitted by more than one member, the Speaker, after consultation, shall designate which member shall propose it.

NOTE: The Speaker will not normally select for consideration any motion previously ruled out of order in committee, unless the reason for its being ruled out of order was that it required a recommendation of the Governor General, in which case the amendment may be selected only if such Recommendation has been placed on notice pursuant to section (2) of this Standing Order. The Speaker will normally only select motions that were not or could not be presented in committee. A motion, previously defeated in committee, will only be selected if the Speaker judges it to be of such exceptional significance as to warrant a further consideration at the report stage. The Speaker will not normally select for separate debate a repetitive series of motions which are interrelated and, in making the selection, shall consider whether individual Members will be able to express their concerns during the debate on another motion.

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For greater certainty, the purpose of this Standing Order is, primarily, to provide Members who were not members of the committee with an opportunity to have the House consider specific amendments they wish to propose. It is not meant to be a reconsideration of the committee stage.

(6) When the Order of the Day for the consideration of the report stage is called, any amendment proposed pursuant to this Standing Order shall be open to debate and amendment.

(7) When debate is permitted, no Member shall speak more than once or longer than ten minutes during proceedings on any amendment at that stage.

(8) When a recorded division has been demanded on any amendment proposed during the report stage of a bill, the Speaker may defer the calling in of the Members for the purpose of recording the "yeas" and "nays" until more or all subsequent amendments to the bill have been considered. A recorded division or divisions may be so deferred from sitting to sitting.

NOTE: In cases when there are an unusually great number of amendments for consideration at the report stage, the Speaker may, after consultation with the representatives of the parties, direct that deferred divisions be held before all amendments have been taken into consideration.

(9) When proceedings at the report stage on any bill that has not been read a second time have been concluded, a motion "That the bill, as amended, be concurred in and be read a second time" or "That the bill be concurred in and read a second time" shall be put and forthwith disposed of, without amendment or debate.

(10) The report stage of a bill pursuant to this Standing Order shall be deemed to be an integral part of the second reading stage of the bill. When a bill has been concurred in and read a second time in accordance with the procedures set forth in this Standing Order, it shall be set down for a third reading and passage at the next sitting of the House.

After Second Reading".

2. By renumbering Standing Order 76 as Standing Order 76.1 and by amending the said Standing Order:

(a) in section (1) thereof, by inserting immediately after the word "committee", the words "after the bill has been read a second time";

(b) in section (2) thereof, by inserting immediately after the word "stage", the words "of a bill that has been read a second time" and by adding, at the end, the words, "When the same amendment is put on notice by more than one Member, that notice shall be printed once, under the name of each Member who has submitted it.";

(c) in section (3) thereof, by inserting immediately after the word "bill", the words "that has been read a second time";

(d) in section (5) thereof, by adding, immediately after the words "upon it", the words, "If an amendment has been selected that has been submitted by more than one Member, the Speaker, after consultation, shall designate which Member shall propose it.";

(e) in section (6) thereof, by deleting the words "section (2) of";

(f) by deleting section (8) thereof and by substituting the following therefor:

"(8) When a recorded division has been demanded on any amendment proposed during the report stage of a bill, the Speaker may defer the calling in of the Members for the purpose of recording the "yeas" and "nays" until more or all subsequent amendments to the bill have been considered. A recorded division or divisions may be so deferred from sitting to sitting.

NOTE: In cases when there are an unusually great number of amendments for consideration at the report stage, the Speaker may, after consultation with the representatives of the parties, direct that deferred divisions be held before all amendments have been taken into consideration.

(g) in section (9) thereof, by inserting immediately after the words "any bill", the words "that has been read a second time";

(h) in section (10) thereof, by inserting immediately after the word "bill", the words "that has been read a second time"; and

(i) in section (11) thereof, by inserting immediately after the words "When a bill", the words "that has been read a second time".

IV. That Standing Order 113 be amended:

1. By deleting section (1) thereof, and by substituting the following therefor:

"(1) Without anticipating the decision of the House, within five sitting days after the commencement of debate on a motion to appoint a legislative committee or to refer a bill thereto, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs shall meet to prepare, and shall report not later than the following Thursday, a list of members of such a legislative committee, which shall consist of not more than fifteen Members. Such a committee shall be organized only in the event that the

House adopts the motion for appointment or referral. Upon presentation of such a report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, the same shall be deemed adopted."

2. In section (3) thereof, by deleting all of the words after the word "meet" and by substituting therefor the words:

"within two sitting days of the naming of the Chairman and the adoption of the motion appointing or referring the bill to the committee of which the membership has been reported."

PART B.

That Standing Order 68 be amended by adding, immediately after section (3), the following:

"(4)(a) A motion by a Minister of the Crown to appoint or instruct a standing, special or legislative committee to prepare and bring in a bill, pursuant to section (1) of this Standing Order, shall be considered under Government Orders. During debate on any such motion no Member shall be permitted to speak more than once or for more than ten minutes. After not more than ninety minutes debate on any such motion, the Speaker shall interrupt debate and put all questions necessary to dispose of the motion without further debate or amendment. A motion by a Minister of the Crown to concur in the report of a committee pursuant to this section or to section (4)(b) of this Standing Order shall also be taken up under Government Orders and shall, for the purposes of Standing Order 78, be considered to be a stage of a public bill.

(b) A motion by a Private Member to appoint or instruct a standing, special or legislative committee to prepare and bring in a bill, pursuant to section (1) of this Standing Order, shall be considered as a motion under Private Members' Business and shall be subject to the procedures in that regard set down in Standing Orders 86 to 99, inclusive. A motion by a member other than a Minister of the Crown to concur in the report of a committee pursuant to this section or to section (4)(a) of this Standing Order shall also be taken up as a motion under Private Members' Business pursuant to the aforementioned Standing Orders in that regard.

(5) A committee appointed or instructed to prepare and bring in a bill shall, in its report, recommend the principles, scope and general provisions of the said bill and may, if it deems it appropriate, but not necessarily, include recommendations regarding legislative wording.

(6) The adoption of a motion to concur in a report made pursuant to section (5) of this Standing Order shall be an order to bring in a bill based thereon.

(7)(a) When a Minister of the Crown, in proposing a motion for first reading of a bill, has stated that the bill is in response to an order made pursuant to section (6) of this Standing Order, notwithstanding any Standing Order, the bill shall not be set down for consideration at the second reading stage before the third sitting day after having been read a first time. The second reading and any subsequent stages of such a bill shall be considered under Government Orders. When a motion for second reading of such a bill is proposed, notwithstanding any Standing Order, the Speaker shall immediately put all questions necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without debate or amendment.

(b) When a member other than a Minister of the Crown, in proposing a motion for first reading of a bill, has stated that the bill is in response to an order made pursuant to section (6) of this Standing Order, and if the bill has been selected pursuant to Standing Order 92, when a motion for second reading of such a bill has been proposed, notwithstanding any Standing Order, the Speaker shall immediately put all questions necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without debate or amendment.

(8) A Minister of the Crown may propose a motion for first reading of a bill based on an order made pursuant to section (6) of this Standing Order, whether that order was the result of a motion by Minister or of a private member, and notwithstanding the provisions of section (4)(b) of this Standing Order, any such bill shall thereafter be considered under Government Orders."

PART C.

That Standing Order 81 be amended by adding at the end of section (8)(a) the words "In any calendar year, no more than one fifth of all the allotted days shall fall on a Wednesday and no more than one fifth thereof shall fall on a Friday." and by inserting immediately after section (6) the following:

"(7) When Main Estimates are referred to a standing committee the committee shall also be empowered to consider and report upon the expenditure plans and priorities in future fiscal years of the departments and agencies whose Main Estimates are before it.

(8) Any report made in accordance with section (7) of this Standing Order may be made up to and including the last normal sitting day in June, as set forth in Standing Order 28(2), and shall be deemed to be subject to the provisions of section (9) of this Standing Order."

and by renumbering the subsequent sections accordingly.

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PART D.

That the Standing Orders be amended by inserting immediately after the title "Budget Debate" and before Standing Order 84, the following:

"83.1 Commencing on the first sitting day in September of each year, the Standing Committee on Finance shall be authorized to consider and make reports upon proposals regarding the budgetary policy of the government. Any report or reports thereon may be made no later than the tenth sitting day before the last normal sitting day in December, as set forth in Standing Order 28(2)."

PART E.

That Standing Order 83(4) be amended by deleting the period and adding the following:

"or to propose an amendment or amendments to a bill then before the House, provided that such amendment or amendments are otherwise admissible."

PART F.

I. That Standing Order 24 be amended by deleting sections (2) and (3) and substituting the following therefor:

"(2) At 6:30 o'clock p.m. on any sitting day except Friday and at 2:30 o'clock p.m. on Fridays, the Speaker shall adjourn the House until the next sitting day."

II. That Standing Order 30(4)(a) be amended by deleting the words "the mid-day interruption" and by substituting therefor, the words "oral questions".

III. That Standing Order 30(6) be amended by deleting the words "Private Members' Business—from 5:00 to 6:00 o'clock p.m." and the words "Private Members' Business—from 7:00 to 8:00 o'clock p.m." and substituting therefor the words "Private Members' Business—from 5:30 to 6:30 o'clock p.m." and by deleting the words "Private Members' Business—from 3:00 to 4:00 o'clock p.m." and substituting therefor the words "Private Members' Business—from 1:30 to 2:30 o'clock p.m."

IV. That Standing Order 30 be amended by deleting section (7) thereof and by substituting the following therefor:

"(7) If the beginning of Private Members' Hour is delayed for any reason, or if the Hour is interrupted for any reason, a period of time corresponding to the time of the delay or interruption shall be added to the end of the Hour, provided that if the delay or interruption continues past thirty minutes after the time at which the Hour would have ordinarily ended, Private Members' Hour for that day and the business scheduled for consideration at that time, or any remaining portion thereof, shall be added to the business of the House on a day to be fixed, after consultation, by the Speaker, who shall attempt to designate that day within the next ten sitting days, but who, in any case shall not permit the intervention of more than one adjournment period provided for in Standing Order 28(2)."

V. That Standing Order 33(2) be deleted and the following substituted therefor:

"(2) A period of time corresponding to the time taken for the proceedings pursuant to section (1) of this Standing Order shall be added to the time provided for government business in the afternoon of the day on which the said proceedings took place. Private Members Business, where applicable, and the ordinary time of daily adjournment shall be delayed accordingly, notwithstanding Standing Orders 24, 30 and 38 or any Order made pursuant to Standing Order 27."

VI. That Standing Order 38(1) be amended by deleting the words "6:00" and substituting therefor the words "6:30".

VII. That Standing Order 41(1) be amended by deleting all of the words before the word "unless" and by substituting the words "Whenever the business before the House is interrupted pursuant to Standing Order or Special Order,"

and

That this Order shall come into effect on the Monday following its adoption.

That Standing Order 51 be suspended for the present Session.

That the Clerk be authorized to make necessary editorial and consequential alterations to the Standing Orders.

That the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs examine procedures regarding members statements, special debates, the taking of divisions of the House by electronic means, the conduct of Private Members' Business, especially with regard to Private Bills and to Senate Public Bills, any anomalies or technical inconsistencies in the Standing Orders, the reform of question period, measures to achieve more direct participation by citizens, including citizens'

initiative, the right of constituents to recall their M.P., binding referenda, free votes in the House of Commons, debates on petitions and fixed election dates.

(1105)

He said: Mr. Speaker, the motion to change the rules of the House, which I am proposing today, is intended to implement a number of commitments that my party made in the recent election campaign and in the throne speech in order to revive and revitalize the House of Commons.

[*Translation*]

In the speech from the throne, the government committed itself to "enhance the credibility of Parliament". The changes they propose to make to the Standing Orders of the House of Commons "will give the hon. members the opportunity to be more actively involved in the development of government policies and legislation".

[*English*]

As I have said in quoting the throne speech, what we want to do is renew and revitalize the House of Commons. Of course changing the rules of the House does not alone bring about its revitalization. It is the extent to which the new procedures are used that will make the difference.

Today we are providing a framework for renewal. It will be up to all members, both government and opposition, to make these procedures effective.

It is to state the obvious to say that Canadians have in recent years, and I think especially over the last nine years, grown increasingly dissatisfied with the way the House of Commons has functioned. They have been unimpressed both with the process that the House has used to do its business and with much of the results. The changes to the standing orders, the rules of the House, proposed today make a beginning on improving the process. Our success in improving the process will, in my view, have a constructive influence on improving the product.

Our Parliament is an institution founded on developments many centuries ago. It is one that has evolved over the years to meet the changing expectations of society. We believe that the Canadian system of parliamentary government is fundamentally sound but that the recent practices of the House of Commons have become inadequate to meet the expectations of the Canadian people.

Canadians expect responsive as well as responsible government. Many Canadians have in recent years come to feel that the House of Commons has failed them in this regard. They also expect more transparency in government decision making. In this regard as well, Canadians have been dissatisfied with parliamentary proceedings. Also, our electors want us to conduct their business in an orderly and civil fashion. They have not been overly impressed with the record of the House in recent years on this front either.

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However, the new government has been making a real effort to have the House operate with a more constructive tone and with a better sense of decorum. The opposition parties, I am happy to say, have been making a similar effort and the results have been a matter of favourable comment by many outside the House.

Members will note that the proposals in this motion do not represent radical departures from some of the ways in which the House has operated. They in fact reinforce the fundamentals of our system. By this I mean they seek to restore a more active role to our members of Parliament and to provide a better balance between them and the government. The proposals are the end product not just of the Liberal platform, but of intensive study in recent years both inside and outside the House.

There has been a growing consensus both inside and outside the House that proposals such as the ones we find in the motion before us are essential to the recognition by Canadians of the House of Commons as the central institution of our federal government. We do not apologize for what appears to be a national consensus. We are pleased to be able to act on this national consensus and this is what we are doing today.

I want to mention some of those who have contributed to the development of this consensus.

(1110)

A year ago there was an important report prepared by the present minister of government services and the hon. members for Saint-Léonard, for Kingston and the Islands, and for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. This report deserves our recognition.

Several months later the standing committee on House management made its very useful 81st report which represented work not only by the members I have just named but also by such members as the member for Winnipeg Transcona and former members, such as the hon. Jim Edwards.

There have also been many studies by academic and private sector organizations. There has been work over the years by the Parliamentary Centre for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade under the leadership of Peter Dobell. The House has benefited as well from commentary on procedural matters by journalists such as Hugh Winsor, Doug Fisher and, yes, Bob Fife.

In the immediate past weeks we also benefited from constructive discussions with the Official Opposition, with the Reform Party and with other members. I would like to thank particularly the hon. members Roberval and Kindersley—Lloydminster, the House leaders for the Bloc and the Reform Party, for making a number of constructive suggestions which we have been happy to incorporate into this motion.

I believe this kind of collaboration and consensus building is what the Canadian people desire of their elected representatives. I am confident all members who want to build a more vital and more relevant House of Commons will be able to support these proposals.

The House actually got a head start in its proposals last week when it unanimously approved a restructuring of the committee system. At that time the standing committees were realigned to match the new structure of the government to make it absolutely clear which committee would deal with which of the departments and agencies. One important feature of the reforms adopted last week was the confirmation that the standing committees and not the legislative committees would be the usual and customary route for the consideration of the committee stage of bills.

The motion before us today follows and adds to the changes made last week. I would like to now turn to its specific provisions.

The main object of today's motion is to put in place more of the parliamentary framework that will permit members to do what was promised by my party in the election campaign and in the throne speech. This promise was to enable members of Parliament to play a greater role in the legislative process before being limited in their scope of action by the approval in principle of a bill that is implied by second reading.

Second, our proposal will give members an opportunity to have more input in the preparation of annual departmental spending plans. This will be a considerable enhancement of their role in the present process whereby they merely review the estimates for the current fiscal year. Since these estimates bear the constitutionally required recommendations of the Governor General, they are procedurally difficult to alter.

Third, our motion would enable members to be directly involved in the consideration of proposals for the annual budget and in consultations about it before being confronted with formal tax measures to which the government must be constitutionally committed.

It is our proposal that these tasks be undertaken through the work of members in the standing committees of the House holding hearings, listening to witnesses and arriving openly at decisions and recommendations.

In a country as vast and complex as Canada every government decision represents a compromise. Every decision on legislation, on expenditure and on taxation affects different groups and regions in our country in different ways. No decision can be reached without consulting a wide range of Canadians, without considering the views of provinces and municipalities and without extensive consultations within the government itself,

that is among departments of the federal government. As a result virtually every government decision represents myriad compromises.

(1115)

The difficulty that the present practices cause for our democratic society is that most of these consultations and compromises occur before legislation or financial proposals are made public in Parliament.

There is little transparency in this pre-parliamentary process which gives natural rise to suspicions, justified or not, about its fairness and balance.

The impact of this approach on Parliament is as a consequence often negative. Interested groups unhappy with the result of the process may simply seek champions of their opposition in the House and often find them in one or more of the opposition parties as well as in individual members on the government side.

Also ministers and their officials, having already been involved in extensive consultation and compromise, are very often highly reluctant to agree to substantial alterations of the bill in the House. As a result, what could be a constructive and potentially more unifying parliamentary process may well become confrontational and lead to more division instead of some reasonable degree of consensus?

It is true that in a regionally, socially and economically diverse country such as Canada, arrival at consensus on national policy is not easy. When attempts at reaching such compromise appear to be restricted to private and even secret processes, however, it is at the expense of the valuable educational and enlightening effects of more public involvement. All this merely exacerbates mistrust and suspicions and makes the arrival at some reasonable degree of national consensus unlikely or certainly more difficult.

Canadians have the sophistication and the generosity to cope with the forging of at least some of these difficult compromises more in public than has been the case before now. There may be some who doubt this but I am convinced that most Canadians are capable of understanding each other's needs and positions and are willing to sanction the kinds of compromises between regional, social and economic groups that are necessary to govern so diverse a nation as Canada.

What is more, it is important that a modern democratic government, more often than at present, more openly involve its citizens in this kind of decision making. The government must give more trust to its citizens and their elected representatives if citizens are to trust their government. Therefore we are proposing two new avenues, two new routes, for the House to deal with legislation in addition to the one already in existence.

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The first new avenue, the first new route, would see the government introduce a bill for first reading but after a short debate of up to three hours and a vote, if necessary, the bill would be referred to a committee, usually a standing committee, before rather than after second reading and approval in principle.

The committee would be able to hold extensive hearings and would be able to make amendments to the bill unrestricted by the present limitations considered to be imposed by approval in principle at second reading. Committees would be in a position to make extensive revisions to the legislation. Amendments of a similarly broad nature could be proposed at the report stage after the bill was sent back to the House and this would be prior to the completion of the second reading stage.

When the report stage is concluded, under this new procedure a motion for second reading would be disposed of without further debate and the bill would be set down for consideration at the third reading stage at a future sitting.

The third reading stage as well as the earlier report stage would continue to provide broad opportunities for all MPs who wish to engage in debate of a more general nature on the bill in question.

The second new avenue or route would see a committee, on motion by a minister or by a private member, if it is a matter during private members' hour, charged with the responsibility of preparing a bill. Such a committee, likely a standing committee, could hold wide ranging hearings on what ought to be included in the legislation and would report to the House on the principles, provisions and scope of the proposed bill.

(1120)

That report could include some of the drafting. Concurrence in the report would be an order of the House to bring in such a bill. The bill, having already been subject to extensive debate in principle during consideration of the motion to concur, would have to be given second reading expeditiously and referred to committee for detailed study of its legislative language. Subsequent consideration by the House would take place under already existing legislative procedures.

One of the features of this route would be that the government, if impressed with a private member's initiative, can move it for consideration as compared with the slow and difficult procedure usually applied to private members' bills.

As I have said, in addition to these two new routes the present legislative process will also be retained, the process of sending a bill to committee, only after the vote on second reading.

The House and its committees will need to develop the techniques and the expertise required to make the new procedures effective. We propose to make a relatively limited number of government bills subject to the new procedures in the

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beginning. I foresee the two new routes becoming more and more the procedures to be preferred by the government.

The great advantage of these new procedures, these new routes, would be that members would be able to do what they and those who elected them have always expected, and that is to do more to develop legislation.

There is, however, an important additional potential benefit to be gained. The broad role of standing committees with regard to a bill dealt with in either of these two new processes could substantially reduce the quasi-proprietary attitude of ministers and their officials toward their legislation. By the time such a bill is ready for second or third reading, it could be as much the committee's bill as it is that of the sponsoring minister. It has been suggested that a vote on second or third reading of such a bill could as a consequence of this be more difficult to describe as, standing by itself, a confidence issue. Members on all sides of the House could find themselves freed more often of constitutional implications in voting and would be able to depart from party positions without concerns about defeating the government.

In other words, the suggestion has been made to me that these two new legislative routes could be one way of increasing the number of so-called free votes.

The new procedures also can help avoid situations that all governments face from time to time. They result from a bill's being developed within departments without sufficiently broad and open public consultation. As a consequence, things could be overlooked and the governments as a result are embarrassed, to say the least, when the bill must be dramatically changed or even withdrawn in the face of a strong expression of negative public opinion after that bill has been introduced.

I would like now to turn to our proposals regarding greater involvement of members of the House in financial procedures. Under present rules the House does not deal with government expenditure until the estimates, the spending programs for the current fiscal year as recommended by the crown, have been put before it.

The estimates are complex and difficult to analyze and are, for constitutional reasons, difficult to change. In addition, their consideration is subject to a rigorous timetable. Main estimates are referred to standing committees late in February and their study must be completed in committee by the end of May of the same year. As a result, the examination of estimates has become rather cursory and there has been no focus for parliamentary debate on government spending before its spending priorities are actually set.

We propose, therefore, that concurrently with consideration of the main estimates for the current fiscal year, each standing

committee must also consider the future expenditure priorities for the subsequent fiscal year of the departments and agencies for which it is responsible.

The committees would be required to report their findings and recommendations by the end of June in order to fit into the government's administrative timetable for preparing the next year's estimates, a process that occurs in the autumn of each year.

(1125)

The House would thus have the opportunity to provide the government and the public with its views on expenditure priorities before the estimates for the next fiscal year are prepared rather than being put in the difficult position of having to deal with what amounts to almost a *fait accompli* when the estimates are finally tabled.

Turning to another matter, the annual budget presentation by the Minister of Finance usually takes place around the end of February of each year. We are proposing in this motion, therefore, that the Standing Committee on Finance be required to undertake an annual public consultation on what should be in the next budget and in so doing to conduct extensive public hearings. This consultation would have to take place in the fall of each year between September and December so as to fit into the real timetable for budget preparation by the Department of Finance.

Having the consultation take place in this time period would make the involvement of parliamentarians meaningful and relevant. This would provide a forum for both parliamentarians and the public to air their views on these important matters well before the budget is locked in in order for it to be presented around the end of February.

This would also enable the Minister of Finance to test proposals and ideas with the public less hindered by the often misunderstood and often exaggerated concept of budget secrecy.

The idea is that while the minister would still take care to avoid giving unfair commercial advantage through advance notice of what the budget would actually contain, he or she would have the benefit of public and parliamentary comment before, rather than after, preparing the budget. Also this would be done because the study has to take place in the finance committee in the fall of each year before a budget is expected to be presented the following February. This would have to take place at a point close to when decisions are being made within the government on the contents of the budget.

I should add that the public could well benefit from a better understanding of the options, and by analysis of the committee proceedings hopefully would be more confident that the budget once published reflects its needs.

Government Orders

In addition to providing the framework for implementing our platform commitments and what was said in the throne speech, the motion seeks to regularize the hours of sitting of the House. Over the years evening sittings in my view have proven to be unproductive for legislation and not helpful to the health and family life of members and the staff of the House.

Evening sittings will still occur when the House is debating general policy matters that attract an unusually high level of participation, as we have seen in the last few weeks, or holding special debates on matters of urgency. However, we consider it desirable that the House not usually sit during the evenings in order to give members more time for committees, for work in their offices and perhaps, most important, time for some normal home life for those whose families come to be in Ottawa.

We wish as well to accommodate members' travel on weekends to their constituencies by reverting to an earlier adjournment time on Fridays. We would make up the time lost by sitting until 6.30 p.m. rather than 6 p.m. during the week and by doing away with the break between 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

We are also proposing a measure that would protect the right of private members to have their proposals debated for the full allotted of time as well as a measure that would recognize in the rules the need for the House to make certain amendments from time to time to tax bills that are already before the House.

There are a number of other areas of parliamentary procedure that have been subject to comment from both within and outside the House including what has been mentioned in the House management committee's 81st report of which I spoke earlier. These include such matters as the conduct of Question Period, special debates and Private Members' Business. I do not believe that these should be the subject of an initiative by the government at the beginning of new Parliament, especially one in which more than two-thirds of the members are new to the House. In addition there is the question of electronic voting, a subject that has engendered a lot of discussion in recent years.

(1130)

These subjects as well as a number of other issues such as recall, referenda, citizens' initiatives, are among those that should be addressed in a parliamentary study. As a result we are proposing that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs put them on its agenda for early consideration.

Also the government has decided that as a part of its effort to enhance the relevance of the House of Commons, ministers must, whenever possible, make announcements regarding policy first here in the House and before meeting the press rather than after.

This enables members to hear first about such decisions in the House of Commons. This also facilitates formal responses by the opposition parties. We saw a good example of how this

approach can work with a statement by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration just last week.

It is also the government's intention to continue the innovation seen in the last few weeks in which the government, on its own initiative, sets aside a significant portion of its own House time for general debates on policy issues of current and immediate significance.

I believe this enhances the role of members since their voices will be heard here in the House of Commons more often before decisions are made rather than afterward.

I want to turn to a subject that is not mentioned in the motion itself, but I anticipate that some of the debate on the motion will concern this subject. It is the subject of so-called free votes. I want to spend a few minutes discussing this important topic.

The subject does not appear in the motion because in our view it is not a matter that can be dealt with effectively by the rules themselves. In fact it is not a matter dealt with now by the rules, the standing orders of the House. Instead I have concluded it is a matter to be dealt with by each party and each party's members themselves.

A government may choose to declare a vote a free vote but it cannot oblige the other parties in the House to accept such a declaration. For example, in the last Parliament the House had before it a bill on abortion which government backbenchers and the Official Opposition regarded as a free vote but which the then third party declared to be as far as it was concerned a party vote, that is one of party policy from which dissent by its members was not acceptable to it.

We should also bear in mind that this question is as much one of self-discipline as it is of party discipline.

Most members of this House sought election on the basis that they were supporters of a particular party, its leader and its program. This is certainly the case for the Liberals who campaigned on a more fully detailed and developed platform than is usually the case. Electors likely expect their members to represent them in a manner that is consistent with the basis on which their members sought election.

A more complex consideration here is that the question of free votes is not only a matter of internal parliamentary procedure. We are dealing here with the Constitution. To be sure it is the largely unwritten part of our constitution but it is a vital part, crucial to the whole concept of parliamentary democracy.

It is a fundamental constitutional principle that the government in order to hold office must command the confidence of the House of Commons. Confidence means that the House does not only agree that the Prime Minister and the cabinet ought to remain in office, but in order to permit them to do so the that House is prepared to support their fundamental policies. This is a basic element of the unwritten part of the Constitution, that part which stems from the preamble to the Constitution Act which states that Canada is to have a constitution "similar in

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principle to that of the United Kingdom". In other words, we are the heirs to hundreds of years of constitutional practice and are at the same time both liberated and bound by that legacy.

(1135)

For more than 300 years it has been a constitutional principle in the United Kingdom, and later in Canada, that ministers in order to hold office must have the support of the House of Commons in the sense that they are assured of a majority on their central policies. They must demonstrate on an ongoing basis the ability to persuade the House to grant the crown the funds necessary to carry on the government, to raise the necessary moneys through taxes and to enact the laws the ministry considers essential for good government.

Under our constitution the House may express its satisfaction with ministers who hold office by passing motions expressing confidence or defeating motions of censure from time to time. But if that same House were at the same time to deny regularly to the ministers the funds needed to administer the government or the taxes to pay its bills or the legislation the ministers believe essential, those ministers would be shown to be unable to govern.

As a result, they would have to leave office or seek the election of a new House. The confidence of the House and the government is not simply something that is periodically voted upon. It is something that is also gained or lost on a cumulative basis.

Not long ago the Prime Minister was asked in the House to commit the government to a process whereby it could, after any defeat on any bill or motion other than an explicit no confidence motion, bring before the House a motion reaffirming the confidence of the House and the ministry and if sustained in that motion to carry on.

This process, if sparingly used, is a legitimate one. It was employed in the House once 25 years ago. This happened when a government, having carried a tax bill successfully through all earlier stages, was not sufficiently prudent and held the final vote at what proved to be the wrong time. Having been defeated on the third reading of that bill, the government later brought in a motion that specifically declared that situation not to have been an intentional declaration by the House of no confidence in the government. The House accepted the motion and the government carried on.

It is not however a device that is, if resorted to on a regular basis, at all compatible with Canadian and British constitutional theory or practice. A government, I submit, in order to remain in office must be able to count upon Parliament to support the

essentials that the programs that it places before it and upon which its members were elected. Both the Constitution and the electorate expect the government to do something more than to simply cling to office. A government is expected to pursue the program on which it was elected.

This is not to say that the government must be on the winning side of every vote in the House in order to stay in office. Far from it. The Sir John A. Macdonald government between 1867 and 1872 absorbed many defeats both on legislation and on supply. The Trudeau government between 1972 and 1974 also carried on despite defeat, including some on supply.

The cumulative effect of votes in both of those parliaments however was supportive of these governments. By and large they got their legislative programs and their central fiscal policies adopted.

The question of confidence is far from straightforward. This was demonstrated during the debate on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne in January 1973 when then Prime Minister Trudeau presented an exposition of the confidence convention and said:

Some things for us will be questions of confidence. Some things would mean the demise of the government. If, for instance, there should be a clear vote of no confidence in the government, if the government should be defeated on fundamentals, on basic principles—we shall go to the people—But I hasten to add that other questions, if they go against us, will not be interpreted by the government as a defeat of the government.

(1140)

He was then followed by the then leader of the New Democratic Party, the late David Lewis, who summed up in his view what was Mr. Trudeau's position on confidence as being:

We will let you know whether it was confidence after.

Mr. Lewis begged to differ. He said:

I want to tell him that, as far as we are concerned, it will be parliament that will make that decision.

Constitutional experts tell us the fact is that both Mr. Trudeau and the late Mr. Lewis were correct. A government can always assert that the results of any vote in the House demonstrates that it enjoys the confidence of the House. However, in the final analysis it has to prove this claim on an ongoing basis by continuing to win crucial votes here in the House. This shows how complex the question really is.

Our Constitution differs from that of the United States. There the executive and legislature are rigorously separated. In Canada the executive and legislature are not rigorously separated as is the case in the United States. Our Constitution does not permit the executive and the legislative body to function almost independently, often working in opposite directions.

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This is not to say that our Constitution is based upon the subservience of the legislature to the executive. Indeed in principle at least the reverse is true. It is the central thrust of our proposed procedural reform, the reforms we are discussing today, to reinforce the role of members of this House without sacrificing the mutually interlinked, the symbiotic relationship between executive and legislature that is the hallmark of a parliamentary democracy.

While this issue is as I have said more complex than some would have us believe, I do not wish in describing these complexities to leave the House with the impression that the government is reluctant to depart from the recent practice of treating virtually every vote in the House as a matter of confidence. In fact it is definitely not the intention of the government to treat every vote as a matter of confidence. There will certainly be more occasions than in the past when this government will not regard issues before the House as matters of confidence, whether these be on amendments, on bills or on other motions.

I think I should return to the motion before us and to say in conclusion that I want to repeat that this motion is intended to provide an important new framework for both immediate and ongoing parliamentary reform. However, it will still be up to members on both sides of the House to make it work.

I want to assure you, Mr. Speaker, that it is the government's intention, it is the intention of members supporting the government, to make these changes work. I believe this motion will carry out the government's commitment in the throne speech to enhance the credibility of Parliament by giving members of Parliament a greater opportunity to contribute to the development of public policy and legislation.

I urge this House to adopt this motion as a substantial contribution to achieving these important objectives which are aimed at restoring the confidence of Canadians in the House of Commons as the central institution of our federal government and of our parliamentary democracy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, in the speech from the throne, the government committed itself to enhancing the credibility of Parliament. It also announced that changes would be proposed to the standing orders of the House of Commons to give members of Parliament a greater opportunity to contribute to the development of public policy and legislation.

Today, the government introduced its proposals for parliamentary reform. The Official Opposition does not object to the proposed changes to the Standing Orders of the House of Commons. However we do have some reservations.

(1145)

Certain aspects of the proposed reform violate the fundamental principles of our parliamentary system. In other areas, we feel it does not go far enough, and we seriously doubt that the few changes being proposed will be able to restore Parliament's image and enhance the role of its members in the eyes of the public.

We realize that updating the rules in the Standing Orders is not a task to be taken lightly. Parliamentary procedure is extremely complex. It is based on principles that are meant to protect the inherent values of a democratic society like ours. Any attempt at reform must be done with great care, to avoid undermining the fundamental principles of our parliamentary democracy. As Charles Franks, founding president of the Canadian Study of Parliament Group pointed out, parliamentary reform is not a straightforward technique to make Parliament more effective and efficient, although it is often presented in those terms. This kind of reform is about the interests that legislators must serve in Canada and how various points of view may or may not affect choices and results.

However, we know that thorough reform is possible, witness the sweeping reforms of 1968 and 1985. It is enough to observe the following rule: any changes in the Standing Orders must conform to the fundamental principles of the Canadian parliamentary system.

Before taking a closer look at the government's proposals, perhaps I may briefly recall, for the benefit of this House, the underlying principles.

The Canadian parliamentary system is derived from the British system. In fact, according to the preamble to the Constitution Act, 1867, the Canadian Constitution is based on the same principles as those applied in the United Kingdom.

Historically, the British parliamentary system has consisted in a set of techniques for co-operation between the government, called the King's Council, and the elected assembly or House of Commons. To encourage co-operation between the two powers, the British created various means of contact as well as certain controls and constraints.

Normally, these parliamentary techniques should have disappeared when the supremacy of Parliament, represented by the House of Commons, became the sole legitimate basis for the exercise of political power in Great Britain and Canada. However the need to reconcile parliamentary supremacy and effective government led to maintaining the parliamentary mechanisms that we know today.

Briefly, the British parliamentary system is based on maintaining a balance between the government's right to govern and the right of the House of Commons to control the government's activities, according to the principles of parliamentary supremacy.

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To maintain this very necessary balance, the British parliamentary system requires a flexible sharing of legislative and executive powers by Parliament and the government, while stressing co-operation.

The government enjoys the confidence of members of Parliament who belong to the party that has the majority of the seats in the House of Commons. This allows the government to dictate the business of the House. Although the House of Commons conducts its business as it sees fit, it is more or less subject to the government's will. This mechanism allows the government to govern.

However, members of the House of Commons enjoy guarantees by which they are free to criticize the nature of government activity. These guarantees arise from the Standing Orders of the House and certain conventions. The preservation of the rights of the opposition is one of the basic unwritten rules.

The contemporary role of the House of Commons is therefore to monitor the government's actions. The main function of its members is to publicly and freely challenge and criticize the government and the measures it tables in the House. Any infringement of the member's role diminishes the usefulness of the House of Commons as a democratic institution.

(1150)

As a result of the last election, the 54 members of the official Opposition were given the mandate to defend the interests of their constituents in the House of Commons pursuant to Parliamentary rules and traditions. They intend to assume the traditional role entrusted them under the Canadian parliamentary tradition to monitor the government's actions. However, Quebec voters did not give them the mandate to reform federal institutions such as the House of Commons.

Granted, the government has presented us with a proposed reform of the Standing Orders of the House, and it is its prerogative to do so. We have decided to co-operative to fully assume our parliamentary role and carry out our mandate. But our duties are not limited to approving the government's proposed amendments to the Standing Orders. We must also offer constructive criticism of the proposed reform. The Official Opposition intends to underline not only the positive aspects but also the shortcomings and oversights in the government proposals. The objective of this approach is to reassert the value of the members' work while respecting the underlying principles of the Canadian parliamentary system.

As representatives of Quebec voters, we cannot let the House lose some of the tools it has to monitor the government's actions. We would prefer to see an increase in the number of such tools. In fact, the Opposition watches over the transparency

and openness of the House of Commons proceedings, in order to preserve the democratic values of our society.

In this regard, we are a little surprised by two amendments to the Standing Orders put forward by the government: the referral of a bill to a committee after the first reading and the delegation to a committee of the responsibility to draft a bill. Of course, the government asserts that noble goals are behind these proposals. Unfortunately, they will result in suppressing debate in the House on the principle of government bills.

The first amendment enables a minister to propose a motion to refer a bill to a committee right after the first reading subject to a short 180 minute debate during which no amendment would be allowed. Once the motion had been passed, the bill would then be referred to a committee controlled by the government majority for review.

The report stage would then be followed by second reading without amendment or debate. The report stage would become part of the second reading stage. The bill would then be reviewed at the third reading stage pursuant to the current Standing Orders.

Of course, Opposition members would have the opportunity to address in the House the principle of the bill during the initial debate on the referral motion. However, the debate would then be shorter than the usual second reading debate. Moreover, the members would lose the opportunity to propose the postponement of second reading or to put forward a reasoned amendment. The proposal to amend Standing Orders 73 and 76 and to add Standing Order 76(1) would limit debate in the House on the principle of the bill.

Comment 659 in the sixth edition of *Beauchesne* reads as follows:

The second reading is the most important stage through which the bill is required to pass; for its whole principle is then at issue and is affirmed or denied by a vote of the House.

The debate and vote on the principle of a bill is the Opposition members' main mechanism to control government bills. It enables them to criticize in the House the principle of a bill before the clause by clause review in committee.

It would be difficult to question the principle of a bill in committee at the report stage while trying to amend it clause by clause. As a result of this amendment, the debate on principle would be diluted by that on the amendments to each clause of the bill. We will debate technicalities without having discussed clearly and openly the opportunity of the bill. That is why the opposition has reservations about this amendment. In our opinion, it affects the fundamental right of members of Parliament to have an input in the legislative activities of government, a right which is at the very root of the Canadian parliamentary system.

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(1155)

We doubt that such an amendment will renew the credibility of this House in the eyes of Canadians. We could have had something more substantial to reassert the value of Parliament.

We feel uneasy about another amendment and for the same reason: the one allowing a minister to put a motion to instruct a committee to prepare and bring in a draft government bill. In its report, the committee would recommend the principles, scope and provisions of the draft bill.

Concurrence in this report by the House would constitute an order of the House for the government to bring in a bill based on the report, but not necessarily the one recommended by the committee. The government bill would then be introduced for first reading. The third sitting day after having been read a first time, the bill would be set down for consideration at the second reading stage, and immediately voted upon without debate or amendment.

In effect, this amendment to Standing Order 68 prevents members from debating in the House the principle of government bills. Certainly members are involved in the preparation of the draft, but their input is more theoretical than anything else, as far as we are concerned. In fact, the decision rests with the majority of the members of the committee who come from the government party.

The principle of the bill adopted in committee essentially reflects the wishes of the government. It cannot be argued therefore that opposition members participate fully to the preparation of the bill. They do participate in the debate on the committee report and can propose amendments. By then however, the bill tabled by the government has turned into an entirely new governmental bill that can be different from the draft bill tabled by the committee.

This can hardly be seen as the same bill. In fact, we are dealing with an entirely new bill, the principle of which has never been considered. This amendment denies the members the right to debate in this House the relevancy of the new government bill. Also, the involvement of opposition members in the preparation of the bill is used to claim later that they were in agreement. It is basically infringing upon the right of opposition members to examine the legislative activity of government by forcing them to conduct a fundamental part of their work as parliamentarians in committee, without debating the principle of the bill.

Again, the opposition doubts that this is the sort of amendment that will enhance the work performed by the opposition members. It undermines a major aspect of the Canadian parliamentary system, in that the members are to monitor the legislative activities of government through an open debate in the

House of Commons on the principle of governmental bills. For that reason, it would be dangerous for the Official Opposition to say that this amendment will help remedy the negative perception the public may have of the House of Commons.

In spite of these reservations, the Official Opposition recognizes that some of the changes proposed by the government are indeed interesting. Two amendments are timid steps in the right direction. First, the amendment to Standing Order 81, empowers standing committees to consider government expenditures for future years.

(1200)

Second, adding Standing Order 83(1) authorizes the Finance committee to make reports on budgetary policies before the tabling of the budget.

These proposals, however, are not enough. The government forgot to include some measures which would have enhanced, in a concrete manner, the status of the work done by MPs, thereby improving the credibility of Parliament as a whole. By proposing that the House of Commons examine order-in-council appointments before such appointments take effect, the government would have taken a giant step toward transparency.

It would have been in everyone's interests, including the Prime Minister, the opposition parties, the members of Parliament and the candidates to those positions, to submit to the House, as part of this parliamentary reform, a procedure allowing the members and the public to participate in the appointment process. In so doing, the government would have concretely enhanced the status of the work done by MPs and would have given back some credibility to Parliament.

Yet, during the election campaign, the Liberals promised to restore integrity within the federal government administration. On page 92 of their famous election program, the Liberals accused the Conservatives of choosing political friends when making key appointments within the government, adding that they would put an end to this reprehensible practice. The Liberals committed themselves to making appointments on the basis of competence.

Why then did they not propose, as part of this parliamentary reform, a review process which would take place prior to confirming order in council appointments? We wonder.

Giving MPs the power to approve order in council appointments before their coming into effect would have been an excellent way of solving the problem exposed by the Liberal Party in its election program. Indeed, to allow the House of Commons to review order in council appointments of parliamentary officials, judges, ambassadors, high commissioners, top civil servants, chairpersons and directors of Crown corporations, as well as of those appointed to various regulating agencies, organizations and tribunals, would certainly have

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been an excellent way of removing the negative perception the general public has of some of our political institutions.

The idea is not a new one. Such a review process already exists in another great democracy, namely the United States of America. The reform proposed today does not take into account the urgency of implementing such a review process, by the House of Commons, regarding appointments made by the government. Yet, it is essential that the public view these appointments as not being merely a form of patronage.

The government is saying to Canadians: If you want more transparency, you will have to wait! Indeed, the government failed to propose an important measure which could have improved the public perception of our parliamentary democracy.

Unfortunately, the opposition also notes another important oversight, namely the absence of a mechanism to hold special debates on issues deemed important by the members of the opposition. Such a measure would have enabled the government to enhance even more the status of the work done by MPs. Past experience reveals that emergency debates in the House are a rather rare occurrence. These debates are held at the discretion of the government. The conditions regulating the holding of such debates are very strict and thus prevent debates on issues deemed important by the public. Many Canadians feel that the work done by the House lacks relevance to the main current issues. The holding of special debates would provide MPs with an opportunity to have in-depth discussions on current issues.

In its 81st report tabled in 1993, the Standing Committee on House Management recommended the adoption of a procedure to hold special debates on specific issues. The goal was to ensure that members of the opposition would be able to raise questions of particular interest to them. The government did not deem appropriate to include a procedure for special debates in its parliamentary reform, even though this would have had the effect of giving more credibility to the work of the House and to the parliamentary role of the MPs.

(1205)

In the same vein, I would like to mention a final major oversight of the government. The government did not include a proposal to create a special question-and-answer period on particular topics or departments. This oversight is even more glaring in that the 81st report of the Standing Committee on House Management recommended establishing such a question period and having one every week. According to the committee, this special question-and-answer period could deal with regional or sectoral problems that do not receive due attention from the

opposition, for lack of time. It would also provide an opportunity to question ministers more systematically than is possible now.

The government thus dropped a fundamental recommendation of the management committee to make the work of Parliament reflect the people's everyday concerns. This oversight will not bring the institution of the House of Commons closer to the people.

In conclusion, the reform proposed by the government is light-years away from a real, specific upgrading of the work of members of Parliament. On the contrary, the government is proposing changes to the Standing Orders which, although positive in some respects, seem in their application to contradict to some extent the foundation of the parliamentary system in which we now operate.

We deplore the fact that the government did not consider statements made by one of its own members when he criticized the Conservative government's reform plan in 1991. On April 9, 1991, the Liberal member for Kingston and the Islands said, as reported on page 19189 of *Hansard*:

We believe that this country functions best when it has a strong and effective opposition.

Later he added:

—the importance of an opposition in Parliament to inform the people and to express their grievances in Parliament is deep rooted 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.

The official opposition agrees with the opinion expressed by the hon. member. Indeed, the present official opposition takes the same view of the parliamentary system because it summarizes the present situation. The government, by abolishing debate in the House on the principle of a bill, seems to be ignoring the right of opposition parties to express their grievances and to argue their case. Moreover, it is not proposing supplementary mechanisms that would allow free criticism of government action.

It is a pity that the Liberal Party in power has a different opinion than it held when it was in opposition. The government has not been concerned with the fine principles it defended when it was in opposition. Perhaps the Liberal Party in power and the Liberal Party in opposition say two different things. Events bear that statement out, at any rate.

With its incomplete reform, the government will not achieve its objective of restoring the credibility of Parliament and of the present system. The official opposition knew that we could not count on the federal government to solve an image problem with the House of Commons. Obviously, the government is showing real timidity in submitting specific measures to end what I

would dare say is the widespread disillusionment that people feel towards politicians.

Nevertheless, the official opposition is aware of the most important role which it must play in this House. It has always shown that it intends to defend the interests of its constituents, in accordance with parliamentary rules and traditions. For these reasons, it will not impede the proposed reform.

Yes, the opposition has reservations. It shares its disappointment with all citizens. But to show its good faith and its sense of fair play, it recognizes the proposed reform. It could have fiercely opposed some of the amendments presented today, but it prefers to give its consent so that the positive aspects of the reform can have unanimous support in this House.

In closing, I say to the government that forewarned is forearmed. The official opposition intends to continue to promote the openness demanded by voters. It will vigorously defend the values inherent in the Canadian parliamentary system so that it can defend the interests of Quebecers in this House, in accordance with its mandate.

This does not exclude the possibility that in future it might fight a subsequent reform which could interfere with its work in Parliament and its defense of its constituents' interests. Our society's democratic values depend on this.

(1210)

[*English*]

Mr. Hermanson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. On behalf of the Reform caucus co-ordinator I would like to notify the Chair that pursuant to Standing Order 43(2) we will be dividing our time.

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge): Mr. Speaker, today is a very great day and one we should mark high on the marquee as being very important for the House, for Parliament and for the people of Canada.

First I want to thank the government on behalf of the Reform Party for putting such a broad agenda before us. Its willingness to look at changes to the committee structure and then presenting those changes will bring about certain expediencies and as well make those committees more effective. The second matter we appreciate very much is that the agenda to be set before the Standing Committee on Procedures and House Affairs will be broad enough to look at a number of items we think are very important to the process and the way we act as parliamentarians.

We must recognize as parliamentarians that the attitude of the public has changed and that we must adapt to the changed attitude and expectations. The public we have spent millions of dollars on for years and years ought to be able to be more involved in the process. I believe we have arrived at a point at which it said to us: "We have arrived; we want to be involved so you as legislators make sure you have a process by which we can intervene and present our points of view and direct government

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during a session of Parliament, specifically during this 35th Parliament".

All of us have heard that this is not just a Canadian phenomenon. It is a phenomenon of the United States. Over the weekend some members of Parliament had the opportunity of hearing a presentation on Congress reform so that Congress would be able to hear what the public wanted. The fellow who presented it talked about the attitude of Americans and how they wanted to be involved. It is very consistent with what we are hearing. It was a good message.

Japan, Europe and other parts of the world have gone through the same populous phenomenon, the same people involvement phenomenon. We must pay attention to it as it is significant.

This attitude came into focus during the debate on the referendum. At that time the old traditional approach, the elitism, or the hierarchal approach to politics was defeated by a broad base of populism. People on the no side had very few dollars to spend. People on the yes side had millions of dollars and they spent it through a variety of mediums trying to convince the population that they should vote yes on the referendum. The people said no, that they would decide and they did.

We have to recognize other characteristics in the process. They should be a lesson and an influence on what we determine after we have hearings and the committee comes back with its report. Voters want more input and more say in the decisions we make not only at election time but between elections. They want equality of input. Everyone no matter their social standard or what economic position they are in—the poor, the middle income, the rich—wants to have something to say about the process and we must open the doors for them.

(1215)

Something very important to me which I have seen happen in our political system is that certain vested interest groups and certain people within our society are able to succeed because of who they knew and who they were able to influence in government. People are saying to us that is not the current rule and is not the way it should be. It should be taken out of the political process. It should now be what one knows, what one's attitude is and what one can place into debate to determine the actions of government. It should be this way not only in the House but also within the rooms of the public service and of the ministers with whatever actions the minister takes in his or her public responsibilities. That is a very impressive major change to me as a parliamentarian.

What challenge is offered? How do we respond to our leaders who now are the electors? The electors are finally getting through to us and saying something. How do we respond? First we must respond by adding opportunity to the process. In the agenda before the standing committee are some very important matters: citizens' initiatives, referendums and direct represen-

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tation to the standing committees so that the members of Parliament can be more involved and more aware of attitudes.

Some people say we are going to a referendum on everything. That is not the intent of a referendum nor do people want that type of government. They do not want daily referenda. They want to know that if they want utilize referenda it is there so they can get involved. It is very important that we add it to our process.

The second matter they want to challenge us with, and this may be said of myself being around for some time or some of the members of government who have been around Parliament for a period of time, is that we must be prepared to change our thinking. As a new member of the House we should also take that advice.

Today I would like to call on the Prime Minister and the government House leader, who made a very eloquent and elaborate presentation today, to think in a more open manner. We must reconsider some of the traditional approaches on how we act and how we behave. It is often easy to say we tried that before and it does not work, we should not have that on our agenda. I have gone through the process a number of times. About 10 years ago I had a certain experience in my legislative responsibility. At that time it may have been out of step, but today it is more acceptable. Some of these public processes are just good examples of that.

For example, I would like the government to reconsider its thinking regarding free votes. In the early stages we do not have to have a free vote on everything. Possibly there is an area where we can test the free vote without the confidence convention. Maybe there are some areas where new programs of expenditure will be initiated by government. It could be in the budget process. The Prime Minister, by announcement, could say this item is open to a free vote; the convention is not there. That would be acceptable to the House. It could possibly be done on some of the bills that reference expenditures where it is a new policy, one that has not gone through the electoral process.

As I listened to the House leader's remarks today I felt that was part of his concern, that if the political party has made a commitment out on the hustings it should follow it through. I would, in a sense, agree with that. It has been given a mandate to follow through so it should. The House of Commons may have a limited amount of authority, but there should be some areas where we can test this concept without just rejecting it in whole. I call on the House leader to think about it. I also call on the committee of House affairs to examine it further.

I have one minute left and would like to cover two other topics. I support the changes in the committee structure as it

concerns my involvement with the finance committee. It is excellent the government is giving us more opportunity and flexibility to be able to determine the direction of government. I appreciate that very much as an opposition member.

(1220)

The proof is certainly going to be in the follow through. The note that I wanted to highlight in this last minute of my remarks is that historically—I read some of the reports of committee work—the concern was that ministers and senior government officials did not listen to the committees after they did some good work. I know the initial attitude of the government is to change that and try to listen to the committee.

Another suggestion I want to make for the committee today in my brief remarks is that we look at using the technology of the day and the available electronic equipment to do away with some of what I call the paper pile up and waste I find on Parliament Hill.

Two weeks ago I set outside my office a huge pile of paper. I said: "What a waste". I looked through it and there were many things that were not relevant to my responsibilities. There must be some way we can even have *Hansard* electronically available without sending that major document to our office every day. I would like to add that to the committee's agenda for it to look at. There would be cost savings, more efficiency and an update of the process.

In conclusion elitism is out. Populism is in. If we make these major changes during the 35th Parliament, I will be able to say we have achieved significant relief for the people of Canada.

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the comments of my hon. colleague from Lethbridge. I tend to agree with almost everything he said. I echo his comments on the proposals enunciated today by the government House leader. They are a major step forward.

I listened with particular interest when he referred to his previous life and that there were times when perhaps government policy was influenced more by who people knew within the government than from a democratically driven change. We can probably say that similar observations have been made about Ottawa, that perhaps public policy has been driven in the past by lobbyists and others from the outside as opposed to the public generally.

One aspect of the reforms proposed today that concern me is the ability of any of these reforms to deal with initiatives before us at the moment. That is the matter of cigarette smuggling. People have said this is an item that ought to receive serious input from provincial ministers of health because of the implication it has for health.

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If this is not caving in to pressure from the cigarette manufacturers it is certainly caving in to pressure from people participating in illegal activities. Does my hon. friend from Lethbridge think any of the proposed changes introduced today would help us if they were in place today to deal with some of the critical issues confronting us surrounding this whole matter of cigarette smuggling?

Mr. Speaker (Lethbridge): Often one of the reasons that one has very brash reactions from the general public is that it does not seem to be able to vent that feeling somewhere.

This matter concerns both federal and provincial taxation. It could be open to a citizen's initiative. Potentially we could even have a referendum on it but it takes a bit of time to do that type of thing. I know we are sort of in the hot box and have to make a decision on this one right away. That often will occur. If we had the procedure in place then we could make a rational adjustment to use it. I would like to see that very much.

We are having a public discussion with regard to cigarette smuggling. I believe the public has an answer to it somewhere. The government will look at it from a certain perspective but I am not sure it would reflect public opinion at the present time.

In a quick answer to the question, opening the public process would bring about a more satisfactory answer than one we would make here believing what the public servants have fed us.

(1225)

Mrs. Daphne Jennings (Mission—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House to join in the debate on the motion put by the government House leader dealing with changes to the standing orders, the rules of the House of Commons.

I would like to begin by congratulating the government and its House leader for bringing in these changes at this time. To me they represent the beginning of the reform of this place that my party, the Reform Party of Canada, has been advocating for some time now.

We in the Reform Party are fundamentally committed to changing the way business is conducted in Parliament so the people of Canada and the members of Parliament who represent them can gain some influence over the policy making process.

In our party platform, devised long before the call of the last election, we made it clear we did not believe this place was functioning in a way that best served the people. We proposed in our platform changes which we believe would give members some influence over the policy making process of government. Ours was not a plan released in the heat of an election campaign. Our plan for reform goes much further than what has been proposed today.

We believe the government is reacting positively to our pressure by bringing in these changes to the standing orders. We in the Reform Party will watch the government carefully to see if it is really committed to fundamental reform or if it is simply putting limited reforms in the window for Canadians to look at without any real intention of making them work. However these changes represent a good first step, but it is only a first step.

The changes introduced in relation to bills proceeding to committee prior to second reading and enabling the government to request or ask a committee to draft a bill are really not necessary. If the government wants to do these things it simply has to do them and could do them under the present rules. These changes present an orderly procedure by which bills can be sent to committee after first reading and the government can request a committee to bring in a bill. These procedures allow for limited debate so that the government is assured of accomplishing its objectives without giving up valuable House time.

In relation to the proposal to send bills to committee prior to second reading we know that the subsequent debate on second reading will really become debate on amendments. As well when a bill comes back to the House from the committee which has been asked to draft it, again debate at second reading will not take place.

Debating time which could have been used by the opposition to set out deficiencies will be lost, but as we believe in the greater good of getting on with reform we support these two initiatives.

I hope the government will take advantage of these changes. If it does then we might see the beginnings of real input into the legislative process by both backbench MPs on the government side and by opposition members as well. If the government does not use these new rules then the people of Canada will deal with it appropriately four years hence.

By virtue of changes proposed to Standing Order 81 the mandate of standing committees will be broadened to allow them to comment on departmental spending plans when the committee is dealing with the department's main estimates. This is good as far as it goes, but in reality it will do little to affect the spending patterns of government departments and help bring government spending under control. More changes are necessary and I will be addressing this issue later today.

Also changing a standing order to allow the finance committee to hold pre-budget consultations and report prior to a particular day in December every year sends a welcome signal that at least members of the House will be consulted. Hopefully the report which will be forthcoming yearly from this committee will be taken into consideration by the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister.

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The last proposal in this motion is to refer a number of procedural matters for examination to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. I am concerned that the date for reporting on these matters has been lost. We in the Reform Party will be vigilant in ensuring that these matters are reported back to the House at the earliest possible time.

I note that in response to suggestions made by my party this list has been broadened to include elements of direct democracy and I thank the government. The matters contained on this list are important. I look forward to the discussions of this committee.

(1230)

The list is still incomplete. How can we have meaningful reform or even a study of reform without including in this list the structure and functioning of the standing committee system?

In my initial address to the House I dealt with freer votes and the relaxing of the confidence convention. I also stated that there is a feeling among Canadians that government—and by this I mean government in its broadest connotation, the party in power, the opposition and the bureaucracy—is not serving the needs of Canadians; that is government serves its own needs first and the public's needs second, if at all.

With all due respect to the hon. minister of the government, a point of clarification is we refer to freer votes and relaxation of the confidence convention. This does not refer to the government's saying today or on this issue it will have free votes. Legally and constitutionally all members of the House are guaranteed the right of independence.

Again may I stress this is an attitudinal change. We are all campaigned on party policy, on definite issues which we were elected to support by the Canadians who elected us. However, that does not suggest that each member of the House should be prevented from truly representing their constituents on specific matters which reflect the very serious interests of that area of Canada. We must not operate from fear. If the government loses a vote on a certain initiative, that could have a good positive result. Perhaps it was bad legislation.

I cannot agree with former Conservative House leader, Doug Lewis, who expressed that government is entitled to its bad legislation. Why? When we have the opportunity to correct this waste of valuable debate time in the House and this waste of taxpayers' dollars let us address it.

In my initial address to the House I dealt with freer votes and relaxing the confidence convention. That is why I argued for an attitudinal change in this House that would result in a relaxation and redefinition of the confidence convention, which would result in freer votes. Through such changes members could begin to play a vital role in making and influencing in public policy.

I believe my remarks in relation to the confidence convention and freer votes are equally valid in the context of reform of the standing committee system.

The changes proposed to the rules today, bills to committee prior to second reading and the government's asking committees to bring in bills, are good ones. If they are used and the results of the committee deliberations are not ignored by the government, this will make committee work more rewarding for the members.

I urge the government to go further than this in relation to committees. Let us in the committee on procedure and House affairs examine the report of the House of Commons liaison committee tabled last spring, which addressed committee reform in detail. Let us together devise methods to limit the power of the whips in this Chamber so that substitutions on committee are not made in order to ensure the outcome of a vote which is crucial to the government. Let us look at various structures so that the House, through the committee system, can once again make meaningful comments on government spending.

This House, through changes to the rules brought in over time, has effectively lost control over government spending. This must not be allowed to continue. Ways must be found so that members can gain some control over public expenditures. These changes are worth the time it will take for the House and its committees, especially the procedure and House affairs committee, to study.

Reform goes much farther than what has been presented today. It is a beginning. I congratulate the government for taking the initiative and implementing some of the changes which members of the House, both today and in the past, have strongly recommended.

I also want to recognize the contribution made by the Reform Party toward these changes. Although in our opinion these changes do not go far enough, we do recognize the good intent of the government just as we recognize that the Reform members and the Reform Party have prodded the government into action. If the Conservative Party were sitting in our seats in opposition today it is highly unlikely we would be witnessing these changes.

I look forward to being a part of the procedure in the House affairs committee and contributing to its discussions.

(1235)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Fernand Robichaud (Secretary of State (Parliamentary Affairs)): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the House on the issue of parliamentary reform. This is a subject which is very important to me, not only as a member of the government team but also as the member for Beauséjour.

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In the last three general elections the people of Beauséjour have elected me as their member of Parliament in the House of Commons. They have given me a mandate to defend their interests in the House. I am very proud to represent the people of Beauséjour. I can assure the House and the people from Beauséjour that I will make every effort to represent them well.

[Translation]

However, when I was elected for the first time in 1984, it took me some time to realize how complex and inflexible the machinery of government is. It is not always easy to find one's way among procedural rules, the Standing Orders of the House, party discipline and the expectations of those who have put their trust in you.

You know, as I do, that the voters are disillusioned with political institutions. They are disheartened by what they read in the newspapers and see on television every day.

Last fall people from coast to coast delivered a very clear message by electing more than 200 new members to this House.

The people want to see some changes. They are dissatisfied because they were not always consulted, because their opinions were not always taken into consideration, and because important decisions were often made behind closed doors.

Data compiled from a survey conducted in 1992 for the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing confirms what our constituents have long been thinking. Seventy per cent of respondents said they felt the government did not care at all about what people like themselves were thinking. This is very unfortunate.

No fewer than 82 per cent of Canadians, that is more than four in five, also responded that most candidates in federal elections made promises without any intention whatsoever of keeping them. This too is very unfortunate.

Finally, 32 per cent of respondents said that most elected officials simply did their best under difficult circumstances. This is a little more reassuring. And, it is precisely to address these difficult circumstances that we are proposing changes to our Standing Orders.

All those who have read the red book released during the last election campaign—and many have—know that parliamentary reform is very important to the party which now forms the government.

We made a commitment to electors to adopt a series of measures to restore their confidence in political institutions. It is no coincidence, therefore, that one of the first initiatives put forward concerns the standing orders of this House.

This decision reflects not only our eagerness to take concrete action, but also our willingness to initiate a constructive dialogue with all members of this House on this issue.

The changes that we are proposing would allow MPs to play a greater role and restore the confidence of Canadians in the integrity of their Parliament and in its ability to intervene in matters which it deems important.

Thus, we are proposing that certain government bills be referred to committee immediately following first reading. The committee could then consider them, amend them if it wishes and report back to the House. The House would then proceed at the same time to the debate on second reading and at the report stage.

The procedure for third and final reading would remain the same.

(1240)

As we all know, the current legislative process is almost over by the time a bill reaches first reading stage. Too often, members get the feeling that the legislation before them is set in stone, as we say.

Therefore, we want to change the process so that a bill would be referred to a committee right after being read the first time. That way, each and every element of a bill will undergo a complete and open examination. We will have a more transparent decision making process, as was requested by our constituents. Quick referral to a committee would give hon. members more influence over the substance of the bills.

In order to increase their influence, we could ask committees to study some issues before a bill is drafted.

Committee members would then have a say in the legislative strategy, suggesting guidelines or parameters for the upcoming bill.

We want the government to be more open when time comes to prepare the budget. In the past, consultations regarding the budget were kept secret. Nothing could come out before the budget was tabled in the House.

We want the Standing Committee on Finance to study the fiscal policy put forward by the government. We want to establish a very open consultation process for the budget. Through his efforts these last few months, the Minister of Finance has shown the way we want to go on this issue.

[English]

Our wish is to listen to what people have to say so that we may respond not only to their needs but also to their expectations. The changes we are proposing will make it possible for the Standing Committee on Finance to hold consultations next fall before the presentation of the 1995 budget.

The process of establishing a budget will be much more open and a lot less secretive.

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[Translation]

Before the government unveils its fiscal priorities, as many people as possible should have an opportunity to express their views. Again, to avoid putting members before a *fait accompli*, we are suggesting that, after detailed study of the Estimates, the committees be given three additional weeks to prepare a report on future priorities for a department, for example. Therefore, when members of the Standing Committee on Finance would undertake their consultation process in the fall, they would already have a number of suggestions to take into consideration.

The measures I just mentioned would help members to play a more important role and to feel they really have some influence on bills referred to the House and passed.

Not one of us was elected to simply say yea or nay on bills we have not worked on. Thousands of people trusted us to make changes; we cannot disappoint them.

The measures before us today also involve changes to the sitting hours of the House. By eliminating the evening session on Wednesdays and adjourning earlier on Fridays, hon. members will be able to spend more time on committees and in their ridings.

Finally I would like to add that these measures mark only the beginning of parliamentary reform. During the weeks and the months to come, we want to sit down with representatives of the Opposition parties to come up with some more changes.

(1245)

These changes will affect question period and statements by members. There are other points that we would like the parliamentary reform committee to study before submitting to the House a report with recommendations. What we would like is to pursue the dialogue on parliamentary reform with all elected members in the House.

We must innovate, we must take a fresh look at our tasks as parliamentarians and we must find solutions which will help restore the integrity of the government. We will thus restore the confidence of the Canadian people in their institutions.

[English]

It is our duty to offer to Canadians a parliament to which they can relate and to give them an institution of which they can be proud.

Mrs. Daphne Jennings (Mission—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member for an interesting and very well intended speech.

I am pleased to hear of the possibility that committee members could receive the bill beforehand. This would certainly be beneficial for everyone and I thank him for saying that.

I would also like to mention what the hon. member just said about the times changing. This is a very good move. In view of the fact that 1994 is the year of the family I hope we take this into consideration. MPs are just as important as everybody else and so are their families.

[Translation]

Mr. Robichaud: Mr. Speaker, the government leader in the house mentioned the fact that members do have families and that we should take into consideration their family roles. It is for that very reason that we want to make changes in the sitting schedule. For members whose families are in the Ottawa area, it will mean more time at home, and those whose families stayed home will have more time to spend in their ridings. It also means that we will be able to serve our constituents much better.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, when the government leader introduced his parliamentary reform agenda this morning, he said that there were much dissatisfaction in the population about the work the hon. members were performing in this House. On that I agree.

There are several criticisms regarding our work and while some are justified, others do not withstand a critical analysis. Nevertheless, some changes have to be made. It is on this basis that the leader in the House spoke of renewal.

However, before we proceed with what he calls the parliamentary renewal, we have to make sure it is based on the foundations of the British parliamentary system. When I say that, I mean that we have to consider collective sovereignty—that is the sovereignty of the people who elect us to this House and therefore send here members of different parties.

Therefore, we have to reconcile collective sovereignty and government efficiency, that is the capacity for the government to act in a normal, unhurried and also consistent way. We do not want to go through, for instance, the unfortunate bell incident we experienced a few years ago. I know that the same incident could still happen in the Senate, but we must live with that.

When we talk about the foundations of the British parliamentary system, we talk about a balance between the role of the government, which is to govern, and the role of the House of Commons, which is to monitor the action, activities and proposals of the government.

(1250)

Needless to say this must be done openly and the Official Opposition definitely supports that wish, that will for a greater openness of all the mechanisms and operations of this House. But it is not enough to talk about openness, we must also talk about the principles behind any bill because, in the end, we must judge the proposals we receive. Who better than Beauchesne can define for us the importance of the discussion on the principles behind any bill. Beauchesne says: “The second reading is the

most important stage through which the bill is required to pass; for its whole principle is then at issue and is affirmed or denied by a vote of the House”.

We may question this reform plan because the debate and the vote on the principle of a bill are the best way the opposition members have of controlling government bills. The debate and vote on principle allow them to question the very appropriateness of presenting such a bill before it is examined and debated clause by clause.

The proposals in this reform bring a few questions to mind. Will members really have the opportunity to criticize a bill before it is passed? I do not question the government's intentions on this issue, I am simply saying that, if we accept what is proposed, we will still be far from our objective. Maybe we will reach it, but only experience will tell us if such is the case or if we have missed our goal altogether. The possible consequences of these modifications lead me to believe it will be hard for members to debate, in the House, the suitability of government bills.

We will have 180 minutes to determine if it is relevant to send a bill to committee; but then we will be discussing the appropriateness of sending the bill to committee and not the bill itself. Let us not kid ourselves, everyone knows that we can talk about something even if we do not have the right to do so, that we can do indirectly whatever is forbidden directly. Therefore, that 180-minute period will in fact be devoted to discussing the principle of the bill. If we do not agree with the principle, we will question whether or not it should be referred to committee. But we would have to use a round-about way to debate what is most fundamental.

Moreover, since members will have the opportunity, in committee, to get involved in the actual drafting of a bill, clause by clause, they will certainly be more involved in general, but here again, the government will have to exercise a lot of caution. Some members, although opposed to the very principle of a bill, may still try to improve it. They should not be told afterwards: “You proposed an amendment which was adopted, and now you are voting against it”. They still want to be able to vote against a bill, even if they have drafted, asked for the adoption of or voted in favour of an amendment to a given clause, in order to limit the subject matter of a bill they intend to fight. That should be made perfectly clear so that opposition members are not used to rubber stamp a bill they disagree with.

I do think that the government will have a huge responsibility in that matter. Democracy should not be held hostage by cunning manoeuvring. As I said before, only time will tell how good this reform really is. It does have some positive aspects such as the review of estimates by the standing committees. It will allow members to review the estimates of each department and to table reports regarding the government's future expenditures. We

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totally support such an initiative; as a matter of fact, we of the Official Opposition, have been demanding a debate in the House for the past three weeks, to review each department's budget, item by item, envelope by envelope. Therefore, you can be sure that we support this committee. Still, it falls short of the fundamental request we have been making since the start of this Parliament.

(1255)

A second positive point certainly is the idea of pre-budget consultations by the Standing Committee on Finance. This committee will consider and report on proposals regarding the budgetary policy of the government. I think this is an important step, one that should have preceded the tabling of the current budget. I think that, before all those consulting firms that have organized conferences across Canada, the primary stakeholders are the members of this House. We were not consulted, but this change will remedy this shortcoming.

Speaking of shortcomings, I believe that there are a few more. I am referring for instance to pre-screening for order-in-council appointments. On page 92 of their platform, the Liberals accused the Conservatives of making a practice of choosing political friends. Well, there is nothing in here to stop such a practice. As the Minister of Canadian Heritage said, and the appointment of the president of the CBC reflects that reality, the red book is a thing of the past and we must look to the future. We can see that it is indeed a thing of the past, because the proposal made, as I said, on page 92 of the Liberal red book is nowhere to be found in here.

There is also the issue of special debates. It was also raised. The Liberals had raised it at the time they were in the opposition. There should be a procedure to allow special debates to be held in a timely manner. Many people wonder why the members of the House are debating some obscure matter with little connection with current events sometimes, while major events can happen in our society that seem to go unnoticed in this House. The fact of the matter is that special debates would allow the House of Commons to be attuned to reality. Yet there is nothing with regard to that in the proposal before us.

We must see why such a proposal was made, and I refer to my colleague from Kingston and the Islands who said in 1991: “We believe that our country works well with a strong and efficient opposition”. Now can we conclude that this reform will really enable the opposition to be strong and to function effectively? This reform in itself does not necessarily enhance the role of members of Parliament. I repeat, experience will show whether the fundamental principles which I think are endangered by this reform are respected or not. I hope that the government will have the wisdom to assess whether the reform will achieve its objectives or not. If the reform does not have the intended effect,

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the government should come back with something else and not stubbornly keep the reform as it is.

I do not think that we should consider this reform to be permanent; rather, it is subject to improvement at any time. We are trying to use new mechanisms. Experience and practice will show whether it has met the objectives.

I will close with some suggestions that are not found in this reform. First, I am thinking of this mechanism for an inquiry which exists in Quebec City whereby the leader of the official opposition can question the premier on a specific issue for an hour, with the Speaker of the House present, to get to the bottom of an important subject, which cannot be done in the daily question period. This exchange between the premier and the leader of the opposition helps the people form a better idea of the issues involved in a debate, which can only be healthy in a democracy. This exists and goes on in Quebec City, not every week but occasionally, and we could do it here.

A second suggestion concerns the ban on reading our speeches in this House; that is why no lectern is provided.

(1300)

Everyone knows that members read their speeches to all intents and purposes. They have notes and they read them. In reality, it is rather hypocritical. The Solicitor General, who is the Leader of the Government in the House, read his entire speech on the proposed reforms, whereas this is prohibited, Mr. Speaker. Of course you did not stop him, because everyone does it. Only the budget speech can be read, because the Minister of Finance cannot be expected to recall all of the figures. I would point out that once the budget is adopted, very often he cannot recall the figures.

The point is that in reality, things are quite different. One thing must be recognized: members are not supposed to read their speeches because they should speak spontaneously, from the heart. Well, I have nothing against members reading their speeches. Everyone does, so why not recognize this fact. It would be a lot simpler than having to carry around books on which to prop up our speeches. It would be much simpler if members had a lectern.

My third suggestion is this: except for emergencies, votes should be held on Tuesdays and Wednesdays because some members are in their ridings on Mondays and Fridays. We divide our caucus in two because we must also work in our ridings. A number of members from more remote ridings must leave on Thursday after oral question period.

We must recognize this fact. I do not see how concentrating the votes on Tuesdays and Wednesdays impedes democracy. On the contrary, it would help to create a better balance between House and riding work and the parties already agreed to this so far, that is up to week three.

One final suggestion. I realize that it is against the rules for you to have a list of speakers. Yet, I gave my list to you at the beginning of the debate, as did the others. Again, the rules do not correspond to reality. Everyone knows that the Speaker has a list of those members who will be asking questions during oral question period. No one says that this is prohibited. Yet, we exchange lists and submit them to you every day so that you can refer to them during statements under Standing Order 31.

In my opinion, the time has come to dispense with this pretence. It would be much easier if we knew exactly who was planning to speak. Each party could submit its list and you could work with that. Then everyone would know who was planning to speak and when. Why not recognize what actually happens? Why not let people know when their members will speak, instead of pretending that I do not give you a list? By the way, in one hour I will be submitting my list for oral question period, as I do every day.

These are just a few suggestions which would help us do away with old habits that no longer correspond to reality.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie. His comments were highly constructive and his suggestions are much appreciated.

I do not agree with his suggestion that votes should take place only on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. It is a problem in this House because we only sit 130 days a year, roughly, under the new system introduced by the former government. Every three or four weeks the House adjourns for one or two weeks. At Easter, for instance, there is a two-week recess. It is at such times that members should be travelling to their constituencies, not now when the House is sitting. In my opinion, when the House is in session, the members should be here.

There is enough time to work in the constituencies on week-ends and during the weeks when the House is not sitting. That is why I do not agree with him that we should not hold votes on Thursdays. Those are simply my thoughts on his speech.

I think that he may have misunderstood the government's intention in putting this proposal before the House today because we did propose a change to the second reading of bills as he suggested. We will only have a very short three-hour debate on the motion to refer the bill to a standing committee after the first reading.

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(1305)

He indicated that the House would lose the right to hold a debate on the principle of a bill at second reading, that is true. But, at the same time, the committee to which the bill is referred will have a lot of opportunities to review the bill.

As a member of the Bloc Quebecois, he did not have the opportunity to do committee work in the last Parliament. If he had been a member of a committee, he would have realized that many proposed amendments are inadmissible as the principle of the bill has already been voted on by the House itself.

The committee members cannot change this principle. What is this principle? This argument is always debated by the committees, and an amendment which proposes a major change to a bill is deemed to have altered the principle of the bill; thus, the amendment becomes inadmissible. It is a problem.

The new procedure will eliminate this problem and the hon. members will have to opportunity to put forward many amendments that were previously inadmissible. So I hope that when he sees this new procedure put into practice, he will support our proposal. This procedure will eliminate, with other opportunities, the second reading debate in the House. I hope that he will see our proposal in this light because I think it helps to understand our meaning. I hope that this explanation will help him.

Mr. Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, I am not judging the government's intentions. My judgment was based on what will happen in practice.

First of all, in committee, there are no more than two or three members from opposition parties, which limits considerably their ability to speak. Second, a debate in committee is not as public and general as a debate in this House, where all Canadians can find out, through newspapers and television, what the members said about a particular issue.

With regard to votes on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, I will tell you that a member's work in his riding is not only on weekends. Very often, we have to go back to our ridings during the week. Moreover, in the past, votes were held mostly on Mondays and very rarely on Tuesdays or Wednesdays. If we are to vote on a particular day, why not choose a day when more members are present. This would allow us to strike a better balance between our work in our ridings and our work here in Ottawa.

We were told in the past that it was impossible to defer a vote for more than 48 hours. That is what has always been done. I think there is a very simple solution: to defer votes for 72 hours. It is just 24 hours more and that is exactly what was done when the Prime Minister was scheduled to give a speech in Toronto last Monday. The government thought that 72 hours instead of

48 made a lot of sense. It allowed the Prime Minister to be here for the vote. I think that what was done for the Prime Minister could very well be done for other members of the House.

(1310)

[English]

Mr. Milliken: Mr. Speaker, I think you will find a disposition on this side of the House to limit speeches to 10 minutes with the usual 5-minute questions and comments thereafter.

Mr. Murray Calder (Wellington—Grey—Dufferin—Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, as I rise on this occasion to make my maiden speech, I wish to extend my congratulations and best wishes as you face your new and most difficult task.

There is no greater honour for me than standing before this House as the newly elected member for Wellington—Grey—Dufferin—Simcoe. The riding, as the name suggests, is made up of municipalities of four counties in southwestern Ontario. In total there are 31 towns, townships and villages with four upper tier county councils.

The riding's boundaries are the historic and picturesque town of Elora, Nichol township to the south, the rural and agricultural communities of Clifford and Minto township to the west. The largest and most urban area is the town of Orangeville to the east and the beautiful port communities of Collingwood and Thornbury on Georgian Bay to the north. This vast and diverse riding is representative of the uniqueness and diversity of its citizens residing within its borders. Wellington—Grey—Dufferin—Simcoe is home to 112,000 people, and I wish to extend my sincere thanks for the trust and opportunity they have provided in allowing me to represent them.

I would also be remiss if I did not take this time and opportunity to thank my wife and family for their dedication and support and understanding as I embark on my new parliamentary career.

The topic of debate today in the House is parliamentary reform. It is probably safe to assume the reason two-thirds of us are here and new to the House is that many defeated incumbents paid little heed to the demands from the public about this very important issue.

If the House would allow me some licence to address the concerns voiced to me during the election campaign, I will proceed. One of the most visible and contentious areas which requires change is the pensions for members of Parliament. During the election there was a clear message that we must return to an understanding we are the representatives of the people and as true representatives we must understand and appreciate the values of those we represent, values of equity, fairness and service.

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There is no member in the House who has not already felt the burdens of this office. It has been three brief months since our election and less than a month since the opening of the 35th Parliament. I ask the members present to consider the amount of time spent in Ottawa, the time spent in transit and the time spent in our ridings. Many members of the House have young children and spouses they dearly miss. Some members have left behind successful businesses to devote their energies to public service.

These are great sacrifices but sacrifices we chose to make of our own free will. Despite the enormous burdens of this office there must be a limit to the compensation for this job.

To return to my earlier point, we are here to represent the values of our constituents. There is a rage in the land about the current pension system. It violates the sense of equity of people as there is nothing to compare it with in the private sector. People are angry that after voicing their protests they have not been heard. It is unfair, they say, that politicians can write their own cheques and pay them with taxpayers' money.

During the election the Liberal Party presented its platform in a document some of us may be familiar with entitled "Creating Opportunity" or the red book. More recently in the speech from the throne the government reaffirmed its support for the independent review currently under way.

(1315)

It is important that we remove the public irritants that have undermined politicians in the public eye. This Parliament must signal the end to double dipping. We cannot have people receiving both pay and pensions from the federal government. The taxpayer is willing to pay but the taxpayer is not willing to pay twice.

The age at which pensions are received must be reviewed. No one in the private sector receives full pensions immediately after vacating a position. The question put to us during the election and now before the members of the House is why should we.

What is the appropriate age? I do not have all the answers but if we are to represent and reflect the realities of our constituents, should we not be governed by the same rules of economy as them? Should we receive full pensions after retirement without an age restriction? I think October 25 told us no.

The size of pension is another component. Our pensions must be based on value qualified by reasoned assessment, not greed. The review under way must look at our duties and skills and other factors also should be assessed objectively. From this we should arrive at a figure more in tune with the feeling of Canadians.

The government House leader has now placed before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs a number of items to be reviewed. I believe this to be a great step forward.

Among some of the items to be discussed are procedures regarding members' statements, special debates, the taking of division by electronic means, the conduct of private members' business especially with regard to private bills and Senate public bills, any anomalies or technical inconsistencies in the standing orders, the reform of Question Period, measures to achieve more direct participation by citizens including citizen initiatives, the right of constituents to recall their MP, binding referenda, free votes in the House of Commons, debates on petitions and fixed election dates.

I applaud the government House leader on this initiative. I look forward to participating in the debate and review of these proposals.

We have seen recently that private members can make valuable contributions to the presentation of different ideas before the House, for example the great acceptance from members from all sides and the success of the debates on Canada's peacekeeping role and cruise missile testing.

These debates raised the level of decorum and intellectual exchange of ideas. This type of reasoned debate is what makes this House such a great institution. It is unfortunate that these exchanges do not receive the level of public interest as the often rowdy and point scoring mentality we have seen in some question periods.

In the remainder of my allotted time I wish to address one final issue. The lobbying industry has expanded rapidly over the past years. The integrity of government is questioned when there is a perception that the public agenda is set by lobbyists who have excessive resources to exercise their influence away from public view.

I believe there is only one collective body we must listen to and that is the Canadian people. In order to ensure that the voices of the silent majority are heard over the voices of the few we must strongly address the issues of conflict of interest, influence peddling and selling access. There must be openness and consultation with all Canadians, not just with the lobbyists arriving at decisions. It is this point I applaud the actions of the Minister of Finance in his pre-budget consultations. These consultations allowed the minister to hear advice from bankers, economists and social agency advocates. What is more important is that we were able to hear what was said in the open, in full public view, not just whispers behind closed doors.

(1320)

In conclusion, I feel the points raised here today are a starting point and not in any way a cure all for the changes required in the operation of the House. I want to go back for a moment and restate that we must represent not only the people of our ridings

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but their values. If we are indeed bold enough to bring this process of change, we will have succeeded in creating a government with priorities based on equity, fairness and service to the people of Canada.

Mrs. Daphne Jennings (Mission—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member on his speech. I concur with just about everything.

However, in agreeing with the member on the atrocity of the pensions and in fact in MPs collecting pensions prior to 60 or 65 years of age, while agreeing with the member—and it is hard for anyone in Canada to disagree—I have to point out right now that there are former members of the House who lost in the last election who are collecting pensions way before they are 60.

I constantly hear that Canadians are very angry about this. I heard it again all weekend from my constituents at our annual general meeting and at my constituency opening.

Does the government have any plans or some kind of process in place, something that we can address this with, to prevent right now those who are receiving this pension prematurely?

Mr. Calder: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member of the Reform Party for that question.

As I stated in my speech these are all things that are under review at the present time. No, I cannot say we are going to stop this immediately. It is a review that is going to be done, not only by the Liberal Party but by the Reform Party, the Bloc Party and any independent members as I understand the process. By that we are reflecting the view of all Canadians.

Yes, I heard the same thing during the election and I referred to it in my speech. I know this is an issue that will be settled in the near future.

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver): Mr. Speaker, I found the hon. member's speech very interesting, particularly in respect of the special interest groups and lobbies that we are all faced with from time to time.

It is very easy to react immediately and say that we should pass some sort of legislation to stop this, but I would just like to make the member aware of a process that some of us use in the Reform Party, that is having a special interest log book in the riding.

I would like to ask the member if perhaps he could take this approach as well. In my riding, whenever I tell special interest groups or write to tell them that I am making an entry into my special interest log book, the reaction is amazing. They become upset that they are going to be put in front of the people of my riding for scrutiny. It works very well for me. I wonder if the hon. member might consider that as an alternative to legislation that he can use immediately.

Mr. Calder: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for that excellent idea. It is something that we will probably take and incorporate in the way that we run our constituency offices and our Ottawa offices here.

It just goes to prove what I stated in my speech. If the House becomes more and more open we will be getting ideas from all sides. It is just the fact that the government's ideas are not always the best. They will become a heck of a lot better if we listen to the opposition at the same time and try to incorporate all ideas.

Mr. Ted McWhinney (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, the intervention by the government House leader reminds us again of Jeremy Bentham's point that constitutional laws are not made by any one actor alone. It is made by the constitutional company. In the case of the reforms proposed for this institution, Parliament, the reforms or the changes will be made by government initiatives and by the contributions from the opposition and the other parties in the House.

(1325)

The debates have been constructive on issues where we have had open debates as in peacekeeping and the cruise missile testing. I think it signals good opportunities for the House to get the constitutional structures of Parliament moving again.

We do so in the light of two great principles of constitutionalism of our time, the alternance which is very apparent from government by executive to government by assembly. My colleagues in the Official Opposition will know that this has been true of French constitutional history since the French revolution. The alternance between the strong executive power and strong assembly power is I think one of the phenomena of our times, a check against an executive deemed to be too strong, a reinventing, a recreation or a creation anew as in the present Russia of power by assembly.

The other is the principle of participatory democracy. One of the implications for that is a questioning of old truths such as those uttered by Edmund Burke and often quoted in the House. It is perhaps important to remember that Edmund Burke was not the product of a democratic system of election. His career in Parliament was facilitated, made possible, by being named to pocket boroughs or rotten boroughs and so the comments on responsibilities to his electors was meant for a handful of people and not the great mass of people that we are facing today.

The constitutional company here very clearly includes the Speaker. This unprecedented process of election saw some of the candidates for the Speakership by invitation address the Official Opposition, the Reform Party and then the Liberal Party in which advances were made in the comprehension of the Speaker's role, that the Speaker has the opportunity not merely

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by conduct but by judicious coaxing to speed Parliament on its way to renewal.

I looked at the role of the committee on management which is now the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. I looked at the description of its agenda, its mandate, and I see not a committee. I see a supercommittee, a committee on committees. I would have to say I congratulate the Official Opposition and the Reform Party for sending along very strong and thoughtful representatives to that committee, but I can see a capacity to change the whole system if they fulfil their mandate: initiative, right of recall, binding referenda, free votes, fixed election dates. That is a challenge and as a member of that committee I find it very exciting.

I know the Official Opposition will pardon me if I quote from Danton's address to the French revolutionary convention *avoir de l'audacité, toujours l'audacité, encore une fois l'audacité*. Constitutional boldness. Let us get the message and get working upon it.

Finally the House leader, because the initiatives are the government's and this was a very thoughtful address, if I may say so, steeped in parliamentary traditions, had never regarded himself as a prisoner of old rules, the dead hand control of old history. We use precedents to shape the future. We use them creatively.

I was reminded of this when there was discussion of the prerogative powers, the issue of the dissolution power, the issue of what happens if Parliament is defeated in the House. I was consulted in 1968 when in a surprise vote, a snap vote in the House, launched by an ingenious New Democratic Party leader, the government was defeated and the issue was must they resign. Much the same issue came up when Mr. Clark was defeated in the House in 1979 and seemingly assumed that he must resign immediately.

In fact, there was some suggestion the Governor General of the day might have tried to persuade Mr. Clark to take a bit more time before he rushed to what turned out to be his self-destruction.

(1330)

It is a fact that the British House of Commons, from the 1920s onward, never regarded a House defeat as automatically compelling the resignation of a government or a dissolution. The precedents have to be examined creatively and in some senses we should perhaps recognize in Canada that we apply British precedents much less imaginatively and creatively than the British. Beware in imitating that we become more conservative than the people from whom we are borrowing.

Let me in that spirit come back to the issue of constitutional change, Parliament as a dynamic institution. We saw this in the debate over peacekeeping and cruise missiles. I would suggest that one of the issues that it brings up, particularly in relation to cruise missiles, is that prime ministers should be protected when

somebody phones them up at five o'clock in the morning and says: "The fate of civilization hangs on your decision, you must join me in my adventure".

It is quite possible the fate of civilization does not hang on that decision. The man calling may have indigestion. In a situation like that it may be helpful to say that on issues involving foreign affairs one would like to consult Parliament. One could simply say: "George, go back to sleep again and call me at some other time".

I would like see a repetition of these debates on foreign policy, perhaps also a tabling of agreements, treaties and even executive agreements, as we saw on the cruise missile which now seem to be entered into without parliamentary consultation, unless as with FTA and NAFTA we follow the American procedure of submitting them as Congress did with special reasons to both Houses of Parliament, the fast track procedure.

One of the ideas might be to have all foreign policy acts tabled in the House before the formal act of ratification by Order in Council. I offer this simply as a suggestion that the range of possibilities is very great.

I listened with great interest to the comments of the Official Opposition on the tabling of Order in Council appointments. I would suggest, though, the issue is not *tabula rasa*. In an earlier capacity I gave frequent testimony, simply because the parliamentary committees were frequent, on issues of changes to Parliament. One of the things suggested was that a reformed elected Senate might be given a power of review and if necessary a power of rejection of these appointments.

There is a lot of good learning there. I am sure the suggestion made by the opposition that these matters be submitted to Parliament will come up for consideration. Let us have the consideration on a basis of the very valuable work that has been done and it may have a better chance of being adopted in Parliament.

The thing that is most impressive is the expansion of the role of committees, the giving to third parties, which means in this case the Reform Party, the possibility of initiating amendments in committees, the giving of the possibility to private members.

The work of this Parliament is so much done in the committees. Never forget that under the parliamentary system the committees have the power to compel testimony. They have the power to punish recalcitrant witnesses. The only thing really immune is the confidential advice within cabinet and possibly advice by officials to cabinet ministers. Everything else is within the parliamentary domain.

I hope there will be an end to these travelling circuses that we saw on the constitution. It is not participatory democracy when we get selected invited witnesses to appear. Parliament should be doing that. The real strength of this Parliament is in its committees. They are all party committees. I draw great hope from the comments by the House leader on this particular issue.

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He believes in reviving the committee structure. It will mean more participation, a recognition that legislation is a dialectical process. Government and opposition contribute to it. It is better done in the informal give and take and compromise in committees than in the House in which our formalized debate tends to ratify decisions already arrived at.

(1335)

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be rising in the House today to join in the debate on the motion before us.

The Reform Party grew from a desire of a founding group of people who, among other things, wanted to bring real accountability to the government. This government motion is another step toward that goal.

There should be opportunity for input by the people who elected us. I congratulate the government for its new approach of direct consultation. There should be the opportunity for freer votes and I congratulate the government for its promise to move forward on this proposal and introduce freer votes to the House.

There should be more opportunity for individual MPs to have an influence on legislation before the House at the committee stages of a bill. I congratulate the government for taking the initiative in this respect. I give credit to the government for taking these steps and introducing these changes and for talking about other steps and changes.

The Reform Party also deserves credit for the part that it has played in getting to this point. We helped create the political situation conducive to change and along with it, I hope, a willingness to turn the talk about turning change into reality.

It is very important that the parliamentary reforms we introduce be meaningful and sincere. They must be effective and not just window dressing. The voters of Canada want substantial, useful and worthwhile changes and they want to be able to see the proof that these changes are being implemented.

The voters of Canada want actually to see the consultative process turn into a course of action by the government as suggested by the majority. They want to witness free votes in this House and they want to see that individual MPs can have an influence on the new legislation as it is studied in committees.

Our view is that the government must be willing to accept changes to its legislation during the process and that it should not feel threatened by free votes or even the loss of a vote.

Greater flexibility in the process will mean better government for all of us and will help restore respect for Parliament from the people who elected us.

I am especially pleased that this motion includes provision for the procedure on House affairs committee to study and report on political reforms such as the introduction of recall.

Talking about recall usually causes an allergic reaction among politicians. I often see it on the other side of this House. The symptoms include chills of horror down the spine, uncontrollable nervous twitching, squirming in the seat, catcalls and the hurling of insults.

We should recognize this disease and name it recall phobia disease, meaning fear of recall. One cause of this disease is the widely held but totally incorrect belief that if a Liberal MP only got 40 per cent of the vote, the Reform supporters could get together with the NDP supporters and recall the Liberal MP simply because they held 60 per cent of the vote.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. White (North Vancouver): I hear laughter from the other side of the House, and that is because this is silly.

It is not because the NDP and Reform supporters could not get together on such a project but because good recall legislation sets up reasons for recall so that political and special interest groups cannot initiate recall simply because they did not vote for the member.

The threshold number of signatures of eligible voters on a petition for a byelection could be very low indeed if the recall petition first has to pass an eligibility test before a commissioner of elections.

The responsibility would lie with the persons initiating a recall petition to prove that there were grounds for that petition.

As I have already said, it would not be sufficient for petitioners to simply say that 60 per cent of the voters did not vote for the member. Nor could they state that the member failed to represent the constituency properly unless they could produce evidence for the commissioner of elections to prove that this was the case. Therefore it is not the number of signatures on a petition for recall that is critical. It is the validity of the reason for the recall petition that is important.

(1340)

Some likely valid reasons for a petition could be a criminal act by a member, a proven failure to vote in accordance with the clear majority wish of the constituents, misrepresentation, for example, as has been recently revealed in the House, and so on.

In places like California, Montana and North Dakota recall legislation exists with petitions thresholds of less than 20 per

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cent. I challenge any member of this House to point out when the last recall took place in one of those states for any reason, let alone by a special interest group.

The voters of jurisdictions where recall exists hardly ever need to recall a member because the threat of recall ensures that they receive good representation and therein lies the real reason recall is opposed by the traditional party structures in Canada.

It has nothing to do with claims that special interest groups could initiate mischievous recall because, as I have already pointed out, legitimate reasons for recall can be built into legislation. We can also build in limits on the number of times recall can be initiated in a term or at what point in a term that petition could begin.

Nothing brings on a violent attack of recall phobia disease more than the thought that MPs might actually vote to represent their constituents in the House. Good recall legislation can answer all of the concerns of those MPs who have been struck with recall phobia disease. It can totally eliminate the fear for good MPs while still making possible the recall of MPs who have failed to represent their constituencies or have conducted themselves in an inappropriate manner.

I am personally unafraid of recall. I do not get shivers down my spine. I do not squirm uncontrollably in my seat or hurl insults or catcalls at the mention of that six-letter word. I am immune to recall phobia disease.

With a bit of logical thought every MP in the House could be immune to recall phobia disease. Hopefully there will soon be a time when we will vote to accept recall legislation as part of the ongoing reforms of our parliamentary system.

In the meantime I once again thank the government for having given us the opportunity to discuss this motion. I expect to vote in favour of the motion.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed the hon. member's remarks very much.

I participated in a discussion last evening with his colleague from Calgary Southeast, I believe it was. I may have got the direction incorrect, but it was one of the members from Calgary and of course I cannot use her name. I enjoyed the discussion very much. I was pleased to hear the hon. member echoing the comments she made about the virtues of recall.

I have not noticed anybody's spine twitching on this side of the House, but I think there is something that the hon. member might want to bear in mind in his comments about recall. I know it is one of the things that will be studied in the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs when it becomes seized of the matter once the motion has been passed. He may

want to give evidence before the committee on his views on this important issue.

He might bear in mind the fact that in political life popularity of governments goes up and down. When the government goes down the opposition normally goes up but not always. Sometimes it gets fractured among various opposition parties. I need hardly remind the member there are two splinter groups sitting behind him that are no longer parties in the House. However they do have some interest and still some support among the electorate, weak as it may be. Governments, as I say, go up and down. When they go down, the opposition parties go up.

Surely the hon. member must be very suspicious and a little mischievous in proposing a recall of members when he knows that as an opposition member there will be very little call for recall in his case. When I was an opposition member the chances of anybody instituting a recall petition against me were virtually nil unless, as I say, there had been some major problem for which I might have been expelled from the House, like a criminal conviction on a very serious offence. Those are grounds for the House to expel a member. It has happened before. There are precedents for it.

(1345)

On any other matter my electors are most unlikely as long as I am an opposition member to consider recalling me because I cannot do damage in a riding. It is quite impossible. The government on the other hand makes decisions that can affect ridings across the country. It has to take sometimes—

The Deputy Speaker: The time is going by. I think the member gets the point. Would the member wish to reply to what has been said?

Mr. White (North Vancouver): Mr. Speaker, I can see that the hon. member opposite has not yet been made immune to recall phobia disease, but I am pleased he paid attention and did not notice the squirming around him at the time.

This is not a matter of popularity of the government. It is a matter of individual recall. There is definitely a public movement out there to have some accountability in members. I would repeat to the hon. member that a critical part of recall legislation must have built into it the ability to assess the reason for recall. That is really the key to it. There is nothing to be afraid of if there are established genuine reasons, not just a matter of popularity.

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the comments of my colleague from the Reform Party. The concept he puts forward is an interesting one on recall.

I have been a member here for five years, in the bad old days when we were perhaps in greater disrepute than we have been at any time in the history of the country. I have never had a constituent in the riding of Dartmouth, or any riding I went to in my capacity as a critic, come up and talk to me about the need to

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recall or to have a provision within our rules for recall. Many of them came forward and indicated to me that other things should be done such as freer debates in the House of Commons.

Does the member believe this is an issue created by the Reform Party in the pre-election period, or does he really believe it is a grassroots movement? If it is, I certainly have not seen it in my travels.

Mr. White (Vancouver North): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. I suspect as a result of his question in the House that he will get some telephone calls from his riding requesting that there be recall.

I can see that he has not yet been made immune to recall phobia disease either. I hope we will manage to make some progress on this over the ensuing months.

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works and Government Services): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his address and ask two brief questions.

The first one relates to his suggestion that there are particular reasons why members might be recalled. I wonder whether he would like to share those with us.

My second question is whether his party has costed out the expenditures that would have to be undertaken in order to have a by-election under those circumstances. How expensive would that be?

Mr. White (Vancouver North): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. It gives me the opportunity to expand a little. Some valid reasons that I suggested earlier in my speech might be a criminal act by a member or a proven failure to properly represent the constituency.

I do not pretend to be the person who would write the legislation or who has taken sufficient input to know all the reasons that could be valid.

In terms of the cost of democracy, there is a cost to democracy which we are ready to accept in terms of recall. That push that is out there is telling us that people are prepared to have a cost of recall. I have to say that the member is assuming that recall is going to happen every day and shows a fear of recall. Recall is such a rare event that it would be well worth the cost when it eventually happens.

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Okanagan Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise to address Parliament. The committee on parliamentary reform has put Motion No. 6 before the House. I wish to do a particular thing here, that is to reconcile the responsibility of a member of Parliament as a representative and the technological means that currently exist that would better facilitate the overall operation of this place.

(1350)

I particularly wish to applaud the motion currently before the House to amend the standing orders. I suggest that these proposed changes are really but a tiny step forward. Given the task before us, now is the time to take not a tiny step but a big step forward. Now is the time to determine what aspects of the old way of doing politics should be kept as a tradition and what things should be changed so that we can improve and represent our constituents better in this place.

I am not talking about some kind of fantastical movie script. I believe it is time to leave the "Jurassic Park" era of governing without worrying about offending the old guard of "The Firm". We have surpassed the technological "Age of Innocence". As those who govern this land we want to improve our standards and efficiency of governing. To do that we must move forward at a pace similar to those we seek to serve.

As a member of Parliament I have a number of roles as does every member in this House. These include at least three areas: first as a representative, second as a legislator and finally as a source of legitimization. Let us examine each of these in turn.

Let us consider the words of the chairman and chief executive officer of Canada's largest chartered bank who described the new frontier before us as a multimedia universe of converging services ultimately coming into the home through a single carrier, smart phones, smart TVs, smart computers, smart VCRs, smart faxes and smart cards that let us pay bills, transfer money, make investments, play games, show pictures, selected products and services, take college courses and maybe even vote. Let me repeat those last words "maybe even vote". Electronic voting is one element which would greatly improve a member's ability to perform the duties of representation, legislation and legitimization.

Consider first the area of representation. Being the representative of Okanagan Centre incorporates three dimensions, mandate, proxy and trusteeship. The mandate function is determined by my political party whose principles and policies I support. By proxy I am bound to represent, to the degree that they can be determined, the wishes of the constituents in my area. In an instance in which that cannot be determined it is my responsibility to act as a trustee to make decisions that act in the best interests of my constituents. To be a truly effective representative we require a dynamic synthesis of all three roles.

After the debate in the House a decision is made on the matter. The decision is made by means of a vote. Where representation certainly takes place during the debate, actual representation happens when the vote is cast.

Because members are required to be away from this place from time to time it is not possible for them to be present at all times when a vote is called. When a member does not cast a vote

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it can be argued that the member's constituents were not represented.

Let us recognize that we have the ability today to ensure that every member is able to vote on every bill from anywhere in the world. The technology can work for us.

Let us look at the second function, that of legislators. The decision to introduce legislation is not arbitrary but rather the development of implementation of legislative measures which reflect the goals of all Canadians. In its ideal form legislation is a result of consensus among Canadians. A recent example of consensus gathering was the pre-budget debate in this House. Another was the consultation of the Minister of Finance in four major urban centres in Canada. Although it is commendable that the minister sought the advice of Canadians it is unfortunate that this type of consultation does not occur before every major government decision.

Further, it is too bad that many Canadians were excluded and did not have the opportunity to participate in the finance minister's sessions. An electronic town hall meeting similar to the one recently held by U.S. Vice-President Al Gore would have enabled residents from every part of Canada to participate simultaneously in such consultations through technological interconnections.

A much wider and probably more representative consultation would have resulted without incurring the costs of air fares, hotels, meals and sundry items, to say nothing of the personal energy that was invested by the persons involved in travelling about this country.

(1355)

A final function of a member is that of legitimization. Democracy requires that the rules which govern society are respected. Respect results from an acceptance, not necessarily agreement with legislation either past or present. The notion of legitimization comes from belief that a member will act in accordance with the rules of decorum and do the utmost to represent the riding.

Legitimization occurs as a function of the member voting on legislation, responding to constituents and fulfilling the promises made during an election campaign.

The notion of legitimization may be taken one step farther to include access to information. A government which voluntarily shares information as well as seeks the opinions of its people instils trust between government and the people. Failure to observe this relationship results in cynicism as was evident during the last federal election.

Open and easy access demystifies the political process and reaffirms the need for our existence. I am suggesting that we examine the contents of the technology treasure chest.

Technology can allow individuals to communicate more readily and easily with their members and with the government as a whole. My job as a representative of my constituents would be made easier if the federal government took a big step forward and provided greater integration, technological integration, within the House and outside the House.

Many Canadians know that both government and business leaders need to understand the drivers of change within our economic system. Those who understand the impact of technology and the impact that it will have will be the successful leaders of the future.

Many aspects of the tomorrow envisioned by Alvin Toffler in his works *The Third Wave* and *Future Shock* are upon us today. Technology affords us the right to expect bringing into existence, probably in the House, the concept of electronic democracy. It is this concept that should be incorporated into any discussion concerning parliamentary reform, particularly as we try to fulfil the many roles that members must undertake to represent their constituents.

We are taking small steps in the proposed amendment, but now is the time to take a big step and significantly alter the standing orders of the House of Commons to incorporate technology and thus greater involvement from all Canadians into the decision making process. Imagine electronic referendums and more direct, less complicated democracy, electronic interaction with constituents and with this place.

Now is the time. Carpe diem. Let us seize the day.

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works and Government Services): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his address and I ask a couple of brief questions.

I listened rather carefully but I did not hear any reference, although there might have been, to other countries utilizing some of the concepts that he has put forward. Are there examples of other countries doing exactly that?

The other question is in terms of cost. Do we have any notion as to how costly this would be?

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Speaker, in the first instance there are other examples in which this technology has been and is being applied. A variety of examples can be made. For example, I referred to Vice-President Al Gore who conducted a town hall meeting electronically and people virtually from right across the United States, from one end to the other, were able to talk to one another in this particular instance via a computer network.

Of particular interest to me in that instance was the involvement of people unable to come to a meeting, who were physically disabled and had to sit at home in their wheelchairs. They were able to involve themselves as readily and as completely as someone not physically disabled. There was a great and wonderful opportunity for these people to be actively involved in the decision making and communication interaction process.

With regard to the second question of the hon. member as to the cost, the details of this have not been worked out. I do not

have the details of the costs, but there are two dimensions here. One is the dollar cost and the other is that if we really believe in democracy we should pay the price to have democracy that actually reflects our people's needs. We will do so successfully and it will not be an inordinate amount. To suggest that the present system does not cost money is false as well.

(1400)

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Mr. Speaker, I know the clock is ticking but very quickly I would like to ask the member a question. He is a new member who canvassed on a platform of parliamentary reform as some of us on this side of the House did. Does he not believe that some of the initiatives which have been undertaken by the new government have been positive?

An example is the fact that we have had so many free debates in the House on major issues. In the early days of this Parliament the government put forward some initiatives to start the reform of the political process.

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member had listened carefully to my speech, he would have heard that I did applaud the government's actions in my speech.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

KAHNAWAKE BAND COUNCIL

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean): Mr. Speaker, the Kahnawake Band Council has issued a press release which is a full blown charge against Quebecers and their government. This press release refers to the hatred of the population, the persecution of English speaking Quebecers and the immorality of the Quebec government.

I want to say that Quebecers are a tolerant people and that, despite numerous exactions by armed native groups, they continue to have good relations with native people. Moreover, I would like to say that the Quebec government was the first to recognize the principle of self-determination and that the James Bay Agreement is still a model in Canada.

We have in Quebec a joint forum made up of equal numbers of representatives from various native peoples and representatives of Quebec society where current problems are being discussed. Instead of resorting to such unacceptable and provocative language, the Mohawks should join this forum.

[English]

S.O. 31

ST. JOHN'S CHURCH

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough): Mr. Speaker, the people of St. John's Church, Peterborough are proud of their past and are planning confidently for the future.

A few years ago, the 150-year old church encountered damp and peeling paint on its walls. Studies showed that the proper cure involved major repairs to roofs and walls as well as repainting. Instead of simply trying to patch, members of the congregation embarked on an elaborate program to restore their church to the glory that it had a few decades ago.

Despite difficult economic times, the work has now been finished. The architectural heritage of the city of Peterborough has been greatly enriched. The new chimes bring a sound of hope to all citizens.

There is a lesson here for all Canadians. Like St. John's, let us be proud of our rich heritage and build on it not for ourselves, but for our children.

* * *

GRAIN HANDLERS' STRIKE

Mrs. Marlene Cowling (Dauphin—Swan River): Mr. Speaker, I rise today for the first time in this House to bring forward the concerns of the farmers of my constituency, Dauphin—Swan River, with respect to the grain handlers' strike on the west coast.

I strongly encourage the parties involved on the west coast to resolve their differences quickly because a large number of innocent third parties on the prairies are drastically affected by the work stoppage.

* * *

CIGARETTE TAXES

Mr. Bob Ringma (Nanaimo—Cowichan): Mr. Speaker, many of my constituents are greatly concerned by the suggestion that the government may be about to lower the taxes on cigarettes. The concerns range from the loss of revenue to the increase in health costs due to the effects of smoking.

Now the health minister for the province of British Columbia has added his voice to those of my constituents. The hon. Paul Ramsey predicts a 35 per cent increase in tobacco consumption by B.C.'s adolescents if the government follows through with its suggested tax cut.

In addition, Mr. Ramsey projects the measure will result in an increase of \$130 million per year to his budget for the treatment of tobacco related illnesses.

S.O. 31

Mr. Ramsey has requested the government take no action to reduce taxes until it is fully discussed at the meeting of federal-provincial territorial ministers of health tomorrow.

My constituents and I add our voices to that request.

* * *

(1405)

CP RAIL

Mr. Alex Shepherd (Durham): Mr. Speaker, those of us who are proud Canadians are offended that CP Rail has decided to change its company logo into what in effect looks like the Canadian flag becoming or being subsumed into the America flag.

It is not just Canadians who are offended by this logo. This logo has also been challenged in the United States for defaming the American flag.

Regardless of CP's rights as a private company to choose any logo it wants, Canadians should have a voice in this matter. CP Rail is a company that Canadian taxpayers have helped to establish through subsidies, outright gifts of land and other means. I note that most of the track in eastern Canada is owned by CN and more precisely, the taxpayers of Canada.

Currently CN, which displays the Canadian flag on its trains, and CP are in negotiations for consolidation of rail service in eastern Canada.

I would like to bring this matter to the attention of the House so that we can convey our desire to have the Canadian flag and not the offensive logo of CP Rail flying over taxpayers' property in eastern Canada.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CELLULAR TELEPHONES

Mr. Patrick Gagnon (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine): Mr. Speaker, today, I would like to mention one instance where federalism was good for Quebec.

The Federal Office of Regional Development has recently announced a partnership between Canada and Quebec which will allow Ericsson Communications of Montreal to launch an important research and development project in the field of cellular telephone communications.

That partnership between the federal and provincial governments and Ericsson will maintain 400 jobs and create 140 new ones. The expected investments could exceed \$94 million and will open important markets for many small and medium sized businesses in Quebec.

Thanks to such investments, Ericsson will be a world leader in cellular phone technology. That project reaffirms, once again, Montreal's position as the true telecommunications centre in Canada.

In conclusion, let me stress the fact that this company has been able to pursue its expansion in Montreal and in Quebec thanks to the Canada-Quebec agreement on industrial development.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE FAMILY

Mr. Bernard Deshaies (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, 1994 is the International Year of the Family. This should be the opportunity for parliamentarians to become aware of the many difficulties Quebec and Canadian families are faced with, and for the government to respond to the crying needs of today's families. It goes without saying that the economic difficulties we are experiencing take a terrible toll on families.

According to Statistics Canada in 1990, 1.1 million Canadian children lived below the poverty line. No one can be indifferent to such alarming figures. Another international research organization estimates that 29 per cent of single parent families live below the poverty line, putting Canada in seventh place among industrialized countries.

It is high time we give back their dignity to Quebec and Canadian families so they can fully develop on a personal level and find total fulfilment worthy of a truly modern society.

* * *

[*English*]

1996 BRITISH COLUMBIA SUMMER GAMES

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay West—Revelstoke): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House to announce that the neighbouring cities of Trail and Castlegar in the riding of Kootenay West—Revelstoke have jointly been selected as the location for the 1996 British Columbia Summer Games.

Kootenay West—Revelstoke is made up of many small towns and communities, the largest having a population of about 10,000.

The games are traditionally held in large urban areas but nowhere will visitors find the hospitality and enthusiasm that will be present during the 1996 games. The two towns are representative of the spirit and hospitality which can be found throughout the riding.

I would like to take this opportunity to invite all members of the House and all of their constituents to visit the most breathtaking area in western Canada and to enjoy the spirit of the games and the hospitality of my riding.

S.O. 31

CRIMES OF VIOLENCE

Ms. Beth Phinney (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, earlier today I had the pleasure of participating in a special presentation when members of CAVEAT, Citizens Against Violence Everywhere Advocating its Termination, presented petitions containing over 2.5 million signatures to the Minister of Justice.

These petitions ask that Parliament recognize that crimes of violence against the person are serious and abhorrent to society.

Mrs. Priscilla de Villiers suffered a tragedy in her family with the abduction and murder of her daughter, Nina, in 1991. Mrs. de Villiers was determined to turn tragedy into positive action. She formed CAVEAT and brought to national attention the deficiencies in the criminal justice system through media appearances and a petition which has elicited an overwhelming response from over 2.5 million Canadians.

(1410)

We are honoured to have Mrs. de Villiers and some of the members of CAVEAT with us today. I am sure all my colleagues join me in saluting her efforts to bring about changes to the criminal justice system.

* * *

SERIAL KILLER GAMES

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River): Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw the attention of this House to the disturbing proliferation of killer board games and serial killer cards depicting perpetrators of violence.

Many Canadians have expressed concern about the insensitive glorification of violent crime that these games promote. The exploitation of human suffering for the purpose of financial gain is morally unacceptable.

Recognizing that the most expedient means of getting such products out of stores is to make them prohibitively expensive and that there may be freedom of speech issues in relation to our charter, I recently tabled a motion recommending \$100 per unit tax levy on the manufacture or importation of such products which explicitly depict or promote actual or fictional perpetrators of homicide, kidnapping or sexual assault.

I urge this government to consider that motion as a means of preventing or limiting distribution of these products in Canada.

* * *

BOSNIA—HERCEGOVINA

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Mr. Speaker, I am sure all members of this House were shocked and saddened to see reports of the carnage in Sarajevo on Saturday.

Once again the shortcomings of the UN position have been seen. Despite the best of intentions lack of a coherent direction is costing lives daily.

Warring factions continue to thumb their noses at the international community while we continue to issue condemnations and pass UN resolutions which we simply are not prepared to enforce, except for the one ensuring that the Bosnian government cannot acquire the means necessary to defend itself.

I implore our government while ensuring the safety of our troops on the ground to urge the UN to take whatever actions are necessary to stop this genocide. As one citizen of Sarajevo said on the weekend: "This was not the Chetniks that did this, it was the world. This is the world's responsibility".

* * *

[Translation]

SOCIAL AND CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans): Mr. Speaker, the unilateral cuts to social and co-operative housing that were applied in the last Conservative budgets had very severe repercussions.

In Quebec City and particularly in the lower town, housing needs are great. Today at least 1,200 households are on waiting lists to get low cost housing in the area and 600 more are looking for co-operative housing.

Quebec City wants the CMHC to be given enough funds to reactivate the Canada-Quebec agreement on social housing.

It is time for the Liberal government to act and the Minister of Finance should take these problems into account in his upcoming budget.

* * *

[English]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Jake E. Hoepfner (Lisgar—Marquette): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House to inform members that the latest unemployment figures for Manitoba increased by almost 2 per cent in the previous quarter.

Farmers in Lisgar—Marquette have suffered through a summer of extreme weather, crop disease and now a strike by Vancouver dock workers.

With 1.5 million workers unemployed, a rejection of a \$2.12 an hour wage increase over a three-year contract is not only shameful but devastating to other workers and businesses who have consented to a wage freeze or wage cut.

The failure of this government to deal with smugglers, unemployment and labour disputes is putting any economic recovery in jeopardy.

Oral Questions

The Minister for Human Resources Development is becoming the minister of human misery. I urge the government to wake up and take actions to solve problems rather than to contribute to them.

* * *

BOSNIA—HERCEGOVINA

Mr. David Berger (Saint-Henri—Westmount): Mr. Speaker, on Friday a mortar shell landed in a crowded market in Sarajevo killing 68 persons and injuring 197. This is the largest number of persons killed in a single attack since the beginning of the war in Bosnia. I am sure all members join me in condemning this massacre of innocent civilians whose victims included Muslims, Croats and Serbs.

The impulse is to lash out or strike back but as British foreign secretary Douglas Hurd warned, a retaliatory air strike may simply yield one day of satisfaction followed not by the lifting of the siege, but by its intensification.

In order to put an end to the fighting both the United States and Russia must become more actively involved. The United States has criticized various peace plans and has proposed actions which many believe would intensify the war. The United States must show more leadership if we hope to bring an end to this bloody war which has dragged on far too long.

* * *

(1415)

CN RAIL

Mr. Murray Calder (Wellington—Grey—Dufferin—Simcoe): There is a 33-mile rail line in my riding between Collingwood and Barrie. CNR is considering closing this line in the very near future.

The impact on the environment and the tourism industry in this area would be horrendous. Hundreds of trucks full of grain corn supplying two very successful companies in Collingwood would make the highways in this area impassable and very dangerous to the tourist industry.

I feel it is imperative that CNR reconsider its decision of closure of this essential rail line.

* * *

CIGARETTE TAXES

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, it appears this government is going to cave in to the law breakers by lowering taxes on cigarettes.

Tobacco, I might point out to this House, is the only legal consumer product that kills when used exactly as intended. It

costs the Canadian taxpayer an estimated \$15 billion in indirect and direct health care costs.

The revenue minister says cost does not affect the use of tobacco. I wonder what the minister is smoking. In 1992 Statistics Canada indicated: "Affordability is to date the most significant factor in the reduction of tobacco use in Canada. Regular smoking among Canadian teenagers has plummeted as taxes drove prices up higher".

How about getting from the Minister of Health a real commitment to the health of Canadians. Stop the smoke-screen. The Minister of Health should come clean and cough up: Does she or does she not support lowering taxes on cigarettes?

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD*[Translation]***BOSNIA**

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister.

Saturday, another barbaric act was committed in Sarajevo, where a mortar shell that hit the central market killed 68 people and wounded over 200. Following this tragedy, UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali asked NATO for authority to proceed with airstrikes against the Serbian artillery positions which hold Sarajevo under siege.

I want to ask the Prime Minister whether he could indicate the Canadian government's official position on this request from the UN Secretary-General which favours airstrikes to free Sarajevo.

[English]

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, like everybody else we are very unhappy with the unacceptable and barbarous act committed in Sarajevo over the weekend.

At this moment we are consulting with our allies on this problem. The Minister of Foreign Affairs has been in discussions with U.S. Secretary of State Christopher and the foreign ministers of England and France. Discussions are going on at this time.

The situation is very, very bad. We will see in the next few days what the best action is that we can take. Of course, Canadians have the particular situation that our troops are located in Srebrenica and we have to consider that.

We will be consulting with our allies. We hope that we will find a way to have peace in that part of the world because what is going on at this time is completely unacceptable.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, an emergency NATO meeting on the matter was scheduled today, at the request of France and Belgium. What position did the Prime Minister instruct his representatives to take on behalf of Canada at this meeting?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I do not think we can make a final decision at this time. I believe that the people who are meeting at this very moment want to analyse the situation and try to propose an action plan. The Canadian officers present are to report to us on the nature of these discussions, and we will see what their decision should be.

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Prime Minister whether he can promise that his government will not approve airstrikes without guarantees for the safety of Canadian peacekeepers in Bosnia.

(1420)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, at this very moment people are discussing the use of airstrikes to prevent the so-called strangulation of Sarajevo, and there is no direct connection with the position of Canadian soldiers who are now located in another part of Bosnia.

We have to weigh the pros and cons, and our position is still the same. In Brussels we said that airstrikes could only be used in self-defence, which is not the case in the Srebrenica area at this time. In the case of Sarajevo, the governments concerned are now analysing the situation.

* * *

CIGARETTE SMUGGLING

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, the Saturday edition of *The Gazette* reported that the chief of the Kahnawake reserve, Mr. Joe Norton, claimed to have received assurances from the RCMP that it was not planning to enter the reserve to fight cigarette smuggling and that moreover, the RCMP considered Akwesasne, Kahnawake and Kanasatake to be special cases.

Can the Prime Minister tell us clearly and unequivocally whether or not the RCMP gave such assurances to Chief Norton?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I think the RCMP officer who spoke last Friday evening on television stated his case very clearly. We have said clearly to everyone that the rule of law applies everywhere in Canada, without exception.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval): In that case, Mr. Speaker, and to dispel any doubt or confusion people may have, including the inhabitants of these native reserves, could the Prime Minister agree to a request to meet with Mohawk chiefs and make it

clear to them that he intends to ensure that the rule of law is applied everywhere in Canada?

[English]

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, officers of the RCMP had occasion to discuss these matters with them last Friday. They were told clearly that the law has to apply everywhere. They have been in touch with the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development about that.

One thing I do not like is the impression the hon. member is trying to make that this is only a problem within Indian reserves.

Contraband is a problem across the country but especially in Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic Canada. Most of the contraband comes in outside the reserves and it is not very fair to try to create the impression that it is a problem with Indians in Canada. It is a problem with many people in every city across the land.

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

It is rumoured the government is considering a major reduction in tobacco taxes. If this is true, to avoid any increase in the deficit these cuts will have to be offset by matching spending cuts or replacement tax revenues.

Can the Prime Minister tell the House which programs he intends to cut or which taxes he intends to increase.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, there will be a budget in a few weeks.

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect the rumours are very strong.

Health organizations across Canada are outraged by the government proposal to cut tobacco taxes.

Would the government calculate the long term increase in health care costs which would result from these cuts in tobacco taxes?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I hope to make a statement tomorrow on this. I said to the House very clearly that it is no good for anybody to bury his head in the sand.

A lot of very cheap illegal cigarettes are available everywhere at this moment. I said we would use every means at our disposal to make sure that the traffic of illegal cigarettes and other smuggling are terminated in the short term. We will use every tool at our disposal to achieve our goal in the shortest period possible. We are faced with a problem that has existed for years. We have decided that the time has come to bring order to that field and it will be done very quickly.

(1425)

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre): Mr. Speaker, a second supplementary question. Last week certain native Canadians threatened an armed response to any attempt by the RCMP to

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enforce existing smuggling laws. This situation has caused understandable concern among law enforcement officers involved.

Does the Prime Minister's definition of self-government include the right to disregard the laws of Canada and to threaten police who may be called in to enforce them?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, this statement is extremely exaggerated. We want to make sure that native Canadians can make decisions concerning themselves in order to find a better place in Canadian society. At the same time they know and accept the fact that they are within Canada and they have to respect the laws of Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): My question is for the Prime Minister. A few days ago the chief of the Akwesasne reserve, Mike Mitchell, stated:

[English]

“[The police] are going to have to be reminded that there are a lot of weapons that exist here—and trying to pursue this in a violent manner is going to be met with probably a very hostile manner as well”.

[Translation]

Does the Prime Minister think this is idle talk? Does he think that the police should let themselves be intimidated on the Akwesasne reserve?

[English]

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, the position of the government is clear. It intends to have the law enforced everywhere in Canada. That continues to be our position. It is not a matter of looking for confrontation but instead, of enforcing the law in an equal manner in every part of the country. This is what we are going to do.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, I would remind you that there have been over 70 violent deaths on Akwesasne over the past seven years and that the Mohawk people are presently being terrorized by a handful of individuals. Is it not the responsibility of this government to ensure that all the inhabitants of this country, including the Mohawks living on Indian reservations, can live in peace without being terrorized at the hands of a few individuals?

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, That is exactly what we intend to do, and I am very pleased to have the support of my colleague opposite on this.

[English]

INDIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. The *Globe and Mail* quotes a spokesperson for the Mohawk warriors as stating that any RCMP incursion into his reserve would be treated as an invasion by a hostile government.

As the civilian police forces are not presently enforcing the law in the Mohawk's self-declared sovereign lands, would the minister of Indian affairs agree the Canadian government appears to have accepted the Indian self-declared sovereignty?

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, there are times when we have to come together not just as members of this Commons but as concerned people and not be throwing gasoline on a highly volatile situation. Does the hon. member want to force another Oka? It happened so innocently and it could happen again.

If the hon. member would take the time to go down to Akwesasne, as many members on this side did, he will find 12,000 law-abiding Indians doing their business—law abiding, with a hospital, a school and a 500 criminal element. It is the criminal element we have to deal with.

The member for Lac-Saint-Jean said that in his statement about two weeks ago. There are Indians and there is the criminal element. The leader of the opposition said that when dealing with Davis Inlet. The hon. member who sits behind the leader of the opposition said that today. We do not have to deal with Indians, but with the criminal element in Indian communities the same way we deal with the criminal element in the non-Indian community. That is the long and the short of it.

(1430)

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East): Mr. Speaker, I suggest to the minister that we might be able to cool this fire if he could give us the government's position on this.

Does the government, representing all the people of Canada have ultimate, exclusive, supreme power and authority over all Canadian soil including territory claimed by all identifiable groups including those people described as aboriginal?

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, there are one and a half million aboriginal people. We are dealing with them as individuals, as family.

The hon. member is looking at one part of the country. I wish he would look at what the government has just done in B.C.—toward his neck of the woods—in Labrador and Nunavut.

Oral Questions

In twelve weeks we have kick started most of the negotiations. That is what is going to bring this country together. Common ground brings us together and not what certain groups within the Mohawk community are doing right now.

I am getting upset because it only took Oka three weeks of this type of dialogue to happen. Meech Lake floundered. A few Indians went out to protect a golf course. The army was called out by the province of Quebec and the next thing is that we spent \$150 million and killed a person. I do not want to see that happen again.

Our party and our government is going to ensure that it does not happen again.

* * *

[Translation]

CIGARETTE SMUGGLING

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Revenue.

It is obvious that the Ontario government does not agree with the federal government's proposal to lower taxes on cigarettes to curb smuggling. The Premier of Ontario has stated that, in his opinion, smuggling could easily be thwarted if the federal government imposed a special export tax on cigarettes manufactured in Canada.

Does the revenue minister share the Ontario premier's opinion regarding the imposition of an export tax on Canadian cigarettes?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, it is true that the Ontario premier has made statements on this matter and that he has proposed an export tax on Canadian cigarettes, but I do not agree with him on this point.

This alone would not solve our current smuggling problem. We need something much more effective than what the premier has proposed, and I am sure that we will have more details on this tomorrow, as the Prime Minister just said.

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, does the revenue minister not agree that the refusal by the Ontario government to lower its taxes on cigarettes would make his anti-smuggling plan totally ineffective, particularly in Ontario and perhaps even in Western Canada?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, it is true that in hypothetical situations, we can have hypothetical answers to hypothetical problems. However, we still do not know what we will do. We do not know all the steps the government will take, that will be announced by the Prime Minister tomorrow. As to what can happen at the border between Ontario and Quebec, I cannot give a good answer because it is a hypothetical situation.

[English]

INDIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. Dick Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley): Mr. Speaker, my question has been inspired by Dave and Brenda Fountain of Burns Lake, B.C. who are currently being challenged on a piece of duly deeded private property they own.

My question is for the Prime Minister. In the throne speech, his government committed to the forging of a new partnership with aboriginal people, specifically in respect to the implementation of their inherent right to self-government.

Will the Prime Minister commit to all Canadians that his government's definition of aboriginal self-government does not mean a self-government that would exist outside the federal and provincial laws that all Canadians are currently obliged to abide by?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I said many times that the situation with regard to Indian land is that it is all part of Canada. They have to abide by the legal system in Canada when we sign agreements. The Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development is trying to find a way to give the authority to the native people to be able to make their own decisions that affect themselves, so they can find a proper place in Canadian society.

(1435)

That is what he is negotiating at this time, but all within the fact that they are within a sovereign nation that is Canada.

Mr. Dick Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley): Mr. Speaker, I commend the efforts of the Prime Minister in his search for the meaning of aboriginal self-government.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister if at this time his government defines aboriginal self-government as an order of government that would exist outside federal and provincial jurisdiction or as a level of government that would exist within and under federal or provincial jurisdiction?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): The hon. member should know that Indian reserves come under federal jurisdiction within a province. The Indian land is in the name, in the trust of the federal crown.

Therefore we already have a system that sometimes, like passing a road through an Indian reserve, has to be done by the federal government, not by a provincial government. It is the law of the land following the signing of the treaties with the natives in Canada.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

CIGARETTE SMUGGLING

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond): Mr. Speaker, after hesitating for several weeks, the government finally told Canadians that it will unveil its action plan against cigarette smuggling this week.

In the context of the health ministers conference, will the minister ensure that a comprehensive strategy to discourage tobacco consumption will be introduced as part of that action plan?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, a few minutes ago the Prime Minister said that he would make an announcement on this issue tomorrow.

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond): Mr. Speaker, will the minister undertake to provide the necessary funding to ensure an increased and effective control of the sale of cigarettes in schools?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I am always prepared to co-operate with my provincial counterparts. Schools are under provincial jurisdiction. Therefore I will have to meet with my provincial counterparts before coming up with a concrete plan.

* * *

[English]

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. David Iftody (Provencher): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture.

The shutdown of the port of Vancouver, Canada's largest seaport, has cut off millions of dollars of commodity exports including hundreds of millions of dollars of grain, potash and forestry products.

Now that the mediated talks have broken off, could the minister give the House an undertaking as to what specific measures the government is prepared to take to guarantee that Canadian grain exports will reach their markets and that the integrity of our international trade position is not hindered?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to answer the question of the hon. member.

As the House knows, over the past week or 10 days we have been encouraging the parties to the dispute to exercise their rights and obligations under collective bargaining to reach an agreement. In the past several days we have offered the mediation services of the federal government to do that. Unfortunately as of yesterday the talks once again broke down and the sides

were unable to come to any agreement that would allow them to proceed with a new contract.

The assessment we made is that the impact of this work stoppage is now reaching beyond the parties themselves. It is having a very serious impact on the economy generally; certainly the grain economy of western Canada and the economy of the port of Vancouver.

Consequently notice will be placed on the Order Paper today of the government's intention to introduce measures to end the work stoppage and bring about a resumption of port operations.

I would ask for the co-operation of all members of the House for quick passage of this legislation.

* * *

(1440)

EXPORTS

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster): Mr. Speaker, I applaud the hon. minister for his announcement in the House. My question relates to the same subject.

I would like to ask the Minister of Human Resources Development if he is willing to bring reliability to Canada's export commitments by designating grain handling as an essential service so that we do not have to keep on introducing special legislation to deal with the situation Parliament after Parliament, session after session?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification): Mr. Speaker, I say to the hon. member that the most immediate and important requirement is to end the work stoppage problem at the port of Vancouver. There are many other questions related to labour matters and I hope that we will providing, during the course of the next several months, an opportunity for this House to discuss them and to come to grips with them.

The important thing right now is to get the port of Vancouver back to work, the grain moving and the other commodities moving. I would invite the hon. member and his party, along with others in the House, to concentrate and focus their efforts on that singular task.

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster): Mr. Speaker, indeed we will be co-operating with the government to try to bring an end to this work stoppage.

However, in the meantime there have been severe financial losses by many Canadian exporters, including agriculture producers. I am wondering if the government has any intention of covering some of the costs incurred by producers through high demurrage costs that are passed on to Canadian exporters.

Oral Questions

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification): Mr. Speaker, I suppose we are prepared to take under advisement the hon. member's proposal if at the same time he is prepared to show what he would do about the deficit in the meantime. I would think that we should try to get the Reform Party to be able to speak with some consistency on these matters.

* * *

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister.

A report from the U.S. State Department, which referred to so-called problems experienced by anglophones and allophones in Quebec has caused considerable consternation among the Quebec public. The report is critical of Bill 86, especially where it affects access to English schools. However, the Quebec Minister of international affairs was strongly critical of this report and said, according to *La Presse*, that legislation to protect the French fact in Quebec did not constitute a violation of human rights.

Can the Prime Minister tell us whether his government, through the Minister of Foreign Affairs, intends to lodge an official protest with the U.S. ambassador regarding the contents of a report that is very damaging to the reputation of Quebec and, hence, that of Canada as well?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage): Mr. Speaker, speaking on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs who is not in the House today, I would say that the Canadian government does not make a habit of commenting on documents originating from the foreign affairs departments of other countries. It is not in keeping with international custom.

I may add as a general comment that I myself did not read the report by the U.S. State Department, but from what I have heard it was drafted before certain amendments were made to Quebec's legislation, which means that today, considering the rules of international courtesy and the scope of the comments made by the State Department, there is no good reason for making representations to the U.S. government.

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Ciaccia felt he had to make a strong protest and ask the federal government, or at least he says he will in *La Presse*, to support him in that endeavour.

Therefore, does the federal government refuse to close ranks with Quebec and lodge a strong protest against these comments which are very damaging to Quebec?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage): Mr. Speaker, I believe that we should take the U.S. government's reports at face value. I am not sure they are extremely damaging to Quebec. Quebec makes its own decisions, and that is fine with me.

* * *

(1445)

[English]

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Mr. Bob Ringma (Nanaimo—Cowichan): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the hon. Minister of National Defence. As we have already heard in this House this afternoon members on both sides of the House, indeed all Canadians, were appalled by the bombing of the Sarajevo marketplace on Saturday.

Can the minister inform this House what options the government is considering as a suitable response.

Hon. David Michael Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I think the Prime Minister has addressed that question.

There are meetings going on in Brussels today and will be in the next couple of days.

As far as the Canadian government is concerned we are most interested and concerned that the Canadian troops in Bosnia are not put at undue risk by any escalation action that may occur as a result of these discussions that are going on.

Mr. Bob Ringma (Nanaimo—Cowichan): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question. Can the minister tell the House what the government's position is on air strikes.

Hon. David Michael Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister addressed that subject when he was in Brussels a couple of weeks ago.

The former government did sign on with the rest of the NATO nations in not ruling out air strikes in certain eventualities. However the Prime Minister made it clear in Brussels that linkage of air strikes with an attempt to open the airport at Tuzla and to liberate the Canadian contingent at Srebrenica was just not acceptable to the Canadian government.

Our position is that we believe that there are other ways to achieve peace there before we start taking drastic action.

Indeed the Minister of Foreign Affairs made a statement yesterday which has been broadcast widely on television to the effect that the negotiations must still go on and that we prefer a negotiated route before any further escalation.

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[Translation]

CANADIAN MILK BOARD

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister of agriculture. The minister is aware that the subsidy cheques from the Canadian Milk Board were delivered to farmers almost eight days late in December and four or five days late in January.

In view of the problems facing the Canadian agricultural industry, what does the minister intend to do to assure farmers that those cheques will be delivered on time in the future?

[English]

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. He is right. There was an unfortunate delay in the delivery of some dairy cheques in late December and early January. That delay resulted from communication problems between the Department of Supply and Services and Canada Post.

As soon as the Canadian Dairy Commission learned of the problem it notified all of the provincial milk boards and agencies to let them know the nature of the problem. The commission has also received the assurance of Supply and Services Canada and Canada Post that every effective control measure will be put in place to ensure that this kind of problem does not recur in the future.

* * *

[Translation]

VANCOUVER HARBOUR

Mr. Jean-Paul Marchand (Québec—Est): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Human Resources Development. I too would like to raise the issue of the labour dispute which has been paralysing Vancouver harbour and, consequently, has brought to a halt the export of millions of tons of Canadian agricultural products.

Has the minister asked the mediator, whom he appointed, for a report on this labour dispute and, if so, will he make it public?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification): Mr. Speaker, as I already said in answer to a previous question, we are tabling a bill today. During the debate on that bill, members will have several opportunities to exchange views regarding the report presented by the Department of Human Resources Development. I will certainly share all information with the members on both sides of this House.

[English]

Mr. Jean-Paul Marchand (Québec—Est): Mr. Speaker, what sort of delay does the minister intend to give to concerned parties before imposing this special law because it is very important. The minister knows that as long as western grain sits in the Vancouver port, Canadian grain farmers are not being paid.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification): Mr. Speaker, that very much depends upon members of this House.

If in fact we got full co-operation from all members we could have the legislation passed by tomorrow.

(1450)

It would depend upon the full and total co-operation of all members and deputies of this chamber. I would invite them to co-operate now that the decision has been taken to introduce legislation. It will be tabled tomorrow. If members co-operate we could have the problem resolved by tomorrow night. It all depends on members opposite.

* * *

RECALL LEGISLATION

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the right hon. Prime Minister.

During this past weekend a meeting attended by more than 500 people in the riding of Markham—Whitchurch—Stouffville resulted in a demand that the government investigate the circumstances surrounding the election of the sitting member. A petition has also been initiated with the intention of collecting around 40,000 signatures to support this demand.

Will the Prime Minister acknowledge that these events are symptomatic of the growing public support for recall legislation among the voters of Canada.

An hon. member: Out of order. Ancient history.

The Speaker: Order. I believe we are straying off the mark with regard to these questions. Perhaps if the hon. member could rephrase his question in such a way that it was not so pointed we might be able to get answer. I wonder if he would try to rephrase the question.

Mr. White (North Vancouver): Mr. Speaker, would the Prime Minister agree that there is a general mood among the public of Canada in support of recall legislation?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I do not know where the member is taking that. Perhaps he should read the editorial from the *Calgary Herald* that supported his party last election where they say recall is unnecessary.

He should read that. He will come to the conclusion that it has been tried in many places including the grandfather of his party, the Socred Party. They are the ones who recalled the recall.

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister constantly brings up ancient history in response to this question. The constituents of Markham—Whitchurch—Stouffville are clearly showing they are not satisfied with the Prime Minister's suggestion last week in this House.

The Speaker: Order. I would rule the question out of order.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot): Mr. Speaker, now we all know that 190 Canadians with an annual income of more than \$250,000 did not pay one penny in income tax in 1991. Even worse, that same year, 20 millionaires paid less than \$100 in taxes to the government. And these are only a few examples of social injustice, a few of the scandals.

Like his Minister of Finance, does the Prime Minister intend to go on tolerating such situations as those concerning family trusts and tax shelters? Or does he intend to act quickly to put a stop to it?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, usually when people quote someone, they mention their sources. The problem was raised several days ago, in caucus and in the media, by the hon. member for Gander—Grand Falls. I think that is exactly what the Minister of Finance wants: to make the system more equitable. I hope that if he does and he manages to plug these loopholes, opposition members will not complain that he is raising taxes.

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot): Mr. Speaker, about this concern for fairness, instead of attacking social programs, the middle class and the elderly who pay their taxes, can the Prime Minister promise Quebecers and Canadians that this disgraceful injustice will be stopped once and for all?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, there will always be people who find loopholes in the tax system, and it is up to the Minister of Finance to deal with that.

The Minister of Finance is now trying to remedy the situation. The minister said that in his budget, he intends to bring fairness back to our tax system. Naturally, some people will be affected. As I said earlier, I hope the Opposition will not claim he is using the word fairness as an excuse to raise taxes. He will use it to ensure that everyone pays their fair share. If this happens to

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increase government revenues, that is fine, and I think everyone in the House will agree.

* * *

(1455)

[English]

MICHAEL DRAKE

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Okanagan Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the minister of immigration.

On December 15, 1993, I sent a letter to the minister urging him to remember and to recognize that convicted child molester Michael Drake posed a serious enough threat to warrant detention but was released on bail and is still out on bail today.

To date I have heard nothing from the minister. What action is the minister of immigration prepared to take to ensure the safety of the children of British Columbia?

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I believe that one of the hon. member's colleagues asked the same question last week.

I mentioned to her and through her to the House of Commons that privacy laws prevent me and him from going into the details. Suffice it to say that Mr. Drake is coming up for a hearing and I will use every method within the Immigration Act to protect Canadian communities and the security of Canada with respect to this case as with respect to other cases.

The hon. member should also know that since my appointment as Minister of Citizenship and Immigration I have acted to move and to deport individuals whom I thought thwarted the very system upon which this act is predicated.

* * *

BORDER CROSSINGS

Mr. Ovid L. Jackson (Bruce—Grey): Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of National Revenue.

Over the last number of weeks the minister announced in his proposed legislation some savings from the amalgamation of two departments. I would like to ask the minister today what part of that revenue, if any, is being used to make sure that our borders are more secure from criminals and the abduction of young people who are crossing the border.

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. I can assure him that because of a number of savings that have come about as a result of automation we have been able to put a large amount of resources, approximately \$13 million, into computer and electronic surveillance equipment for our customs officers at border crossings.

In addition, I can tell him that through reorganization again we have the possibility of increasing the number of people at customs stations, so we will in fact have a larger number using

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better equipment to reduce the number of abducted children that cross the border, and also deal with other elements such as terrorists, criminals or others who attempt to cross the Canadian-American border and other borders, and of course at airports.

I would specifically like to mention, as he has, that the programs for missing children are working effectively, but we need the support of the public in making sure that we have the maximum amount of information available so we can in fact use our automatic systems for licence plates and other such things and make sure that the numbers of missing children and abducted children who are recovered is increased.

* * *

LABOUR DISPUTES

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Vegreville): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Human Resources Development.

As the minister said last week, the Reform Party is the party of free enterprise. As such, we recognize that some labour disputes in monopoly-like situations may require third party intervention or regulation which will prevent the problem. Clearly the labour dispute at the port of Vancouver is such a case.

Will this government permanently resolve the problem of grain handling interruption by declaring grain handling an essential service?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification): Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier we will be putting on the Order Paper today notification of legislation. I will be more than interested in listening to the hon. member's comments on debate trying to justify such a position. I would hope he would not take too long because we would like to get the legislation passed and into law tomorrow so we could put people back to work.

He may want to hold back his larger philosophical discourse until another occasion when we can talk about labour relations in this country and how we can assure that both parties' rights are protected.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC WORKS

Mr. Réjean Lefebvre (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, the wasting of public money seems to have no limits. This morning again, the *Toronto Star* revealed that Canadian taxpayers have had to shell out more than \$150,000 for the reconstruction of the towers of the Caribou pier in Nova Scotia, and the Wood Island pier in Prince Edward Island. This expenditure was made necessary simply because the Department of Public Works did

not check to make sure that the size of those piers could accommodate the ferry.

(1500)

My question is for the Minister of Public Works. How can the minister explain or justify such irresponsible planning of federal investments, since it seems that those who built the ferry and those who built the piers had some communication problems?

[English]

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his question. It is a question that probably should have been directed to the previous administration when this incident occurred.

I want to assure the hon. member that after the error was detected it was rectified within a two-week period at a cost of \$150,000. I have given clear instructions to my staff at Public Works and Government Services Canada that that kind of behaviour will not be tolerated.

In essence we have asked for a review and if necessary, disciplinary action will be taken.

* * *

CIGARETTES

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. He will likely be aware that earlier today his House leader indicated the new government's approach to Parliament and to government was to include all the stakeholders in a decision prior to its being made.

The Prime Minister will realize that nearly 40,000 people die of cigarette related illnesses each year. He will also realize of course that health care which is a major component of this discussion is largely a provincial jurisdiction.

Will the Prime Minister indicate to what extent the provincial ministers of health and the health care community in general have been consulted prior to the decision which he says is coming down tomorrow?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, we have been in discussions with the premiers. I hope they are talking to their ministers of health just as I have the pleasure of talking regularly with the federal minister of health. She has good judgment.

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[Translation]

TRANSPORTATION SAFETY

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Public Service Renewal): Mr.

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Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the annual auditor's report and financial statement of the Canadian Transportation Accident Investigation and Safety Board.

This report covers the fiscal year ended March 31, 1993.

* * *

[English]

CANADIAN MULTICULTURALISM ACT

Hon. Sheila Finestone (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) (Status of Women)): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the annual report on the operation of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act for 1992-93.

I will be making a statement shortly, outlining my vision on this government's new directions for multiculturalism.

The Speaker: Madam Minister, we are at that point now.

* * *

MULTICULTURALISM

Hon. Sheila Finestone (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) (Status of Women)): Mr. Speaker, I did not anticipate your being ready so quickly.

In 1971 the Liberal government took a timely step forward in affirming the uniqueness of Canadian identity. It proclaimed the multiculturalism policy of Canada showing how we perceived ourselves and how we were viewed by nations throughout the world.

We let it be known on domestic and international stages that we placed a high value on the diverse heritage that history bestowed upon us to share. Many changes stemmed from this policy in the lives of citizens and in government activities. Part of this social evolution took place in 1988 when the world's first national multiculturalism legislation saw the light of day in the House and was unanimously passed.

(1505)

Through the multiculturalism act we made an emphatic statement that ours is a life story to celebrate a legacy of traditions brought from nations far and near to link our cultural communities as one people united under one banner. The act codified in law the multicultural reality that has flourished since the First Nations settled this vast land, long before the advent of the explorers. We were indeed proud to see respect for our neighbours' origins become the law of the land.

Diversity is a Canadian reality, a reality reflected in this House, in you, in me and among all our colleagues, and among the citizens from all ethnocultural groups who have placed us here to speak on their behalf. The essence of this diversity lies in how we conduct day to day life in Canada, at home, at school, in our neighbourhoods and in the workplace.

It is with regard to where many Canadians work and provide services to the public that I tabled the fifth annual report on the operation of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act. It documents progress the federal departments and agencies made in honouring this government's commitment to reflecting Canada's cultural make up in its daily affairs. It also helps keep these administrations accountable to the people of Canada whom we have the privilege of serving.

[Translation]

In other words, the federal government must play a leading role in Canada's cultural development. This annual report covers the 1992-93 fiscal year. It applies to a time that preceded the return of this government by seven months.

Nevertheless, I have the duty to ensure that the document is tabled.

[English]

Some departments and agencies have made great strides in upholding diversity in the workplace and ensuring that all citizens have equal access to government services.

To cite just two examples among the many highlights of outward looking ventures, during 1992-93 CBC prepared a plan of action on equitable portrayal in programming. This led to further progress in the movement toward increasing the presence of visible minority performers and subjects on TV and radio in Canada.

A great number of programs dealt with the fight against racism and hatred as well as with the promotion of cross cultural relations. It included a Canada Day documentary in which five Canadians of diverse cultural backgrounds discovered the meaning of being a Canadian.

Agriculture Canada funded research into the diverse food buying habits of consumers and the opportunities that these trends present to Canada's agri-food industry. The results of this research were provided to producers and retailers in this fast growing sector. We shall do some ongoing nation-wide studying of these trends and help our food processors compete with foreign companies.

These innovative ideas are but a few among the many put forth by a large number of agencies and departments on the front line of diversity awareness. These employees deserve our praise. Other administrations proceeded at a somewhat less

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accelerated pace. We acknowledge their efforts and encourage them on.

Finally, a minority of offices have not quite blazed a trail in advancing the benefits that diversity can bring and diversity offers. Hanging posters in the lobby is a good start but one must make the actual message on those posters come to life. Their intentions are honourable but they really could go further.

With this in mind, I have asked program staff to convene a round table of senior officials. These people will explore new ways to highlight the fact that the government demonstrates leadership in bringing about meaningful change in Canada.

Clearly one cannot look to the outside until one has had a thorough scan of the inside.

(1510)

As my hon. colleagues have likely sensed, this report is a good foundation for a much more energetic plan of action for the remainder of the decade. However one cannot really call it a best seller, not at least right now. Let us wait until I table some reports in the year to come, same place, same time, but I do believe it will be a different story, a story about widespread institutional change.

[*Translation*]

The portfolio entrusted to me by the Prime Minister is an honour, as well as a challenge.

Our mandate is to articulate the idea that our approach to citizenship embraces all Canadian women and men—seniors and young people—regardless of where they or their ancestors were born. We will be busy during the 1990s and I look forward to every day of it!

[*English*]

At the top of our agenda is the need to enlighten, to educate, to arouse a better understanding and interest, to open the eyes, to drop the lid on the coffin and finally entomb the myths that multiculturalism is merely an immigration issue, that diversity must lead to division, and the misguided musings about quotas.

I have already heard rumblings in this House about ghettoization. It is true there are those who do move into places some people think of as comfort zones. Others might call them ghettos. I do not think that is the right nomenclature, but they move to a place called Canada first. They contribute their skills to a land built by others before them who arrived with courage, hope and dreams.

Canada is a nation where we all enjoy freedom of movement and we all have the right to move to a neighbourhood with stores, with a market and with a community centre that represents a familiar setting. It is a comfort zone. All citizens have that right too. They have every right to tell us to stop focusing on

the small picture of who lives where and who does what and to look at the whole screen in panorama.

[*Translation*]

Let us recognize diversity as the most obvious characteristic of the Canadian reality, thanks to our ancestors from around the world.

Our diversity is at the heart of our identity, and you cannot rewrite history. We know of regimes in this century that tried to do so, and they failed.

[*English*]

I suggest that members see “Schindler’s List” if they want a reminder.

[*Translation*]

Whether people know it or not, multiculturalism will not fail.

[*English*]

Anyone who foresees the end of our respect for neighbours’ origins and for their right to become involved in our communities is not facing the fact that all Canadians have equal rights and equal responsibilities.

Embracing all our traditions is an eloquent expression of the Canadian dream. It forms the very lifeblood of our nationhood. It creates building blocks, not stumbling blocks, for one only stumbles when one lives in darkness and cannot see the path ahead.

[*Translation*]

The federal government intends to follow a path clearly laid out, long before Confederation, by our aboriginal peoples and generations of ancestors.

The finest homage we could pay them is to show that there is no such thing as us and them, mainstream versus immigrants, old guard versus newcomers.

Even the so-called mainstreamers have roots that spread all over the world. We Canadians are one big family. After all we are all made of flesh and blood.

[*English*]

We also have a mission on a broader scale to serve as an example to troubled nations that look to us for inspiration in times of strife when they think of freedom, human rights and shared values. We will reinforce our status as a role model through an alliance of every man, woman and child with a grasp of the responsibilities of Canadian citizenship. We shall pick the route that leads to a land where every person’s talent and energy will build on what is great about Canada. We will strengthen our economy through communication with trading partners. It will help us maintain our revered status in the eyes of the world.

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(1515)

The task that faces us all is not an easy one. Yet I can think of little in life more debilitating than idleness, scapegoating, antipathy and apathy.

I speak from my own heart to those who ask if a land of opportunity, equality and fairness is a dream world; who question whether multiculturalism has a value or is a value, has an inclusive policy or is an inclusive policy; or who think that it can happen alone. I say when we cease to dream we cease to grow.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity afforded by the presentation of the fifth annual report on the operation of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act by the Secretary of State for Multiculturalism to address this important topic.

We are also anxious to hear the results of the round table of senior officials, which will report shortly to the secretary of state on new ways to demonstrate the government's leadership in bringing about meaningful changes in Canada. However, I would like to draw attention to the subtext of the speech by the secretary of state, which implies there is no difference between them and us, no difference between immigrants and the citizens of this country, the founding citizens.

How can the government claim to promote multiculturalism while stating there is no difference between the members of cultural minorities and the members of our two majorities in this country, the franco-Quebecois and anglo-Canadians?

The secretary of state appears to use the words multiculturalism and assimilation interchangeably.

Let us look at the facts. In most Canadian provinces, Amerindian and cultural minorities of every description are assimilating in great numbers. In Quebec, however, aboriginal nations maintain their language and culture to a greater extent, and we can even speak of a renewed interest in those languages. Among Quebec's cultural minorities, mainly in Montreal, we see greater retention of their mother tongue by children of immigrants—the second and third generation.

I think the secretary of state was referring to the integration of immigrants in the vast Canadian anglophone majority to which she belongs. Does the secretary of state realize what is happening in her own province? This is a denial of Quebec's distinct identity. Her department's mandate is to encourage a sense of Canadian cultural identity based on the main characteristics of Canada, which are bilingualism and multiculturalism. It is clear that the federal government's policies are more inclined to embrace the perspective of a hypothetical pan-Canadian cultural identity.

Until Quebec has acquired full political sovereignty, we will defend Quebec's right to the recognition of its cultural identity.

When the secretary of state says that diversity is the most obvious characteristic of Canada, because our ancestors came here from all over the world, we must not and cannot ignore the fact that today, and in fact for the past 350 years, there has not been one Canadian reality but three: one francophone, one anglophone and one Amerindian or aboriginal, the reality of the aboriginal First Nations.

(1520)

This is not a situation unique to Quebec. It is the same for Acadians and the French speaking communities of the rest of Canada.

Waves of immigrants settled in Quebec, coming first from Great Britain, Ireland and Mediterranean and slavic countries, then more recently from Asia, Africa, Latin America and West Indies. Quebecers do not make a distinction. They are all true Quebecers.

For Quebec, the diversity principle must revolve around the French nature of our culture embodied in all our institutions and on which is based Quebec distinctiveness. The contribution of immigrants to Quebec and Canada is enormous, culturally as well as socially and economically. The diversity of our population must allow for differences while encouraging newcomers to blend into the social fabric.

To that end, the authorities having jurisdiction, that is to say Quebec and the other provinces, must have the tools necessary to facilitate this blending in, whether it be job training or French language education.

It is important to establish clearly that a sovereign Quebec has every intention to abide by the treaties and conventions which protect minorities. We will participate fully in the discussions that, at the international level, will focus on the tools developed to better protect minorities.

The multiculturalism policy of the Canadian government has a lot in common with that of Canadian diplomacy. It irons out the reality and distinctiveness of Quebec.

A federation has to give a certain image of itself, whether abroad or to newcomers. In this regard, it appears that our federation hides behind stereotypes the true identity of one part, because it cannot integrate its distinctiveness.

[*English*]

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary North): Mr. Speaker, the statement of the hon. minister was long on rhetoric but in our opinion very short on substance.

As the party in power for 17 of the past 25 years and the architect of the multiculturalism policy since 1971, the minister gave two examples today through which she was able to identify progress having been made in upholding diversity in the

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workplace in the public sector. One of them was in the form of a plan of action prepared during 1992–1993 to increase the presence of visible minority performers and subjects in Canadian television and radio.

Twenty years after the multiculturalism policy was proclaimed the Canadian Broadcast Corporation finally made plans to be more inclusive of visible minorities. This the minister heralds as a great stride forward. Can we expect to wait another 20 years before this plan of the CBC is actually put into action?

This brings clearly into question the effectiveness of the official multiculturalism policy. Given the identification of the policy with the Liberals, it is particularly surprising that Liberal MPs from ethnic minorities have in the past been openly critical of the policy of multiculturalism. The Liberal MPs representing Toronto area ridings particularly were critical not only of the creation of a separate department but also of what they termed the ghettoizing nature of multiculturalism as a whole.

(1525)

Expressing sentiments he said were shared by several ethnic minority MPs in the party, the member for York South—Weston argued that while the policy of multiculturalism may have been valid in the past, it no longer plays a constructive role.

I believe strongly that the policy is no longer valid or appropriate today. In effect, the present policy of multiculturalism is divisive. It divides Canadians. It is unfair in that it treats Canadians in different fashions. It is regressive and at times discriminatory.

That statement was by the member for York South—Weston.

In an article entitled *Ethnic Pluralism Under Siege—Popular and Partisan Opposition to Multiculturalism from Canadian Public Policy*, December 1992, Spencer's commission argues for refocusing official multicultural policy as follows:

We believe that Federal Government funding for Multiculturalism activities other than those serving immigrant orientation, reduction of racial discrimination and promotion of equality should be eliminated, and the public funds saved be applied to these areas.

The Spencer report's criticism of multiculturalism and recommendations for narrowing the policy's scope were reinforced by suggestions that minority and immigrant groups were also critical of the policy.

For example, one writer of Japanese ancestry describes the reality of racism from her experience as a child and adult in Canada that is belied by the rhetoric of multiculturalism. She says:

Multiculturalism, a term everyone loves to use in defining Canada, is admirable in theory but it does not work in practice. Multiculturalism is the name given to the ethnic and cultural diversity of our country. It implies an attitude of tolerance and acceptance, of equality among all regardless of ethnic background. This idea does not stand the test of personal experience. And the experience of individuals provides real insight into

what defines our country. Though official policy would have it otherwise, it is hard to be different in this country. For me this is an irony that underlies the very fact of being Canadian.

Still others have gone further to argue that through strengthening the associations between being ethnic and being of inferior status, multiculturalism actually promotes or causes racism.

Similarly novelist Meil Bisoondath writes:

In stressing the differences between groups, in failing to emphasize that this is a country with its own ideals and attitudes which demand adherence, the policy has instead aided in hardening of hatreds.

This brings me to the position of the Reform Party on the current policy of multiculturalism. We call for the abolition of the official multiculturalism department. We call for the acceptance and integration of immigrants into the mainstream of Canadian life.

We have found that Canadians welcome, value and enjoy the wealth of backgrounds and cultures represented by its citizens. This great country was built by hard working and enterprising people who came here from all over the world. Many are proud to celebrate their heritage and ethnic societies have flourished in Canada for generations.

Whatever our ethnic and cultural backgrounds, what binds us together is our tremendous pride and privilege in being Canadians. It ought to be the role of the federal government to preserve and protect those things that we all have in common, and in ensuring equality for all regardless of things like race, language, culture and country of origin. Because of this I urge the minister to use her influence in cabinet to end the use of a definition of Canada as a meeting of two founding races, languages and cultures. This definition of Canada was introduced by the Liberals and is one which they cling to to this day even though it excludes more than 12 million Canadians whose culture and language of origin is neither French nor English.

In addition, those proud Canadians who fall outside the Liberals' two founding races definition are ready, able and willing to preserve those elements of their culture and heritage that are important to them, using their own money and their own resources.

(1530)

They do not require these activities to be funded by other Canadians through the allocation of tax dollars. Keeping the heavy hand of government out of such activity would also allow ethnic societies to remain free of some of the unfortunate political obligations that have been perceived to arise in conjunction with the allocation of political largesse.

Instead the Reform recommends that federal multiculturalism programs provide immigrant adjustment services, language training and focus on the elimination of racism. These are the services new Canadians really need to help them build a new life in this country.

The Reform's position is that official multiculturalism has indeed failed to respond to historical and contemporary discrimination as well as class and gender based inequities in the workplace.

I suggest to the minister that we ought to focus our energies and resources on the key problem which is removing the tremendous challenges and obstacles to ensuring that every Canadian becomes an effective participant in the economic and political spheres of our country, Canada.

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina—Qu'Appelle): Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent of the House to be able to place on record for maybe five minutes or so the position of the New Democratic Party on the statement by the minister.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent for the member's request?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. de Jong: Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank you and the members of the House for giving me unanimous consent to put on record our position.

First of all I would like to congratulate the minister on her new responsibilities and position. I have worked closely with her in previous parliaments and I know she will do an excellent job. Her heart and mind are in the right place.

I also wish to congratulate the government for following through on its promise to have ministerial statements and new policy directions being made in the House rather than at press conferences.

It does not bode well for this Parliament when one hears the position taken by the Official Opposition party and by the second largest party in the House. The Official Opposition party is so narrowly focused in its own little world that I am afraid it misses the much larger point and the larger reality that most Canadians are living in.

The position of the Reform Party I also find most unfortunate. They suggest we should focus our efforts on the pride in being Canadians. I have always felt that my support of multiculturalism was my way of celebrating being Canadian. One of the major essences of Canada is the fact that we are not a melting pot and that we celebrate our diversity. In this diversity is our strength.

We see the ramifications of this all over the place. We see people of Ukrainian, Croatian, Chinese or Vietnamese descent opening up trade connections and possibilities with the coun-

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tries of their origin. This has a tremendous economic plus for Canada.

It also is when one sees throughout history the rise of great nations, those great nations that embraced multiculturalism, different thoughts, different traditions and different ideas. This coming together made countries great. I believe if multiculturalism does its job in Canada it will help make Canada great.

I urge the minister to continue with her work and to redirect some of the things that department has been doing. It can be more successful in some areas. Certainly the concern of racism being on the rise is a legitimate concern. In hard economic times we will have that increase in racism. The department has an important task to fulfil. I extend to her and the department all of our best wishes.

* * *

(1535)

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-211, an act to amend the Criminal Code (cattle rustling and range cattle).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present this private member's bill regarding cattle rustling and range cattle problems.

It sounds as though this is a bill that comes out of the 1890s but in fact cattle rustling in the last number of years has become a major problem not only in western Canada where I am more familiar with it but, I am told, across the country per se.

In spite of the reductions in staffing of the RCMP they do an admirable job but it is impossible for them to carry on the necessary surveillance. The various cattle organizations do their best in terms of range land patrol but not are not able to do the job required in such a vast country as Canada.

Over the years when cattle rustlers have been caught, very little normally happens. The case does not make it through the courts. Consequently today people are literally losing thousands of livestock to one form of cattle rustling or another.

The severity of the crime must be reflected by the severity of the punishment. This bill increases significantly the punishment for cattle rustling. It is not hanging. I do not support capital punishment. It goes a long way to making the point that this is a serious offence. It should be dealt with appropriately.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed.)

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I know this is an issue of interest to other members. I simply want to say that if people are interested in providing seconds to this legislation, which of course is within the rules, they would be welcome.

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Again this is not simply something coming from central British Columbia but it is a Canadian-wide problem.

The Deputy Speaker: That is a good point, but it is not a point of order.

* * *

PETITIONS

CRIMES OF VIOLENCE

Ms. Beth Phinney (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I have petitions with over 5,000 signatures from people from every part of Canada to add to the over two and a half million signatures which have already been presented to Parliament. They are from citizens who feel that there are serious deficiencies in the criminal justice system.

These petitioners are calling on Parliament to recognize that crimes of violence against a person are serious and abhorrent to society. They ask that the Criminal Code of Canada, the Bail Reform Act, 1992, and the Parole Act be amended accordingly.

These petitioners hope that with a new government we will quickly see major changes in Canada's justice system.

SERIAL KILLER BOARD GAME

Mr. John Finlay (Oxford): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition that I have received from several hundred of my constituents in Oxford county.

This petition has been duly certified by the clerk of petitions. Most of the petitioners are citizens of the city of Woodstock. They are requesting that the government ban sales of the serial killer board game and serial killer cards and prevent any other such games, cards or material being made available in Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

QUESTIONS ON ORDER PAPER

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed that all questions be allowed to stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(1540)

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Before recognizing the member for Dartmouth, I wish to inform the House that pursuant to Standing Order 32(2)(b), because of the ministerial statement Government Orders will be extended by 27 minutes.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

HOUSE OF COMMONS STANDING ORDERS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure after five years of serving as the member of Parliament for Dartmouth to rise in this place to talk about the changes that have been proposed and put before us today with regard to the standing orders of the House.

When I first arrived here in 1988 I guess I was one of those people who wanted to change the world and do it rather quickly. But at the same time, because I had spent some time working for the previous Liberal administration, I knew that the rules of the House could be used either in favour of reform of the rules and progression of legislation or used to stymie.

Unfortunately, in the first four and a half years I was here the rules of this place were all too often used to stop that type of exchange and that type of debate and in actual fact to undermine the confidence Canadians had in this institution.

The Right Hon. John Turner, the member for Vancouver Quadra until the recent election and who chose not to seek re-election, often said that this place is the highest court in the land. It truly is. It is a pleasure to be sent here no matter what political philosophy one harbours at any time. Indeed it is an honour to be allowed to come to this place and represent one's constituents.

However, what happened in the last session at least, far too often the government of the day even without a great deal of consultation with its own members would decide with rules that were enacted in an archaic way so that only the executive branch of government had any right to know what in the name of goodness was going to take place. Bills were put before the House which were imperfect as most bills will be. Even on the government side good members, nearly all of whom were defeated or retired, were not allowed to have any input. They really saw what was going on when it went to their Wednesday caucus meeting. At that time there was no attempt to seek input so that as legislators or as representatives of the people we could better the legislation and put our ideas forward. It was the government line.

The bill would come down and members would be told: "That is it. You go in the House. You have your marching orders and you support that bill to the death". Members on the opposition side did exactly the opposite. Most times it did not matter if there was a grain or a whole beach full of wisdom in the bill members of the opposition opposed because it was viewed in

that type of combatant legislative set of regulations that was what they did.

The rule changes that are before us today are a step forward. We have seen a few steps forward since this Parliament was elected. We have seen the reform document that was tabled. When the Minister of Supply and Service and Public Works was our House leader, he put forward a number of reforms that we thought if we were the government we would like to try to pursue.

One thing was that we would have free debates in this House so that prior to the government making a decision members from all sides, not just the government side, but the opposition and other parties and the independents represented here would have an opportunity to put their position forward. Hopefully the minister or the government generally would listen and come up with better legislation, better regulations and better governance for the country. These rules start to do that.

I recall that in 1988 after I was elected committees were struck and all too often government members came in and supported bad legislation. As I said, in most cases opposition members would not support even good legislation. But there was one opportunity we saw for change. It was when the then Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs came forward to me as the critic and said: "Look, we have a Bankruptcy Act". It was Bill C-22. "We are going to introduce this thing in the House of Commons". I think the six or seven previous attempts to pass that had failed. It was clearly not in the public interest for anybody who was on that committee to see another attempt at reforming Canada's bankruptcy laws fail. We were in the middle of a recession and we were seeing unprecedented numbers of individuals and companies going bankrupt. I think the Bankruptcy Act dated back to 1948 or 1949. It had never been substantially reformed.

(1545)

I said to the minister: "If you are prepared to allow us to pre-study the bill or give it to us after first reading and if you are prepared to tell your members on the committee that they have free rein to treat the bill as a draft piece of legislation, I will give you the assurance of the Official Opposition that our members will try to build a bill that can pass the House of Commons, that takes account of the special interests but comes forward with what is in the public interest". That worked and for months we studied that bill. The bill we came up with did not even look the same as it had.

Alas, when it came down to the crunch the government of the day decided it was going to become partisan again. When that happened the business of the committee shut down. That rare period of harmony in the committee changed. We became highly partisan and the bill hit the rocks. It was only because we were

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able to rediscover that sense of joint responsibility for legislation we were able to pull it off the rocks.

The country is better off today because there is a new Bankruptcy Act. Probably thousands of people are still employed in Canada because that act allows for reorganization of corporations and allows for reorganization of personal debt. It was a fine hour for the House of Commons when we did exactly that type of work.

The changes to the standing orders we are debating today go even further. I am an advocate of reform. If we are to gain back the respect of the people whom we are elected to serve it is important that we be allowed to do our jobs as parliamentarians. It means that members of the Bloc Québécois, the Reform Party, New Democrats and the independents in the House be allowed as much input as possible into the legislative process.

The reforms before us today indicate that after first reading and before approval in principle when everyone is tied down to a position, bills can be referred to standing or special committees of the House. This has pushed us miles forward from where we were.

If we pursue this vigorously on important or contentious pieces of legislation or those which have various sides to them, members of the Bloc, members of the Reform and indeed members of the governing Liberal Party will be able without fear of reprisal from their whips—God love all the whips—to provide direct input. This is a very positive step for this Parliament.

Through the reading of the proposed amendments we are debating today I also get the sense that committees will or can be asked by a minister to come up with the general direction on a piece of legislation. In other words it can roughly formulate legislation which would then go to justice officials who would put it together.

As time goes on and in practice I hope that these committees will work together. I hope they will find areas in the public interest to conduct their own studies without necessarily a reference or request from a minister and come forward with what they believe is appropriate legislation addressing those concerns.

For example, in the last couple of sessions of Parliament members have come forward with private members' bills. Some of those private members' bills dealt with ingredient labelling. Actually the Deputy Prime Minister when she was in opposition had put forward a couple of those bills.

Suffice to say perhaps standing committees will be able to take that type of subject matter and formulate pieces of legislation. They could then be put before the House finding some process by which they could be properly debated and passed, if they are good pieces of legislation.

I could speak for days on this subject, but in closing I commend my government for taking the initiative so early in this new Parliament to put forward what I hope is the first of a

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number of reforms. It will put some respect back into the parliamentary process and will also make this place more worth while for the members who serve here.

Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain (Guelph—Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I say to the hon. member for Dartmouth that I too feel this is a positive step in this new government. When we were campaigning during September and October all members on all sides of the House heard the same thing from the Canadian people. They are not happy with the way Parliament has functioned. They are unhappy with the tight and rigid rules.

(1550)

This is a step forward, but I believe we do have a long way to go. We have many avenues to explore in order to make all our voices heard in Parliament. Any movement forward will be seen as positive by all Canadians.

I would ask the member for Dartmouth to comment specifically on the areas of reform, such as pensions. In general Parliament has taken a fair amount of heat particularly from the Reform Party in suggesting that perhaps Liberal members are not supportive on reform in the pension areas. I believe that is not true and that a good many members are quite supportive of practical measures to be reformed in the pension area.

Mr. MacDonald: Mr. Speaker, the whole area of pension reform is not something the Reform Party, the Bloc or the Liberals can claim credit for.

The Canadian public, because of the way we have conducted ourselves in the past here, has had a pox on both our Houses, and I mean the other place as well as this place. Therefore the good members who sit here are constantly being questioned about whether or not they are paid too much or whether or not they give value for money. That did not happen 10 or 15 years ago. It has just happened recently.

I can think of nobody in the previous Parliament who did not fully justify the pay received from the crown for the job performed. I can honestly say I have never met anybody who served in this place, at least when they first came to serve in this place, who was here for self-interest. They were here because they wanted to better the country.

The problem we have as legislators is that there are people like Mr. Somerville of the national coalition who would have everybody in the world believe that nobody works up here. That is fundamentally wrong. Every member of Parliament knows, as the new members in the Reform Party, the Bloc and the Liberals have learned very quickly, that this is a very difficult job. It is a tough job but it is one we sought.

As far as pension reform goes, I have always said I do not believe people in this Chamber are overpaid. They are underpaid

for the work they do. Far too many have to make choices with their families and they have to live with those choices long after they finish serving in this place. Nobody here should get rich, but nobody should be beaten every day in the media and by public interest and indeed by some members here because they take a salary home for a job well done. That is on all sides of the House.

The public wants pension reform. I will continue to say what I said during the campaign. I am fully in favour of an independent committee saying what we are worth here. Regardless of whether it says we are worth \$100,000 or \$30,000, or if it says we are worth a pension after 20 years or 10 years, I am quite prepared to live or die by whatever the recommendations are, if it is a truly independent committee. Other members have to be prepared to do that also. They have to defend whatever it is the independent committee recommends to their own constituents not just during election campaigns but as soon as that committee reports.

I am in favour of pension reform, but let us support whatever it is that comes in from the independent commissions.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard): Mr. Speaker, this is the first opportunity for me to address the House since the elections. First of all, I want to thank the voters in my riding for giving me a third solid mandate to represent them in the House, as I have done since 1984.

Some hon. members: A good choice, indeed.

Mr. Gagliano: My hon. colleagues say the voters made a good choice; I thank them, and especially my constituents for their continued support. I want to assure them that I will do my very best to represent them well, as I have been doing for nearly ten years now.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank the Prime Minister for appointing me chief Government whip, a rather heavy responsibility considering the historic outcome of the elections.

(1555)

Since October 25, 205 new members have arrived to sit on both sides of this House. Furthermore, two new parties have joined the mix, making it a difficult task to organize everything on Parliament Hill. With the co-operation of the other parties and of my colleagues, the Official Opposition whip and the Reform Party whip, I think a more civil tone has been adopted in this House and I hope that this can be maintained. That is what Canadians want. We have a House with 295 energetic men and women who want to make their views known. Given the fact that we sit opposite one another, we cannot liken our system to a round table meeting. At times, some animosity may surface, particularly during oral question period, but I think that ev-

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everything is going well so far and I hope that this continues to be the case. As chief Government whip I will try to set an example.

Everyone points to our famous red book and to the fact that during the election campaign, we made some very specific promises. From the moment the government was sworn in, the Prime Minister set the tone by slashing ministers' budgets and by following through on his first promise, namely to save \$10 million per year. Immediately after taking this initiative the government cancelled the helicopter contract, as it had promised to do. It also carried out a number of other initiatives.

Not only the government, but all of us in this House have come up with a plan to cut \$5 million a year in the expenses of the House of Commons. It is not much, a mere drop in a budget of \$220 million a year, but this is just a beginning. In time, with your help on the Board of Internal Economy, Mr. Speaker, we will look for ways to make further savings. For the time being, we have a plan to save \$5 million a year. The Board of Internal Economy has already adopted a certain number of measures and, hopefully, with the support of my colleagues, we will be able to go ahead with this plan at our next meeting.

As I said, we will continue to save a little here and there, not just for the sake of saving money, but to allow this place, this House, this Parliament Hill to be really operational and to adapt to a new reality, a new situation and new technology to be put in place. So, this is an important proposal, not only to cut expenses, but also to promote the efficiency of this place and allow us to represent our voters effectively, thereby sending the right message to our constituents.

This brings me to the subject of today's debate: parliamentary reform. I see my colleague the Parliamentary Secretary to the House Leader. We sat together on the Board of Internal Economy and now we both sit on the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. In the past, we have debated the issue of parliamentary reform at length in our committee and even in this House.

Now, just a hundred days or so after coming into office, the new government, the new House of Commons has put forward a motion on parliamentary reform, a rather important subject that we have already taken steps on, about ten days ago, when we adopted the new House of Commons Standing Committee format. Here is another measure relating to this reform to enable all members to speak to represent their constituents and their views.

Since 1984, I have had the honour and pleasure of sitting in this House as a member for nine years on the other side, and a few months on this side. But on one side or the other, there is one very important question that my colleagues and I have to ask ourselves in this debate today. We do not realize the implication

of this change: to allow a bill to be referred to a committee after only a few hours of debate. This is a major change. I know that the Official Opposition mentioned it in their remarks, but this is of paramount importance.

(1600)

Once this reform is implemented, every minister and hon. member will make a speech, but their time will be limited. We will not have the time previously provided for second reading.

How did we proceed in the past? Members on both sides of the House all made long speeches and took position and, when the bill was in committee, no one on either the government or the opposition side wanted to change their position. We would go through the same debate in committee and then, at the report stage, we would go over the same debate and the same amendments once again.

I think that the amendments proposed in this reform package will enable committee members from both sides of the House to look at bills and to invite witnesses and experts; they will then be able to go beyond preconceived ideas and to propose amendments to improve the bill.

If the bill is not valid and a lot of changes are made to its substance, I am confident that the government and its ministers will take this into account and withdraw the bill under consideration. This will make a real debate possible, unlike the shocking situation that prevailed in the past. We could spend hours, days and often weeks in the House on second reading of a bill. The debate in committee was just a formality since the government stuck to the position it had defended in the House at second reading and the opposition did the same thing.

I think that, for once, hon. members on both sides of the House have a real opportunity to make changes in committee and to improve legislation. That is the role of lawmakers, who must also put forward and review options, like the Minister of Human Resources Development who has just presented a motion to give committees the mandate to look at this whole important issue. Whether or not we agree with this approach, we had one or two days of debate to express our opinions and suggest ways to resolve problems, and all these options are now available to the committee.

Some members, especially in the Reform Party, may accuse us of not going far enough. There is the whole issue of free votes that has arisen since the opening of this Parliament. I can tell you that, as a whip, I consider all votes to be free.

Nowadays, it is unthinkable for a whip to tell members how to vote. That is just not done anymore. I think that members are free to vote as they wish. There are party positions, there is the question of leadership in each party and every one of us is big enough to face his or her responsibilities.

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Many times in this House we have seen members decide to vote against their own party. Some regretted it, others are proud of it.

We must not say that is a small step; for me, it is a big step. Mr. Speaker, I hope—you are indicating to me that my time has expired—that with the co-operation of my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader, who chairs the Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, we can look into the whole issue of electronic voting. That is very important.

We have already discussed this subject with my colleague, the chief opposition whip, and we are trying to have all votes held on Tuesday evening. The idea of voting on Tuesday and Wednesday evening is not bad; I think it would save time. That too is important. The members would all be here and while they are in the House, we could vote on several bills, one after the other, instead of always ringing the bells for fifteen or thirty minutes; and members could plan their schedules better.

I am glad that this reform will be implemented within a few days and I am sure that the House of Commons will be better for it.

(1605)

[English]

Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to our whip's speech. I have a few questions for him. When I was in opposition I was always concerned about the fact that when we were sitting in committees, we as members in the committee could not bring forward any pieces of amendments to that bill that actually cost the government money.

As a result a lot of the proposals being put forward by committees, a lot of the good ideas that came out of committees, were always ruled out of order because they cost the government money. I am wondering if our whip can tell me whether or not that has been alleviated. Are there in place now some provisions to allow committees to actually do the work they were put there to do which is to bring forward ideas that the people of Canada want to bring forward in legislation and ideas that unfortunately may cost the government money?

Mr. Gagliano: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question. He explained a situation that we have both experienced in committee. It has not changed. Unfortunately this parliamentary reform motion we have before us does not address that particular problem for the reason that there are some constitutional situations that do not allow us to go ahead right now. We wanted to make sure that we had some substantial parliamentary reform but naturally we could not address the whole package altogether.

What is important here, and I want to stress what I said before, is that after 180 minutes the legislation will be sent to committee. That is so early that I am sure members will be able to

influence the minister and his officials. Therefore on those monetary amendments that the members will make I am sure the minister or the officials of the minister will agree to make them.

Indirectly we are answering that problem which would take a long time in the House and through lawyers and so on regarding how we can go about this constitutional impediment we have in terms of spending money because it is the crown and only a cabinet minister can do that.

Mrs. Daphne Jennings (Mission—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned the whip and the whip's powers, so to speak, and the government does recognize free votes to a certain extent right now.

Keeping that in mind, I would ask the hon. member if the government would consider allowing free votes in the standing committees including free votes for chair and for vice-chair rather than have the whip tell the members who they will vote for for chair and vice-chair?

Mr. Gagliano: Mr. Speaker, a very interesting question. I would like to tell the hon. member that all our votes are free votes, including in committees.

The Prime Minister, a minister, the whip and the House leader can all express our opinions. We suggest our choice but members in a committee or in the House can stand and vote the way the member wishes to votes.

The idea that there is no free vote is a figure of speech. The member has the right to vote freely in a committee or in the House. The Prime Minister, the leader of the party, the whip, the House leader and any other minister or member have the right to say we should vote that way. It is up to the member in the end to decide.

(1610)

[Translation]

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa): To begin with, Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Saint-Léonard. Saint-Léonard is the riding next to Bourassa and we have a lot in common, including an important Italian ethnic minority.

I also want to express my support regarding the committee's policy to reduce by \$5 million a year House of Commons expenditures. This is an important message to send to the public, particularly in a period of economic crisis. I also want to say that I will support any measure to enhance the status of the work done by MPs, as well as to improve Parliament's effectiveness.

I have a question for the hon. member: When you looked at parliamentary reform and drafted the proposal which you tabled in this House, did you take into account the experiences of the United States, France and Great Britain?

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard): Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, in the last two to three years, my colleague the parliamentary secretary of the Government House Leader

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and I have examined this whole issue and we looked at what was being done elsewhere.

In the case of the United States, we must of course consider the fact that their system is presidential, while ours is a British parliamentary system; it is therefore more appropriate to look at Great Britain, although we must take into account the Canadian reality—namely that Canada is a federation with some distinctive features. We also looked at the way things are done in France, and in other countries which have a British parliamentary system similar to ours.

Parliamentary reform is of course an ongoing process which is applied every day. Indeed, without realizing it, we often reach unanimous agreements which can later become regulations. Consequently, I fully agree with the hon. member for Bourassa that we must continue to try to make the role of MPs more effective, so that we can adequately represent those who elect us every four or five years. This responsibility which consists in representing the public and with—

The Deputy Speaker: The time for questions and comments is up. Resuming debate. The hon. member for Richmond—Wolfe.

Mr. Gaston Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to take part in this debate concerning amendments to the Standing Orders of the House. After listening to the previous speakers, you can tell how everyone is concerned about giving elected representatives more responsibility and more influence on how this House and the whole process work.

As my colleagues have done earlier, I would like to express my point of view and begin by describing some of the fundamentals involved here. The hon. member for Dartmouth talked about progressive elements. Instead of using words like “progressive”, he should talk about rules or evolution, as his colleague from Saint-Léonard did.

The hon. member for Saint-Léonard reminded us that there are over 200 new members in the House. It is true that those new members have a lot to learn and to take in.

As for the proposed amendments to the Standing Orders of the House, according to the Constitution, Canada's sovereignty is entrusted to three entities: the Crown, the Senate and the House of Commons. In reality, however, that is not the case. We have learned from the history of Western parliamentary government that the real power belongs to the inner cabinet of the government party.

However, as we come to the end of the 20th century, the political power in Canada is based on only one legitimate principle, and that is the power given to the House of Commons whose members are elected to represent the will of the people. A minimum balance has to be struck between the sovereignty of the people, expressed by universal suffrage, and the efficiency

of the modern state so that the spirit of democracy can survive throughout Canada as well as Quebec.

(1615)

The primary objective of members of Parliament, who represent the various societies and nations that comprise the Canadian entity, is to control the actions of the parliamentary executive.

With the emergence of the welfare state, the postwar period marked the beginning of an era in which politicians were faced with an ever increasing number of laws that were more and more complex, mounting budgets and a more cumbersome administration. So, we are witnessing the progressive growth of the executive at the expense of the legislature. This is not in itself a serious problem, but it can become extremely dangerous for the democratic future of a geopolitical entity when, for example, the leader of the governing party states repeatedly in the House that no one in Canada or in Quebec wants to reopen the Canadian Constitution, thereby denying the very existence of the official opposition.

As I said, the contemporary role of the House of Commons is to control the government's actions, which implies the right of members to question and criticize freely and publicly the government and its legislative measures. The disappearance of the parliamentary balance and the emergence of a parliamentary oligarchy infringes on this right and reduces the democratic nature of the House of Commons.

The members of the Bloc Québécois, the Official Opposition in this House, have a number of reservations about the proposed changes to the Standing Orders of the House put forward by the Liberal government, since the dynamics of the proposals are such that the sacred balance between the legislative and the executive powers would be destroyed.

These proposals call into question the very essence of parliamentary democracy. However, Bloc members did not receive a mandate from Quebec voters to reform federal institutions and, in this particular case, much less a mandate to reform the House of Commons which of all the institutions is the one largely responsible for Quebec's gradual, ongoing loss of political autonomy.

The Bloc's mandate in this House is clear. It is to defend the interests of Quebec, according to parliamentary rules and traditions, while there is still time. The Bloc has a fundamental obligation to oppose any reform which is aimed at limiting the role of opposition members in controlling government activity. This obligation involves protecting the interests of Quebecers.

Since this political party's primary objective is to secure the national independence of the Quebec state, it cannot help but advocate the decentralization of the decision-making process. In short, the Official Opposition acts as a watchdog in ensuring

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the transparency and openness of the proceedings of the House of Commons.

It is written in the famous red book, the Liberal Party agenda so often waved about during the election campaign, and I quote: "The people are irritated with governments that do not consult them, or that disregard their views, or that try to conduct key parts of the public business behind closed doors".

This amendment put forward today by the same Liberal Party would enable a minister to make a motion to refer a bill to a committee immediately after second reading. It makes the Bloc Québécois wonder what some of the statements contained in the red book are worth.

Also, the throne speech mentioned that the government was "committed to enhancing the credibility of Parliament". Basically, to make the House of Commons run more efficiently, the Liberals advocate providing members of Parliament a greater opportunity to contribute to the development of legislation. Again, the Bloc Québécois questions the value, the usefulness of the government proposals in terms of referring bills to committee immediately after first reading, because that is the intent: to change second reading proceedings to allow the minister to ask for the bill to be referred immediately to committee. This would mean that no amendments could be considered in the House. We do not think that abolishing debate in the House at the second reading stage is a measure that will increase transparency or allow members to make a greater contribution. The Official Opposition believes, on the contrary, that it undermines the legislative function of private members. Does this mean that parliamentary democracy is progressively disappearing? Is the member of Parliament not the front-line representative, that is to say the elected representative of the people of his or her riding, the riding being foremost in a system of democracy by representation? Those are the questions that we must ask ourselves.

(1620)

The reality is the following: the time allocated to the consideration of private members' bills in the House of Commons has shrunk from three to four days a week in 1867 to a mere two to four hours a week in 1968. The exact same thing is happening now with regard to the time allocated to the Official Opposition, for this government proposal basically eliminates any debate in the House on the principle of bills being read for the second time. And that is an important stage! Second reading is the most important stage a bill has to go through. That is when the House gets to vote on the very principle of the legislation.

Again, the Bloc Québécois has serious reservations concerning this measure put forward by the government to reform the House of Commons. One of the primary immediate objectives of the Bloc Québécois will be to introduce legislation to increase the capacity to get involved, the legislative responsibility and

the input of members of Parliament in the development of a decentralized Parliament. After all, Parliament is a rhetorical instrument in the original meaning of the word, that is to say one that allows public debate on matters of public interest. As I said, it also encourages the expression of dissent in a civilized way. Real political opposition is a necessary attribute of democracy, tolerance and confidence in the people's ability to resolve their differences peacefully. Opposition is essential to the parliamentary political system; otherwise, politics simply becomes administration.

With this in mind, the debate and vote on the principle of a bill at second reading is the most important way that opposition members have to oversee government bills and provides an opportunity to question the advisability of a bill before it is studied and debated clause by clause. By sending a bill to committee right after first reading, the government prevents members from criticizing the principle of a bill before its passage is assured.

Mr. Speaker, you will agree that it is difficult in committee, at report stage, to call into question the principle of a bill while it is being amended clause by clause. Once again, the Bloc Québécois believes that this infringes the fundamental right of members to control government legislation.

With this reform, the opposition could no longer delay debate; from at least six hours allotted to the official opposition under the present Standing Orders, we would have at most one hour under the government's proposal. It seems that the power of backbenchers is being strangely eroded, as I already said several times, whence the reluctance of Bloc Québécois members to approve such a measure. Incidentally, this same amendment does not restore Parliament's public credibility.

The government's proposal to amend the Standing Orders of the House concerns the committee charged with tabling a bill. Thus a minister can present a motion delegating to the committee the power to draft a draft bill and table it in the House. In its report, the committee can then recommend the principle, scope and general provisions of the draft bill, which implies a provision for an immediate vote on second reading, without debate or amendment.

(1625)

The consequences of this proposal on the principle of parliamentary democracy and the importance of the role of the backbencher as a legislator are the same as in the case of the preceding proposal, namely that it prevents MPs from criticizing the principle of government bills. Indeed, nothing in this proposal indicates that a bill tabled by the government, following the report tabled by a committee, complies with that report. The government may well not respect the principle of the bill drafted by the committee when that bill is tabled for first reading.

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With this measure, the government is trying to force the hand of the opposition by indirectly implicating it in the decision process, by enabling it, in theory since committees are controlled by the majority, to participate in the drafting of bills. The government is trying to get the opposition to support the bills which are tabled.

Although we do not systematically oppose this proposal, Bloc Québécois members want to emphasize the importance of having a debate here on the principle underlying any bill, and they want to make this House aware of the fact that this measure does absolutely nothing to ensure transparency and to improve Parliament's credibility, two important election promises contained in the famous red book.

The Official Opposition deplores the fact that the government's proposed reform does not provide for special debates on bills deemed important by MPs. Indeed, emergency debates are rather rare in the House. The rules governing such debates are very strict, thus preventing this type of exercise on issues of concern to the public. The relevance of the proceedings of this House often is not obvious for the public, since in the absence of emergency debates these proceedings are not always related to current issues.

In order to better protect Quebec's interests, the Bloc Québécois would like to enhance the status of the work done by the House of Commons. We therefore propose that a procedure be established to hold special debates on specific issues, as was recommended in the 81st report of the Standing Committee on House Management.

The Bloc Québécois also deplores the fact that the government did not make any proposal for a special question and answer period on specific issues, during which some ministers would answer all the questions asked.

The eighty-first report, mentioned earlier, contained a recommendation that a special period for questions and answers be institutionalized on a weekly basis. The Standing Committee on House Management saw this as an effective means of dealing with regional and sectoral problems which, due to lack of time, could not be dealt with by the opposition during Question Period. The committee also saw this as a way to question ministers more systematically.

We therefore notice a lack of political will on the part of the government and an attitude that clearly contradicts the great principle of the election platform of the Liberal Party of Canada.

In this perspective, and to protect the interests of Quebec, the Bloc Québécois proposes setting aside once a week, outside normal sitting hours, at least one hour for questions and answers on a subject or problem to be dealt with by a single minister. The Official Opposition would determine early in the week which ministers are to be questioned on what subjects, as well as the

date and time of the proceedings. During these sessions, the House would sit according to a format similar to that of committees of the whole.

And, as a last point, I would like to draw the attention of the House to several government proposals concerning public spending and pre-budget consultations. The proposed reforms which empower the committee to examine the future year expenditure plans of departments before the last sitting day in June and to table a report advising the government on its future expenditure plans is a positive measure involving backbenchers in the budget planning process.

The item on authorizing consideration of proposals regarding the budgetary policy of the government from September to December is also a way of involving backbenchers in the budget process. The opposition sees this as a positive element as well.

(1630)

Finally, the proposal regarding the possibility to amend the tax system in committee without previous notice before the introduction of a bill seems destined to give committees, with a parliamentary majority, all the flexibility required to impose tax measures. That way, the opposition would not get notices in the House and the government could introduce bills without saying immediately that their application would entail taxes.

Before I conclude, I would like to remind the federalist members of this House who might feel very patriotic that Bloc Québécois members were not sent to Ottawa to reform parliamentary structures, but to defend the interests of the Quebec state. Need I mention it? We are sovereignist members and as such we denounce the proposed changes to the Standing Orders since they do not improve openness and are not, therefore, in the interest of Quebec.

Let me mention, as an example, the absence of any measure whatsoever which would allow the House to examine order-in-council appointments of officers of Parliament, judges, ambassadors, high commissioners, presidents and administrators of Crown corporations and of various people in regulatory bodies, agencies, and courts. It would have been very much in the public interest if, in the context of this parliamentary reform, a procedure allowing members to examine appointments before they became reality had been proposed to the House. In so doing, the government would have enriched and transformed the members' role and would have given back to Parliament its credibility. That type of proposal is essential to the openness of political decision making and seems to be a fundamental democratic measure if the people are to express their sovereignty since it would protect the country against patronage and political bias.

The Bloc Québécois cannot help but feel concerned since it is not covered in the proposal for parliamentary reform. The lack of such measure shows how the government are against openness even though last autumn, during the campaign, they

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promised they would base appointments on qualifications and put an end to patronage.

In conclusion, I would like to quote the liberal member for Kingston and the Islands who said, on April 9, 1991: "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" and "We believe that this country functions best when it has a strong and effective opposition". We of the Bloc Québécois also believe that our country, that is Quebec, will have the opportunity to assert itself and gain political autonomy thanks to the presence in Ottawa of a strong and efficient Official Opposition. The voice the Bloc Québécois is raising in protest against the centralizing views of the federal government and the lack of transparency of the parliamentary reform proposed today, is the same voice we hear, coming from the Canadian political scene, in favour of political independence for Quebec.

Therefore, the sovereigntist MPs reject the government's proposal to refer bills to committees for review, immediately after first reading, on the grounds that it violates the guarantees granted opposition members, under the Standing Orders, to question and criticize the government.

The Bloc members deplore the lack of political will that would have allowed for real reform and put an end to the general disillusionment felt by Canadians for politicians as a whole. The same members deplore a partial reform which does not provide for this fundamental balance between the role of the government, which is to govern, and that of the opposition, which is to control the government's activities.

To conclude, we also deplore the fact that this reform of parliamentary rules, which challenges some fundamental principles of our parliamentary system, does not address the tarnished image of MPs.

In short, all the Official Opposition is seeking is that the rules of the parliamentary system be respected, and that decisions made by the Canadian political community be transparent, as requested by the Quebec people.

Quebecers have a good memory and they are not ready to forget the many years under the Liberals, when many decisions regarding the political future of Quebec were taken, with total disrespect for openness, and resulted in the Constitutional Act of 1982.

(1635)

The Deputy Speaker: 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 Richelieu—Cigarette Smuggling; the hon. member for Yukon—Tobacco Products.

[English]

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, the remarks that have been made in the debate today have been of considerable interest to the government. I will deal with the hon. member for Richmond—Wolfe in due course, but I wanted to start by speaking briefly about the remarks made particularly by the hon. member Mission—Coquitlam in her speech this morning. I thank all the members who participated in the debate for their contributions and suggestions which are of considerable importance to the government.

Members on the opposite side will agree that the government has attempted to consult with them in formulating the proposals that were put forward. The general thrusts of the proposals were ones set out in the red book and we have proceeded with those. However we have added to the motion changes as suggested by members in the opposition and in the Reform Party which we think have ameliorated the motion and made it a better one for all members and for the House in general.

The hon. member for Mission—Coquitlam referred to several of the items being referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs which really are in the last paragraph of the government's motion today. The number of items being referred to the committee for consideration is a very substantial one. I know it will take the committee some time to get through it and the date for return has been omitted from the resolution. The committee is free to report from time to time its findings to the House. I am sure it will do so on some of the issues as the study is undertaken and completed.

The interest in reporting on a large number of subjects at once saves time in terms of debate in this Chamber if there is going to be a debate on the adoption of the committee's report. On some of the issues no doubt there will be a desire on the part of members to have a lengthy debate. I can see that on an issue such as recall there may be considerable pressure to do that.

On the other hand, the committee affords an excellent opportunity for discussion. The committee can hear witnesses and members are free to make speeches in committee. They can arrange to have those printed and reported if that is the interest. I look forward to a lively discussion in the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs concerning the items referred to there.

I remind hon. members on all sides that this particular committee has the standing orders, procedures and practices of the House referred to it on a permanent basis. It is free to launch a study on any aspect of the rules and practices of the House that it sees fit to do and may then report those findings and re-

commendations to the House in the form of a report. We are not in any way restricted to the items listed in the paragraph at the end of this motion if the practice or rule that we are undertaking is already part of the practice of the House.

In the speech by the member for Mission—Coquitlam she indicated that her party was interested in restructuring the committee system. I am not sure how she intended to restructure it. We have restructured it a bit. The changes were made last week. The changes contained in the motion before the House today are significant ones and in my submission give substantial additional powers to the committees of the House, particularly in dealing with government bills.

[*Translation*]

The problem as described to us by members of the Bloc Québécois is totally different. I believe that the person who talked to all Bloc members misrepresented the implications of this resolution, of this motion. They misunderstood our proposed change to second reading and referral to committee of a bill after the first reading. This change is very significant because in the past, because second reading always took place in the House, when a bill was referred to a committee, that committee had to consider the bill as already agreed to by the House.

(1640)

The committee could not change the principles of the bill. As there were several principles at stake, it was very difficult to propose admissible amendments to a bill in committee. Now we practically have a free hand. When a bill is referred to a committee after the first reading, the committee can review the bill without restrictions. That is a major change to the Standing Orders of the House. It gives all members, on both sides of the House, the opportunity to propose such amendments. So it is quite important.

[*English*]

I say to the member for Richmond—Wolfe that he should read this again and not listen to whoever is giving instructions over there. If they read the changes they would see that this is significant.

In fairness, the members who have spoken were not in the last House. The member for Laurier—Saint-Marie who was here was never on a committee because he was not a member of a party. The Bloc Québécois was not recognized as a party before the last election. Like the NDP and the Conservatives now in the House, they were not allowed to be on committees. They were struck off. Therefore he did not have experience on a committee and I can understand his making this mistake.

Had the member been there and tried moving these amendments he would have been frustrated to his wit's end. Quite sensible, ordinary regular amendments could not be moved

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because they changed the principle of the bill or were beyond the scope of the bill as approved by the House at second reading. That is gone and those restrictions are off.

When a bill is there to amend the Canada Elections Act, for example, and it is before a committee after first reading, other amendments to the Canada Elections Act could be added to that bill before it comes back to the House.

It gives tremendous scope to members of Parliament from every side to make changes in legislation that has been proposed. It is a very significant departure and one quite contrary to anything we have had before. It is a case of the government's giving up significant control of the legislative agenda in respect of a bill when it adopts this course and refers the bill to committee.

It will be interesting to see how it works and I invite members to wait and see how it works. However, to criticize at this point as depriving the opposition an opportunity to debate the bill at second reading is unfair.

It has that effect but the opportunities thereby created are so much greater that it is a bonanza for members, particularly members who are not of the cabinet, on every side of the House to participate in the legislative process.

[*Translation*]

I also know that the leader of the Bloc Québécois comes from the Conservative Party. He was a Conservative before he founded the Bloc Québécois. He approaches all changes in this House with the eye of a Conservative. I do not share his viewpoint.

[*English*]

I am a Liberal. These are Liberal changes. These are changes that members are going to appreciate and enjoy. The fact that the Reform Party is accepting of them in such a generous way indicates that they do meet some of the objections.

We have had arguments in the House that the House is unresponsive and there is a need for changes that allow for greater participation of members in debates of particular importance at a given moment.

I recognize that a government's legislative agenda may not allow for such debates. I am delighted to see members referring to the 81st report of the standing committee on House management, as it was then called, that came in during the last Parliament which did make some proposals for changes in the opportunities for members to ask questions of ministers and for special debates on different occasions that were not emergency debates under Standing Order 52.

Those are extremely rare. We had something like five Standing Order 52 debates in the last Parliament. They were extremely rare and very hard to get. They were subject to some comment by me in that committee, but most of the proposals that were put

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forward by that committee are ones that I personally support and am urging the government to consider.

I am sure that in the new Standing Committee on Procedure and House Management the members opposite who have mentioned these with favour will raise them as proposals the committee could put forward to the House. I hope they will find some support among members of the committee on all sides. If we can come up with a recommendation to make such changes it would be delightful. I note the proposal for doing so is contained in the motion the government has put forward which indicates a willingness on the part of the government to consider this.

(1645)

I may say the government has shown restraint in not wishing to touch on things like question period which are principally the domain of the opposition. Members of the opposition can come forward with constructive suggestions that will improve question period and the other opportunities they have as members to participate in the affairs of the House by questioning the government ministers.

I look forward to the opportunity. I look forward to the debate. I want to say how much I appreciate the very constructive suggestions being put forward today by members on all sides as we grapple with this problem.

The lack of confidence in members of the House stemmed in large part because the last government was so inattentive to the wishes and desires expressed by Canadians. It ignored Canadians. It failed to live up to the promises it made.

In proposing this motion we are trying to fulfil the promises we made in the red book. We are interested in allowing Canadians to participate in the committee process in a very meaningful and very direct way. In my view these changes which may sound small to somebody listening to this debate outside represent a revolutionary change in the way legislation is dealt with in the House.

I look forward to having these in place and having the co-operation of hon. members on all sides as we move forward to try bills in this new process.

Mrs. Daphne Jennings (Mission—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for answering my questions from this morning.

He also inquired as to how I felt we could restructure the committee system. In keeping with the rules of the House I would like to reword my answer into a question so it will be allowed.

Would the government consider going to the extent of initiating and setting up a public accounts committee with all-party

membership to look at the spending of two or three government departments for a year? In the process of one Parliament, which would be five years, we would be looking at 15 or perhaps 20 government departments after the fact. This would be a way to hold us accountable. Could I have an answer, please.

Mr. Milliken: Mr. Speaker, under Standing Order 104 there is already a Standing Committee on Public Accounts created by the House which is chaired by a member of the opposition. It has been a tradition in this place that a member of the Official Opposition is elected chair of that committee. I do not believe the committee has yet met, but when it does I have no doubt it will elect a member of the Official Opposition to be its chair.

The public accounts committee includes, and I quote from Standing Order 108(3)(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;

Therefore the Auditor General's report, which was tabled the other day, is deemed referred to the public accounts committee. It is free to study as many government departments in a year as it wishes to do. It is free to study, because those are all reported in the public accounts of Canada, which are referred to the committee and the Auditor General's report thereon is also referred to the committee.

The committee is free to undertake the study of any government department it wishes at any time. It is under the chairmanship of a member of the opposition so there is pretty free rein granted to that committee.

The hon. member may have missed it as its reports are not widely covered by the media and so we do not hear about it, but it worked extremely well during the last Parliament.

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the comments of the hon. member with regard to the proposed changes to the standing orders.

I have a couple of comments and then perhaps a question. First, the door is open but we have not passed through it yet. I might say we have identified the right buttons but we have not pushed them yet. We are hoping that in the 35th Parliament we will not only identify the needed reform in this very institution but will also act upon those needs and implement them. I was glad to hear the hon. member say that the procedure and House affairs committee which he chairs would be willing to look at other issues with regard to parliamentary reform as well as the ones that are identified in the document we are debating today.

(1650)

A particular interest of mine is reform of the other place by non-constitutional means. Perhaps once we have dealt with some of the issues on this paper we can get to those as well.

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Another concern of mine is dignity and decorum in the House. I understand that the House is performing much better than has been seen in the past. As someone involved not only in campaigning in an election but also in candidate recruitment I found that young people were particularly turned off by this place. It would be appropriate for the House to do all in its means to change the appearance of this place so that young people would become excited about this institution and interested in the politics of their country.

Does the hon. member have some ideas on how that could be accomplished?

Mr. Milliken: Mr. Speaker, I have a suggestion I would be interested in discussing with hon. members that would encourage young people to participate in Parliament.

When I was in university I had the privilege of working here as a summer job for one of the ministers of the then government. It was quite a long time ago and I enjoyed it very much. I found it a tremendously worthwhile experience.

We have two avenues open to us. One is to employ summer students. Many members may be able to afford this in their budgets and I think it is a great idea. I have done so since my election in 1988 and I found it extremely helpful.

The intern program that is currently operating in the House is a relatively small program. It involves a number of individuals who are assigned for periods of months to a member's office to work there. Something the House might look at is the expansion of that program with a view to providing additional assistance to members in their office work, at the same time giving students an opportunity to learn more about the way Parliament works.

I would recommend this to the House. It could possibly be accomplished by some change in the member's budget so that the service was provided by the House. Everyone would have an intern.

That is a possibility. It is something we might look at as a House. It is certainly not government policy. It is something suggested to me by others who have been involved in the intern program, or indirectly through the intern program, and it would be a good opportunity for more people to participate.

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to the issue of parliamentary reform. It is one that has been my favourite since I was elected to Parliament in 1988.

I would expect that all members take some pleasure from the fact that the government has moved to make changes in the way we do business in the House and in committees. It has been done early in its mandate and in a manner that reflects both the election promises it made and the work of other members on

both sides of the House, not just in the last Parliament but going back about a dozen years.

I would like to put the issue of reform of Parliament in context. It is a rather large context. I have to go back and at least make reference to the foundation document, the Magna Carta. I am not going to read from it but it is here. Part of the Magna Carta shows up in our statutory books of reference. It is actually an appendix to the Revised Statutes of Ontario if I recall my days of law practice. It is not an unimportant foundation document.

I refer also to the bill of rights of 1689. It consolidated many of the rights and privileges that had been given birth to since the Magna Carta and which we still rely on.

I have a photocopy of proceedings of the British Parliament in the year 1788 where an individual by the name of Harris and another unfortunate individual by the name of Lee were both arrested by the Sergeant-at-Arms for contempt of the House in failing to attend and answer questions at committee. I have a long history of reform supplemented in part by a document I read on the weekend which was written by William Lyon Mackenzie and contained a proclamation from Navy Island, U.S.A., following the Upper Canada rebellion in 1837. There in print were many of the basic fundamental rights and freedoms that we required in this country at that time and which we still rely on today.

(1655)

This House should always be reforming itself. We can reach back to 1837 and see the work and the lives lost. There were people hanged, people who followed Louis Papineau in Lower Canada and people who followed William Lyon Mackenzie in Upper Canada. But the work of reform of this House must always continue.

Who is reforming the House? Is it the government? No, it is not the government's job to reform the House; it is the job of members of Parliament. Anyone who uses the term government in reforming this place is in part misinformed. The government does have a role in that it collectively is the word that represents all of the members of the House who sit on the government side. The government must show leadership, but the government cannot by itself reform this place. The government is a manifestation of the crown, of the King, of the executive branch of government. The government does not run Parliament, members of Parliament do. That is something we must never forget.

The genesis of this round of reform, if we reach back about a dozen years, is the Lefebvre report, which I commend to members, and the McGrath report which dealt with a similar phase of reform. In the last Parliament we had the work of the House management committee, the work of the subcommittee to the liaison committee on committee reform and the work of our colleagues in the Liberal caucus, all of which has collectively

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been, at least in part, manifested by the proposals for reform in this 35th Parliament.

I want to recognize a very important dynamic in parliamentary reform. One member can do nothing by himself or herself. Simply stated that is a fact of life; one person can do nothing. On the other extreme, we have a critical mass of people in parties, and a party can accomplish something, especially if we are the party on the government side and in the majority. But we must be careful to recognize that a party in majority is a party that holds virtually dictatorship powers. I say virtually because it is not often that a government will go to such extremes to impress its will on Parliament without listening to the opposition. Exceptions perhaps are the last Parliament. However we must all recognize this.

Where is the middle ground? What is the mechanism? The only mechanism capable of delivering a vehicle for reform and activity by members of Parliament greater than one but less than the party is the parliamentary committee. That is where we must look for reform.

I want to address two of the areas of reform very quickly. One is our absolute and utter failure to deal with the government's estimates. We have failed for years to do our work in monitoring the expenditures of the federal government. We are not alone in the western world. I know the British Parliament has similarly failed. I know that other Parliaments have failed. We do not want to continue this failure. We must recognize the challenge as it is. I believe the challenge is at the committee level. I am prepared to support the initiative in this round of reform that provides for a pre-estimates round of review that permits committees and members to impress upon government their views as to the spending in each envelope. I can only hope that it will work. I am not convinced that it will but we have to try it. We must start somewhere.

(1700)

The other area is the new process of referring bills to committee after first reading. I am at first blush going to support this. We have to do something to improve the legislative mechanism here.

In my view it would be a wonderful institution if a committee could take a small piece of legislation, a small amendment, a one-page amendment, with the explicit or tacit consent of the minister, draft it and bring it into the House even during Private Members' Business as opposed to government business and have that amendment passed without having to gobble up the time required to develop cabinet consensus around the Privy Council table, back and forth among bureaucrats and back and forth through committee just to get one clause in a bill changed. It can take a year or two or three or four. I would love to see the new proposals accommodate that type of procedure. We will see if they do.

Finally I want to make a pitch for codifying and putting into statute the mechanism of the House for reviewing all the delegated legislation, that is the statutory instruments and regulations enacted by the Privy Council. There are over 1,000 per year. They are reviewed by the joint committee for scrutiny of regulations. This place and the other place share the workload.

At the moment there are some areas of delegated legislation and regulations that are excluded from the disallowance power of the committee. The disallowance power was used three times in the last Parliament. However, because the power is in the standing orders as opposed to being statutory, this committee is not able to provide for disallowance of regulations and statutory instruments made by agencies outside government such as the National Transportation Agency of Canada.

I would like to put it on record that it is my hope this will be an area for reform a little later in this Parliament. I want to join all members of the House from all sides who want to work to modernize Parliament's institutions and to make it a more effective place that will reflect the wishes of our electors and be efficient in so doing.

Mr. Dan McTeague (Ontario): Mr. Speaker, I have the unique pleasure today to compliment the member for Scarborough—Rouge River. About five years ago around this time I had the benefit of being his campaign manager. At that time I recall these same eloquent remarks being placed before the electorate and the fine people of Scarborough—Rouge River.

It is significant that this is my first intervention as the member for Ontario. I will have an opportunity at some point to discuss that.

Going very quickly to the question, how does the member for Scarborough—Rouge River feel these changes will impact him now that he is a government member? We know he has distinguished himself as a member of the opposition but now that he is sitting on the government benches it is very important for him to understand where his role is now in terms of government and how these new reforms will help him along.

Mr. Lee: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Ontario for his question and comment.

I learned a bit about Parliament before I was elected to Parliament. It will not be a surprise that most of what I have learned was in my first few years here as a member of the opposition. In my first few months sitting on the government side of the House I want to confirm that I cannot and will not forget all that I learned in opposition. I will not likely change my views about what this place needs and how it should be run. Hopefully I can be true to what I have always believed and to the views I formed in opposition.

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(1705)

I realize that being in government has some additional responsibilities and on behalf of my electors I am certainly prepared to undertake all of those. Je me souviens. I will not forget what it was like in opposition.

Mr. George Proud (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure also to commend the hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge River on his presentation. It is a very happy day, I understand, for people on all sides of the House.

I want to say as a member on this side of the House that we have to look on things, hopefully not differently but in a manner better than for many years prior to this time in the House.

I say that many remarks have been made today talking about the reform of the standing orders, the reform of all our workings here in this institution. I know some of us believe that this is just a small chink in the armour but at least we are on the road.

We talked about this for the five years we have been here. I want to commend the member for his visions that he put forward over the years and for the other members from all parties who were involved in trying to get a presentation such as this and trying to see this actual day come to pass.

I want to ask a couple of questions and get the hon. member's views on what he would think of the possibility, as we go down the road, of changing or amending legislation and of writing policy. I wonder if he sees Parliament and the committees being in a position to write policy, to get actually to the point at which we will do those things as we reform this institution. What extent does he see this going to?

Mr. Lee: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question. There is one principle if we are to proceed down the road to making the place work better and if we are to use the committee structure and that is the committee must, before it starts work, have a consensus as to what it wants to do. Without that all efforts will be scattered to the four winds and the committee will simply not achieve any goal, whether it be legislative or policy oriented.

I commend to all members who would be active in any committee area to build a consensus at the committee level before they start. One must accept a bit of divergence of views here at committee, but if they lose the consensus the committee will not impact on the government.

Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if the hon. member would give me his views on some changes that actually are not in this because as private members' bills go, everyone knows that we try to get up in this House and put forward legislation. Because of the system of the draw we

have I was in a private members' draw for three years and never got drawn. I am wondering if the hon. member would agree with me?

Mr. Lee: Mr. Speaker, I have to admit to the hon. member and to colleagues that I will be chairing the subcommittee on private members' business. I can assure the hon. member and all members on both sides of the House that we will be looking very carefully at possible reforms in that area.

(1710)

Mr. Hermanson: Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise the House that the hon. member for Calgary Southwest, a great advocate of parliamentary reform, will be speaking for 20 minutes and after that we will again divide our time pursuant to Standing Order 43(2).

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to sincerely commend the government House leader and other MPs responsible for these proposed amendments to the standing orders. I would also like to thank the member for Scarborough—Rouge River for reminding us that parliamentary reform ultimately depends on the initiative of individual members rather than on the initiative the government.

The amendments proposed in the motion from our standpoint reflect a significant step forward toward improving the ability of the House to conduct its business. It is our sincere hope that this is just the first step of many in that direction.

The proposed amendments that we find most attractive and most deserving of support are the following: first, the proposal to allow public bills to be sent to committees before second reading rather than after; second, the proposal to allow committees to draft and introduce bills; third, the proposal to allow the Standing Committee on Finance to consider and make reports on proposals regarding the budgetary policy of the government.

The general thrust of all these amendments is to give members of Parliament a greater say in the development of public laws and budgetary policy. This in our judgment is just an excellent first step in the right direction.

If hon. members agree with the spirit and the general direction of these amendments, it is a sincere hope of Reform MPs that the House will also be willing to consider additional steps in the same direction, steps that will take us toward a truly democratic and accountable Parliament for the 21st century.

Three of the most important of these additional steps are the institution of freer votes in the Chamber, the acceptance of direction by this House through referendums and citizens' initiatives and the acceptance and institution of a recall procedure.

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Reform members are pleased to see that the concluding paragraph of the motion directs the standing committee to examine procedures which would facilitate the institution of these measures. Because these measures are frequently misunderstood in some quarters and maligned in others, I would like to add to the comments of the member for Lethbridge earlier in the day and just comment briefly on the importance of each.

Let me start with the institution of free votes. If one is a so-called backbencher in the House, in other words if one is not a member of the cabinet, then there is no single reform that I would commend to such members for increasing our influence in this place and our ability to represent our constituents than the institution of freer votes.

The Reform MPs have challenged the Prime Minister and do so again to become the first Prime Minister to truly liberate MPs from excessive party discipline. As I said in my reply to the speech from the throne, this could be accomplished if the Prime Minister were simply to rise in his place and say: "Mr. Speaker, the government will not consider the defeat of a government motion, including a spending measure, to constitute an expression of non-confidence in the government unless it is immediately followed by the passage of a formal non-confidence motion".

If the Prime Minister were to take this simple step, what would be the practical consequences? We would not, as the Prime Minister suggested the other day in response to a question, see the House dissolve into a Parliament of 295 independent members. Under the freer vote convention we proposed we would still have parties. On most issues on which our platforms and commitments were clear and we were elected on the basis of those platforms and commitments we would continue to vote, for the most part, in accordance with those mandates.

However, if from time to time there arose issues on which our constituents clearly wanted us to vote contrary to the party line we should have the freedom in this House to do so without being censured by our colleagues or maligned by the media as dissidents or pressured by party whips or party leaders to vote against our constituents' interests.

(1715)

If we also relaxed the confidence convention in this House in favour of freer votes on estimates and individual spending measures, we would not be destroying the capacity of the government to carry a budget. We would simply be implementing recommendations by previous committees of this House to which the Auditor General again drew our attention in his latest report.

I want to quote four sections from his report and ask this House to come back to this subject. Paragraph 1.22 states in part:

However, committees are spending less and less time on the estimates. One major reason for this apparent lack of interest lies in the impact of the confidence convention, which, as currently interpreted, makes any motion to change a vote in the estimates a potential test of the House's confidence in the government. Because failure to win a confidence vote leads to the resignation of the government, no changes can be made in the estimates, even though committees have the power—at least in theory—to reduce or reject estimate votes.

Paragraph 1.28 states:

In 1988, the public accounts committee expressed concern about the adequacy of Parliament's scrutiny of the estimates—.The committee recommended to the House that a new "budget committee" be set up to remedy these deficiencies, and that "the government not consider a reduction in the estimates as a matter of non-confidence".

In paragraph 5.114 of the report it is stated:

Opening up the budget process to allow parliamentarians to participate would certainly contribute to a more meaningful dialogue on deficits, debt and the expectations of the public. However there would still remain the stumbling block known in our parliamentary institution as the confidence convention: the notion that the party forming the government must be able to demonstrate that it enjoys the support of a majority of the members of the House of Commons on most pieces of financial legislation. The standing committee on House management noted in its April 1993 report on reforming the House that to change this confidence convention does not require amendments to the standing orders of the House of Commons. Rather it requires a better understanding of the rights and responsibilities of individual members and a recognition that "Canadians want to feel that their members of Parliament have opportunities to vote freely and they expect them to do it more often".

Finally paragraph 1.31 states:

A recommendation in April 1993 by the standing committee on House management dealt with the convention of confidence. It stated that "with few exceptions, motions proposed by the government should be considered as motions of confidence only when clearly identified as such by the government". The committee felt that this, together with deleting some references to confidence in the rules of procedure, could help in opening up the budget process.

If we relaxed the confidence convention in this House in favour of freer votes, a few government measures including spending measures would be defeated. Under the freer vote convention we proposed that would not automatically mean defeat of the government. If a government measure were defeated because a number of government members voted against it, that defeated motion would immediately be followed by a formal confidence motion. In that vote government members would most likely support the government.

However by adopting the free vote convention we proposed, government backbenchers would have acquired for themselves and for this House the right to kill a bill or a portion of a bill without killing the government.

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If the House were to support having the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs examine and report on this institution of freer votes, it has also been suggested that the committee should examine how freer votes, freer than the ones we have in this Parliament, came about in the British Parliament, the mother of Parliaments.

I stand to be corrected by members who may have more intimate knowledge of the evolution of this practice in the British House, but my understanding is that the current free vote convention in that Parliament, while not as extensive as the one Reformers propose for here, came about not at the initiative of the cabinet and not at the initiative of the Prime Minister but at the initiative of the backbenchers.

(1720)

It is my understanding that some backbenchers in the Thatcher government simply decided one day that they would vote against a government motion and they told the cabinet so. They also told the cabinet: "We do not want to defeat the government. We just want to defeat this bill. If when the bill is defeated it is immediately followed by a confidence motion, we will support the government". As one British commentator put it: "After 300 years the backbenchers in the British Parliament finally figured out the importance of one simple mathematical fact: that there were more of them".

In a democratic chamber in which decisions are ultimately made by counting heads that fact ought to count for something. We say let not the rank and file members of this House take 300 years to figure out that there are more of us here than there are members of the executive and aspirants to cabinet positions. Let us make that fact count for something in the 35th Parliament.

I do not want to sound radical like William Lyon Mackenzie, but I say: Backbenchers of the House unite, unite behind the principle of freer votes. You have nothing to lose but the shackles of excessive party discipline.

Time does not permit me to elaborate on the contributions which greater use of referendums and citizens' initiatives could make to enhancing the credibility of Parliament and providing this House with a clearer sense of direction on critical issues at critical times. Suffice it to say that the country needs a full blown referendum law that permits regular consultation of the public by national referendum, the results of which would be binding on the government of the day.

Reformers propose that at each federal election Canadians get two ballots, not just one. On one ballot voters would mark their choice for a member of Parliament; on the other, a national referendum ballot, electors would vote on four or five major issues.

Because Canadians do not trust governments always to frame referendum questions fairly or to permit referendums on issues of greatest concern to the public, citizens should have the right to force a question or to initiate a question on to a referendum ballot if 3 per cent or more of the total electorate were prepared to sign a citizens' initiative petition.

One major reason we support the motion before the House is that its concluding paragraph directs the standing committee to examine ways and means to incorporate the results of referendums and citizens' initiatives into the legislative acts and decisions of the House. Anything which enhances the capacity of the House to respond to public direction will increase the credibility of Parliament and the trust of Canadians in this institution.

Finally I want to touch on the institution of recall. The third step the House needs to take toward a more truly democratic and accountable Parliament for the 21st century is the initiative in proposing a mechanism for the recall of its own members if members completely lose the confidence of those who have sent them here.

Chapter II of the standing orders, in particular Standing Orders 20, 21 and 23, provides for the House to exercise at least some discipline over its members with respect to their conduct, their election, their right to hold a seat and unacceptable behaviour, such as the acceptance of bribes. The spirit of Chapter II would be given some substance if Parliament were to pass a law enabling the electors themselves to discipline their members for unacceptable behaviour or consistent failure to represent constituents' interests.

There have been primitive experiments with recall mechanisms in this country in the past, mostly at the provincial level by at least three different political parties: the old Progressive Party, the Social Credit Party and the CCF, which was of course the predecessor to the NDP. While none of these primitive experiments was successful they provide valuable lessons from which modern parliamentarians could learn in designing an effective recall mechanism.

For example, the recall provisions used by the old Progressive Party and by the CCF were for the most part incorporated into party constitutions and procedures, not into public laws. They were in essence private contracts between a member and a small number of voters, usually the party executive or membership in the member's riding. These recall mechanisms were subject to abuse mainly by ambitious members of the MP's own party and brought the mechanism into disrepute.

(1725)

The recall mechanism utilized in Alberta in 1936 to which the Prime Minister directed the attention of the House the other day was incorporated into a public law, but it too had its defects. In this case the law was too easily opened to abuse by opposition parties and interest groups. For example it contained no provision prohibiting the purchase of signatures for a recall petition.

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Its first use was marred by this abuse when a group of lawyers in Calgary whose politics will remain nameless reportedly offered the good citizens of High River up to \$5 a signature to sign a recall petition against the premier.

Incidentally, and I do not think the Prime Minister mentioned this the other day, it may be of interest to members to know that when the Alberta recall bill was repealed by the Alberta legislature it was done by a free vote. The premier at the time, William Aberhart, voted against the repeal as did my father who was a cabinet minister at the time. The repeal was carried by a majority of the backbenchers who considered the bill to be defective.

Any modern recall mechanism to be considered by the standing committee should have three major safeguards based on what can be learned from the lessons of the past.

It should have a high threshold level. In other words a large number of electors would have to sign a recall petition in order to recall a member of Parliament and force a by-election. We have suggested that the threshold level be 50 per cent plus one of the number of electors who voted in the previous general election. In the constituency of Markham—Whitchurch—Stouffville for example, this would mean that almost 37,000 electors would have to sign the recall petition in order to trigger the recall of the member of Parliament who has lost their confidence.

In addition we would propose that except in exceptional circumstances such as where it can be demonstrated that a member of Parliament made fraudulent representations to electors during the general election campaign, recall not be available to electors until 18 months after a general election and that it be available for use only once in a riding during the term of a parliament. This together with the high threshold level would largely prevent the politically motivated harassment of MPs by their political opponents or by well heeled interest groups through abuse of the recall mechanism.

While some members of Parliament may ridicule the concept of recall I would encourage the more objective among us to do one thing. Members should do an informal or formal survey in their own ridings to find out what their constituents think about these direct democracy measures, the use of referendums and citizens' initiatives, freer votes, and the right of recall. I believe hon. members will find there is a great deal of public support for these measures and whether we like it or not the most popular of these three instruments is the right of recall.

I close by again commending the government House leader and others for bringing forward the proposed changes to the standing orders we are discussing today. My only request is that we persevere and go three steps further toward making this Parliament an even more democratic and accountable institution for the 21st century.

Reform members look forward with anticipation to the report of the standing committee called for by the final paragraph of the motion, in particular its recommendations on procedures for achieving freer votes, the institution of recall, and the incorporation of the results of referendums and citizens' initiatives into legislative acts.

(1730)

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Mr. Speaker, I have listened to the hon. member often in the last two years as he led a political party from relative obscurity to one that certainly holds some currency with the Canadian public today. I do respect his views, although I may not agree with all of them.

The hon. member has done quite a lot, as has his party through their political movement to ensure that we just do not heap scorn upon those of us who seek to do public service through our respective legislatures but by raising some real issues. Sometimes institutions change very slowly. As a young member of Parliament I can tell the hon. member that much of which he speaks I have supported and I will continue to support.

The whole concept of why we are here, whether it is to serve our party, our political masters within the party or our constituents, I am sure is one that each member of Parliament has had to deal with at some point since this country was formed. It is a matter of compromise and it is a matter of balance.

We have a party system. It means that within our party structures we try to draw a consensus on major issues. To have a complete lack of any discipline within the caucus system, I would put forward, would lead to some anarchy and perhaps some extreme forms of legislation, coming as the member would say from the executive. I think there is a balance.

However, I do agree that excessive discipline has been used in this place and in political parties for far too long. It has caused an abuse of the privileges of members who come here to speak on behalf of their constituents.

I want to ask the leader of the Reform Party if he believes there is a happy medium between complete direct democracy for every member and the party discipline system. I have noticed in the few votes we have had in this House that it appears that either they are birds of a feather flocking together or—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I think the member has the question.

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Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I want to acknowledge that none of us have a monopoly on the concept of parliamentary reform. There are members here who have advocated many of these changes for years and I certainly want to pay tribute to them.

With respect to the member's question, yes, I would say that what we are trying to do is to find a happy balance. We are not talking about going from excessive party discipline to a House of 295 independents whose voting and policy record would be completely unpredictable.

We are trying to get a balance among three things. There is the mandate theory of representation, that when members stand up here they represent the mandate they got from their electors. There is the trusteeship theory of representation, that when members stand up here they represent their own views and their own judgment that they bring to bear on public issues. There is also the delegate theory that when members stand up here they also represent the interests and views of the people who sent them here.

I am suggesting we have to get a balance among those three. If push comes to shove, in my view the will of the constituents should prevail over my personal view or my party's view, and the standing orders of this House should facilitate that kind of a balance.

Mrs. Dianne Brushett (Cumberland—Colchester): Mr. Speaker, I find it very interesting the member would indicate that the recall mechanism is the highest priority of the public today. Coming from the east coast I would have to disagree.

However, I would like for him to explain from where he gets his statistical data that he dare make a statement that it rates such a priority.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I might not have made myself as clear as I should have. I was not saying that recall was the most important thing in the minds of Canadian voters. I was saying that if asked about these direct democracy measures, referenda, citizens' initiative, freer votes and recall, at either public meetings or through surveys we have always found recall to be the highest priority of those four direct democracy measures.

I think in a way it is a reflection of the public's cynicism and mistrust of our institutions and an attempt to do something to correct it.

(1735)

Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain (Guelph—Wellington): Mr. Speaker, to the Leader of the Opposition or who would like to be, that would be fair to say would it not, I would like to ask the leader of the Reform Party about the referendum idea. I am quite concerned. On the surface it sounds very nice and appealing to some people. However, on examination it is far too simplistic.

This is part of my question, but I must share a little of this rationale.

The Deputy Speaker: I would remind the hon. member and perhaps other members as well that I am reminded by our boss that questions are to go through the Chair rather than directly to the member.

Mrs. Chamberlain: Mr. Speaker, in a referendum we have very solid views from Canadians from different parts of the country but they have had no opportunity to debate as we do here. I believe that part of our reason for being here is to have the opportunity for dialogue and to exchange views, to find out the rights and wrongs about things we would not have thought about perhaps if we were sitting in our living rooms at home reading a newspaper, watching the TV and getting all kinds of media reports.

There are good and bad sides to everything. Without that debate we would get a very cold, clinical, solid view in a referendum. I am quite concerned about that kind of push driving referendums. I would like to hear the opinion of the leader of the Reform Party on that.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I think the question is clear enough.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question and for that brief promotion to Official Opposition leader.

I agree with the thinking behind the hon. member's question that unless there is an educational component and intelligent public debate that goes along with referenda that they are not as effective a mechanism for decision making as they should be.

What most countries that have extensive referendum legislation provide for such as Switzerland and others is for the establishment of educational committees or promotional committees to thoroughly advocate the various sides of the issue. Certainly that ought to be part of any national referendum bill so that the decision made by people is an intelligent decision made on options that are presented not just something based solely on what they get from the media.

Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk): Mr. Speaker, I will take a little longer than 15 seconds. As a member who has actually voted against my party on three separate occasions—actually my party voted against me once—I have always considered my votes in this House as a free vote and you will notice where I am sitting.

I know that when I am elected that approximately 80 or 85 per cent of the people elect the party and not the individual member. Every time I stand up and try to express the view of my constituents that might be a little different from that of the party I always keep that in mind, knowing I represent a group that has elected me as a member of a party.

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I wonder in this debate how he can reconcile that with more free votes. I have a problem every time I do that.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's question and the dilemma that freer votes can create in that respect.

What I am saying, and I am sure this is the member's experience, that issues will come along where the party line is quite clear and he is absolutely aware that his constituents on that particular issue want him to do something different than his party. In other words, I am not talking now about general support for his party. I am talking about whether the public supports him standing up and voting in favour of some measure put forward by his party with which his constituents disagree.

We are suggesting that the free vote convention should be flexible enough to permit him to vote the way his constituents wish in that conflict situation and for him not to be subject to censor by his party or accused of being a radical or a dissident by the media. That would be my response.

Mr. George Proud (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, I want to follow up on what my colleague from Haldimand—Norfolk said to the member for Calgary Southwest. When the member for Calgary Southwest talks about freer votes, referendums and recall, I ask this question. I was one of the promoters of what we are talking about today, free votes and more freedom to the committees and things like that. I have no problem with recall if that is what comes out of this. I have been recalled many times. However, I believe that if we do not vote the way our constituents want us to we do not have to worry about that very long either.

(1740)

However, in all sincerity, if we do what we are talking about, about opening this place up and making it freer in every respect that we can, will that not in itself take care of many of the problems we are talking about today?

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, the short answer to the member's question is yes, up to a point. But just having freer debate or freer discussion in my view is not enough. It has to be carried that one step further where if, as a result of the discussion here, one comes to a conclusion somewhat different than one's party or one's constituents come to, that one would have the freedom to exercise it.

Certainly this greater freedom of debate and expression is a step in the right direction, but to cap it off there has to be some application to the voting as well as the speaking.

Mr. Mills (Broadview—Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, because this is such an important issue and we have the leader of the Reform Party who spent many hours and years working on this issue maybe we could have the unanimous consent of the House to continue questions.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed not to see the clock for three more people to pose questions?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: I take it there is unanimous consent. Is there with the Reform Party?

Some hon. members: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Very well. The three members who were standing up can, with unanimous consent, put their questions but please do it briefly.

Mr. Dennis J. Mills (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry): Mr. Speaker, I am sympathetic and support many of the hon. member's recommendations. There are some that I do not support, but I have real concern when he puts this emphasis on always listening to the popular view of our constituents.

I have not always shared the popular view of my constituents. In fact I will give a specific example. When I started off opposing the Charlottetown accord, for the first two weeks of the campaign there were many of my constituents who did not share my view. Over a period of time many came around.

The member does not realize that in this Chamber we have to deal with national issues that do not just concern the people of our riding but we have to make a judgment call and be sensitive to all regions and all concerns of other members in this House.

I do not always believe it is the popular view of our ridings that should drive us.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I should make clear to the member that I am not talking about turning members of Parliament into a voting machine where all they do is go home on the weekend, count noses on an issue and come back here and stick up their hands or not. I am not talking about that.

I agree with the member that there are lots of issues where the relationship between the member and his constituents has to be one of dialogue. The constituents may think this way and we go to them and say that we think differently because we have had this experience and have been exposed to this debate from others in the House.

My experience has been that if our constituents think that we will defer to their judgment if push came to shove they will often defer to ours. However, if they think we are going to do what we want to do or what our party wants to do regardless of what they think, then that is where we lose them.

I agree with the member there has to be dialogue, but I do think if push comes to shove the constituents ought to have the final say.

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Mr. Dan McTeague (Ontario): Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the hon. member for Calgary Southwest for his rather enlightening comment on what the Reform Party's position would be with respect to recall.

(1745)

This reminds any budding student of history of the famous debate that took place some two centuries ago in the 1790s when the member for Bristol in England in the other Parliament discussed the various pros and cons of the system which the member, some generations later, has just suggested.

My concern to the hon. member is that it seems very clear that the system the member proposes is not only cumbersome, it could very well be costly. If he stops to consider that if 50 per cent of the signatures are required in any one constituency, what is the cost that is going to be attributed to that very taxpayer in terms of determining whether or not those are valid signatures?

The second part of that would be simply the cumbersome nature of having that kind of a system.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, two or three points. I thank the member for his question. First of all, on recall if you set these safeguards high enough and strongly enough you can ensure that the instrument is not abused so it is not accessibly costly.

On the second point, I would ask the members to consider the cost of having an unacceptable member of Parliament who will not or cannot represent your views. That is the cost you have to offset against the cost a removal mechanism.

The third point I would make is the member made reference, and other members in this House have done this, to the famous speech by Edmund Burke in which he said that he owed his constituents his conscience, not his vote. This is the most articulate expression, the trusteeship theory of representation. It predated the existence of parties. The other thing the members should remember is that Edmund Burke was never elected again in the electoral district of Bristol.

Mr. Murray Calder (Wellington—Grey—Dufferin—Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, with the discussion we are having here on free vote, there has to be a common ground between free vote and responsible government.

There is a beautiful example south of the border which is predominantly free vote. On different issues I have watched and read in the newspaper, we have seen shameless vote buying.

What I would like to know right now is where the leader of the Reform Party thinks the common ground is between free vote and responsible government.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that question. He hits on a very pertinent point. I believe this free vote convention that we have suggested covers that common

ground. It gives the members the freedom to kill a bill or a portion of a bill, but when they do that it reverts back to asking the House if it wanted to kill this bill or this portion of a bill, or did it actually want to kill the entire administration because it has no confidence in it.

That free vote convention covers that common ground. It gives the members this individual capacity to kill an individual piece of legislation but ultimately also makes them accountable for the entire administration and it accountable to them. I thought this free vote convention we are proposing endeavoured to cover that common ground.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank members for co-operating. The time has long ago expired. With unanimous consent I will now go back to debate.

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, this is a very important debate we are having and it is going to be extremely difficult and frustrating for me to be limited to 10 minutes.

For the last 20 years of my life I have been practising participatory democracy first as a municipal politician and more recently in Parliament. I have dedicated most of my political career to opening up the processes of government, to making it more truly representative of the views of the people I represent and more broadly of the views of Canadians and their communities. I would love to debate at length why I disagree fundamentally with the member for Calgary Southwest, the leader of the Reform Party.

Let me come to the subject of this particular bill before us because as I see the context of this bill, for nine years we have had a government that fundamentally did not believe in the role of government in society and therefore had a great deal of difficulty governing well and had a great deal of difficulty governing with respect for the people of Canada and their opinions.

(1750)

I heard many times in the House: "We have to make tough decisions and if they do not like us they can throw us out at the next election". I do not believe that democracy begins and ends at the ballot box. It is something that goes on every day. It is the relationship between an individual member of Parliament and their constituents, it is a relationship between the institution of Parliament and all Canadians.

This motion in my view is a significant step forward in that relationship not because how we conduct our affairs in this Chamber or in our committees is of great overwhelming importance to Canadians, they really are not interested in our standing orders, but they are interested in what our decision making process is and how their views count in that process.

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Substantial portions of that bill will allow them to see openly and transparently how this House and how this government reach the decisions that will affect how much they contribute to their society, how it is used and how that will affect much of the pattern of their lives as Canadians. What it will allow us to do individually is to have a more of an input in that process and also to get more out of it.

I do not come here only to represent my constituents. I do not come here thinking that the views of Ottawa West should determine what should happen to the country. I come here to be part of building a nation on their behalf, certainly to represent their interests. The development of this wonderful nation called Canada is in their interest as well. I listen to the people from all parts of this country, from different kinds of communities. Together, certainly in my caucus, we try to come up with what we think is best for the country and best for its people.

I hope that with these more open processes of members of Parliament being able to work together in committees to develop legislation, to consult openly with Canadians, Canadians will feel and will truly have a more active voice in that decision making if they choose to exercise that. They will also have members of Parliament able to engage more actively and dynamically in the exchange of views that allows to build consensus, not only about the specific problems and actions that we are confronted with but about a longer term vision for the country.

We will always have differences of opinions on what those directions are. At least I hope with the measures we are taking today when we complete our work here in Parliament, a new program, that it will better serve the interests of our individual constituents and the country because we have looked at all aspects of it, we have considered all points of view and we have done that wonderful thing of not letting one point of view prevail over all others, but of finding that accommodation of many different points of view.

I want to touch on one thing. As some of the members in this House know, my role in the last Parliament was as critic on public service issues. I want to say one thing that I think is going to become increasingly important. That is going to be developing not only a House and committees but a government in the broadest sense of including the public service that is also more consultative, more open and more capable of balancing those many different interests in society, making good decisions and recommending to us as government and as parliamentarians good decisions.

I know, having seen the transformation over a period of years in municipal government to a more participative democracy, to quote a famous Canadian, that it takes time for the public service to see the wisdom of the people as a useful input to decision

making. I know it is going to be difficult for them. I know it is going to be a challenge.

(1755)

I encourage them to go along with Parliament on this trip to a more democratic society and to see it as a positive step forward for how the public service functions as well.

I have only a few minutes left but I do want to touch on a few things. I want to touch on the issue of free votes. This is the beginning of a debate that will come back to us.

It is very easy for me to know what the constituents who phone or write to me on a subject or respond to a questionnaire think. Do I really know what my constituents think when I know the poorest members of society have less access to being able to respond and participate in a public debate?

Do I have a responsibility to know that even though some people in my constituency are relatively voiceless without the money to organize, their views are, nonetheless, important and how they are affected is important? Yes, I do.

Do I have the audacity to say that on any given vote in this House I know what my constituents think? I do not think so. I know what a small sample of my constituents think.

I also have to know in much broader terms who my constituents are. I need to be in touch with them in a variety of ways and to absorb into myself what the many different concerns and preoccupations they have are so that I can bring all of those to bear as well as what I hear from fellow parliamentarians when I make a decision.

Do I believe in recall? Let me say that I have been married for 31 years. I am sure there have been hundreds if not thousands of days in those 31 years when my husband thought his life would be better off without this woman in it. On those days, he would have chosen to divorce me.

However, on balance of those more than 10,000 days, both of us would say that there has been more good than bad and a lot of in between. We are glad that we did not have the easy escape hatch, that we are prepared to live with the balance of the good and bad. There is a lot of that in democracy.

On any given day I may displease my constituents. My government may displease my constituents. On balance, I hope they will weigh both the positive and the less positive and not look at only their momentary self-interest when they decide whether I and my government have done a good job or not.

Mr. Ovid L. Jackson (Bruce—Grey): Mr. Speaker, to the member for Ottawa West, the leader of the Reform Party said that there was almost a form of recall when he said that Burke never got re-elected.

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One thing that concerns me as a new member of Parliament is that all of us, for whatever reason, want to reinvent laws, rules and regulations.

I will come to my question. I want to make a quick preamble here.

General Robert made rules. We have a book of rules here and there are other things. I come from a municipal council where we stopped reading bylaws simply because what happened in the old days was that some people could not read. Sometimes they only had one written part and one had to read those things clause by clause. Now we have the electronic media and we have to fine tune it. That is what the government is trying to do.

What bothers me in this place both with the committee work and with its rules and regulations and talking about laws is that we are spinning our wheels. We spend a lot of time at it. Somehow members of Parliament always want to do something and they think doing something is changing the rules. I know that rules are for making something happen.

I want to ask the member for Ottawa West, how do we reconcile the permanent government, which is the civil service, integrating with the rules and regulations we have? We make a rule in committee, and it has been done before. I have seen this kind of thing as a mayor when six members of council asked the administrator to do six different jobs. They spin their wheels and never get anything done.

How do we reconcile making a committee function properly with the civil servants who are there? How could we make that better by using these kinds of rules?

(1800)

Mrs. Catterall: This dilemma is not easy and I think the hon. member knows that the permanent public service as he calls it can be very resistant to change if it does not agree with it at first. Let me tell the hon. member what I have seen over the five years I have been here and how I think it has to change.

I have seen officials come before committees as they are required to do to defend the position the government has put forward. Unfortunately that position has often been developed in the secrecy of cabinet without the open consultation and discussion we are talking about here.

When we say we are going to send the concept of a bill to a committee for discussion so that the committee can consult with and hear the views of people who will be affected by the issue, that leaves our officials freer to bring forward options for a committee to consider. That is going to be a change for them. It is going to take some time for them to understand they are not defending a particular position and that they are free to advise the committee on options and on the implications of those options.

It also means that members of Parliament must have a new relationship of respect and trust with the public service. It is not the defender of the government now. It is working with members of Parliament and the committee to help make a good bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Before recognizing the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell there are three people left to speak. We have 22 minutes. I wonder if there would be a disposition to give eight minutes to each of the members and not have questions and comments. Is that agreeable? I take it it is not agreeable to do it that way and I call on the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure this afternoon to have the opportunity to speak on the motion before the House to amend our rules.

We are amending the rules pursuant to a commitment made by our party during the last election campaign when we put out a program to Canadians. They voted for that program which included a number of things on Parliament. It mentioned allowing more free votes, giving MPs a greater role in drafting legislation, giving more power to House of Commons committees and involving the public in consultation before important legislation was introduced.

Many of these issues have been done already. The others are in the motion we are debating today. That is what it is all about. This is part of the program I and all Liberal candidates stood for in the last election campaign.

I want to advance the proposition to all members today that it is untrue to state at the present time there are no free votes. As a matter of fact a very successful argument can be made that all votes in this Parliament are free. I say it for the following reason and I am not saying we do not need to improve our system. After all we are proposing to do just that today.

Nevertheless as a member of Parliament I have the power to make an accusation against any citizen of Canada in this House and I could never be sued in a court of law for saying it. I have the ultimate freedom in this Chamber on behalf of the people who sent me here to say anything, anything at all. I, though, must live with the consequences of that which I say in this House once I leave this House. Nevertheless, I still have that freedom. I as a member of Parliament together with my colleagues have the freedom to defeat my government in a non-confidence motion.

Did the people of the United States have a tool like that in the Watergate scandal? Do they not wish they had had something like that? The process for getting rid of a president that country no longer wanted and Congress no longer wanted dragged on for months and months before the United States Congress. It would take about six minutes to do that in the House of Commons today.

Government Orders

(1805)

We talk about freedom and powers that MPs have and do not have. Maybe MPs do not use all the power they have, but they have power in this House and to state the opposite is simply incorrect.

We are talking about recall in this whole business. Does anyone realize what the whole process of recall would do to the freedom of a member of Parliament? If I were under threat from my own riding association for leaving my party to be recalled and lose my seat in Parliament, would that give me more freedom as an MP? No, that would mean I would be subject to even greater pressure from my colleagues. How much of that has been considered by those proposing recall? I submit not much thinking went into that particular proposition.

We are talking about voting only as it reflects the aspirations of our constituents. I have been elected to this place three times, to the provincial legislature of my province once, to municipal council three times. I was fortunate and blessed by having received the support of my electors on seven different occasions in my life. I think I have done a few things which people might consider controversial. I have not always voted according to the wishes of the majority of my constituents.

Mr. Speaker, I think you will have some understanding for this but I voted against abortion in this House. Was that the reflection of the majority of my constituents? Probably not. When I voted against capital punishment was that according to the wishes of the majority of my constituents? Probably not. And when I made very strong pronouncements against euthanasia probably the same logic applies.

However in every case I made copies of my speeches and sent them to every single constituent in my riding. I stood by what I had said and stood there to be judged later by my constituents about what I had said. That is what it is all about. It is being accountable to those who sent us here and not necessarily always voting in the manner that 50.1 per cent of the people advocate.

We are debating changing the rules of this House, rules that have existed in one form or another and in this Parliament or the mother of Parliaments for probably about 1,500 years dating from the period of Saxon–Wettins through the Norman invasion of Britain and then through all the changes that occurred. Then there are those forms we have adopted here and modified for our own use. We have to remember that there is a reason those rules have evolved. Yes, they can be updated. Yes, they can be improved. Yes, they can be modernized. Yes, they can be liberalized. Yes, we can do all those things to those rules. But let us remember why they are there.

On the confidence convention, I saw someone resurrecting the ghost of William Lyon Mackenzie earlier today. Is that not interesting. William Lyon Mackenzie and Louis Joseph Papineau both fought for the institution of responsible government.

Both fought for the institution whereby there would be confidence votes so that the government could be accountable to the legislature. The member for Calgary Southwest had the right argument but was making it in reverse, unless I have totally forgotten everything I learned in history and I do not believe that I have.

I say that having a system known as responsible government means to have a vote of confidence. It means ultimately that the government in this Chamber is accountable to all of us, where at one point we can all say or have the right to say that we can turf the government out right in here. That is an ultimate power few legislators have. What does it do? What kind of pressure does that put on our government, to say that it has to be accountable to all of us, that all of us have that great power over the government? I suggest to you that it can make government listen to those who were sent here to represent the people of this great country.

(1810)

Let us change this institution, let us modernize it, but let us be careful as well that we do not destroy it in our zeal to make it better.

[Translation]

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu): Mr. Speaker, let me congratulate the member on his speech. I cannot wait to see if he will say the same thing in a month or two, when the Minister of Finance will have presented his budget, when he will have tabled a bill changing the unemployment insurance program, when he will have modified projects in a way that will totally run counter to what he advocated when he was sitting here on the opposition side and, defending his principles, shouted down the government.

Will he have the same courage then? Will he uphold the same principles? When one crosses the floor of the House, one generally receives a sort of electrical jolt and sometimes red books, like the one you mentioned earlier, become blue. That is why I am eager to see what will happen; I certainly urge the member to stick to what he just said.

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, since I do not have a good memory for historical events in this House, the member opposite certainly remembers the blue books better than I do. After all, he is the one who sat as a Tory in the House, not me.

Nevertheless, I do not claim that—and I do not want the member to suggest that I do—my government, the Canadian government will never be at fault and will make no mistake. Of course not. Nobody is perfect. What is important to know is whether the government is acting in the best interests of Canadians, not whether it is going to give a new grant to my riding or to that of the member opposite. The government is here for the common good, and I know that our Prime Minister, our government, intend to do just that. As I said before, if the government does not behave in a fair, honourable and ac-

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countable way, the House has the power to exercise the many prerogatives it has.

[*English*]

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver): Mr. Speaker, the member justified voting against the wishes of his constituents on the basis that they could judge him at election time. But the hon. member knows that there are many issues that come before the House during a session and that it is unreasonable for him to say that they could judge him on one or other issue of the hundreds that come before us.

Can the member not see that by picking and choosing when his personal beliefs will interfere with his representation of the people who elected him, that he is taking an elitist attitude to the people who elected him.

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, the member may think I am an elitist. I find the comment rather odd as I came from the most humble beginnings to take my seat in Parliament. As the member gets to know me he will learn about that. The last thing I have ever been called is elitist as I will describe to him privately later. But that is certainly not the case.

The proposition I am advancing to the member is that governments have to be accountable, MPs have to be accountable for what they say. That does not mean they cannot consult with their electors all the time. But it also means another thing; that if members do not have discipline as a party, no obligation to live with the program their party makes, either the one that I present or the one the member presented to the Canadian people, then surely the freedom he is advocating could also be used to go against the collective wishes of those who sent him here in the belief that within his own constituency there would be half or 1 or 2 or 3 per cent of the people more against the program of his own party than those who are for it. That is the caution I want to give the hon. member.

(1815)

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island): Mr. Speaker, I join in this very historic debate today. I believe we are at a crossroads in this country.

I found it rather interesting and almost amusing to hear people on the other side talk about what a wonderful breakthrough this is, that we are debating things before we actually decide them. I asked: "Has it never been the case before?" I am new to the political process. I did not even belong to a political party before I became involved very recently.

I am astounded to find that what I dealt with during the election campaign is actually true, that for the most part our democracy is very inclusive. It is inclusive among a very small

number of people. I applaud the government for the steps it is taking. It is wonderful we are having this debate, that we are looking forward to actually producing and having some changes, not just talk, but some actual changes.

We need to reform the democratic process. It occurred to me while I was sitting here that perhaps we are observing an oxymoron. We are having a liberalization and a reform of the democratic process, two very different words and yet to a great extent we are heading in the same direction.

I believe that one of the reasons we have so much mistrust of politicians is that our democracy works only in spurts. We have a spurt of involvement of the people at election time and then they are ignored until the next election. Consequently people mistrust the politicians because they detect and observe no ongoing accountability.

There is an interesting statement in the red book which is so oft quoted in this Chamber. It really is not surprising that it should be in the book. The Reform Party and my involvement in it came as a result of this "new emphasis in listening to the people, the constituents, the voters and the taxpayers".

When we listened to the taxpayers we found out among other things that there was a great deal of mistrust and distrust because of lack of consultation. The Liberal Party in its work to get elected did a good thing also. It began listening to the people. It probably did it through its polling techniques or whatever, but it heard the same message we heard that gave birth to our party and it was that people want to be involved on an ongoing basis in the decisions of government.

The quote I would like to take from the red book is: "The people are irritated with governments that do not consult them or that try to conduct key parts of the public business behind closed doors". That is the truth which we are reaching for here.

I pledge, and I am sure that I speak on behalf of all the members of my party, that we are going to work together to enhance not only the ease with which Parliament works but also with its accountability to the people.

In that regard I would like to address for a few minutes a very important aspect of our work in representing the constituents, those that elected us. There is a lot of fear among politicians—and maybe I am wrong here—in talking on an ongoing basis with the electors and truly representing them. I hear over and over innuendo that they are not to be trusted, that perhaps they do not have enough ability, enough education, enough sense of history, enough perspective or maybe they are too narrow and they think only of themselves and so they cannot be involved on an ongoing basis.

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(1820)

I read very recently an essay written by Woodrow Wilson which I think is very illustrative. I would like to read just one short section. He said: "Today when our government has so far passed into the hands of special interests, today when the doctrine is implicitly avowed that only select classes have the equipment necessary for carrying on government, today when so many conscientious citizens smitten with the scene of social wrong and suffering have fallen victims to the fallacy that benevolent government can be meted out to the people by kind-hearted trustees of prosperity and guardians of the welfare of dutiful employees, today supremely does it behoove this nation to remember that a people shall be saved by the power that sleeps in its own deep bosom or by none, shall be renewed in hope, in conscience, in strength by waters welling up from its own sweet perennial springs, not from above, not by patronage of its aristocrats. The flower does not bear the root but the root the flower".

In conjunction with this I believe that we should pay a great deal of attention to the concept of referendum to the people on important issues. We all recognize that as legislators here we represent a broader constituency than just our own home constituency. I also speak for Canada. I long to keep this country together. I think I speak on behalf of my constituents when I voice those sentiments.

However we also need to recognize that on many issues our people are well informed and with an informed debate can become more informed and thereby give us real valid input, even to the point of having a referendum.

I would also like to indicate that sometimes ordinary citizens feel totally left out of the process. There is something that they want done. Government will not hear them. It seems to me wise as a back-up, probably used very infrequently, that we have a method of citizens' initiative which will allow the citizens themselves to place on a referendum ballot a question which is to be answered and which is to be binding.

I recognize that my time is fast disappearing. I would like to simply say that on the mechanisms of referendum and of citizens' initiative we have done a lot of work in developing them. I do not have time now to go into those details, but they do work, they can work, they do work in other parts of the world. I believe it would greatly enhance the democracy of this country if we were to incorporate those as well.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6.22 p.m., pursuant to order made Wednesday, February 2, 1994, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and to put forthwith every question needed to dispose of Government Business No. 6 now before the House.

[English]

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Motion agreed to.)

(1825)

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS*[Translation]*

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

CIGARETTE SMUGGLING

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu): Mr. Speaker, as the Standing Orders allow for the "late show" or the adjournment motion, we can come back to a question raised in the House. I therefore take the four minutes which the Standing Orders allow me to use to return to the question which the Prime Minister was asked on January 21, 1994, when I asked why his Minister of Indian Affairs spoke of setting up a system of native self-government, although in his government program and his political speeches, the Prime Minister still said that there was no more room for constitutional negotiations.

In his answer, the Prime Minister said that it was not certain whether negotiating native self-government required amending the Constitution or not.

Now, all constitutional experts agree that it is necessary to amend the Constitution and the Prime Minister himself said that a committee was studying the matter and would report on it. So if a committee is about to report, why does his minister say that he wants to open negotiations right away, when he does not even know if he needs the provinces' consent or if he must open the constitutional issue to do so?

What is surprising is that, in the second question I asked him, the Prime Minister said that the Minister for Foreign Affairs would be very happy to answer in a debate. He said, "I have nothing to add to the statement I made earlier. Our ambition is to treat everyone equally in Canada, and that is why we believe that everyone is equal in this country and no one has special status".

The Prime Minister said that after his minister announced that he was ready to open constitutional negotiations with natives on their right to self-government. Despite claiming to support his minister, the Prime Minister said that he did not want to give special status to any province or nation, such as the Quebec nation or the aboriginal peoples.

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This glaring contradiction brings me to the question I am raising in the House today to get more details through his parliamentary secretary. But I also want to invoke the reasons given by the minister to justify opening these negotiations to recognize the right of natives to self-government. The minister was doing it in the name of better economic management.

If it is in the natives' interest to administer their own affairs, why would the same principle not also apply to the people of Quebec who happen to be one of the founding nations and who, like the other founding people, namely the aboriginal people, aspire to manage their own affairs? It is in the name of this very principle of better economic management and not to wage a flag war against the rest of Canada or to break up a country but to build one, like any free nation in the world has done. I think that since the Second World War, 65 new nations have emerged with all attendant rights.

Our guiding principle is this: let us collect our own taxes. Let us manage our own affairs and then buy the services we need jointly with the sovereign countries around us. That is how we want to act with natives. In fact, the minister was talking about opening the Constitution in the same sense that we also want to open it, in the sense of managing our own affairs.

It is strange to see the Prime Minister saying two different things, talking from both sides of his mouth about a founding people, namely the aboriginal people, and about the other founding people, namely the people of Quebec. It is in that sense that I would like the parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister to answer pursuant to the Standing Orders for two minutes to elaborate on the government's precise position.

[*English*]

Ms. Jean Augustine (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I will respond to the member's question of January 21, 1994, when the member for Richelieu asked the Prime Minister a question regarding native self-government and the Constitution.

Let me begin by saying that the Prime Minister has stated unequivocally in this House and elsewhere that the priority of the government is job creation and not the Constitution.

The Liberal position on the nature of self-government was made clear in the red book. We said that the inherent right of self-government is an existing aboriginal and treaty right. To that extent the federal government is involved in a series of meetings with national and regional aboriginal leaders, provincial and territorial governments and other parties.

(1830)

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples interim report said it was possible to implement native self-government without changing the Constitution. That is what we are working on at this point in the discussion. I hope this satisfies the

member's questions which seem to have gone beyond his question of January 21.

TOBACCO PRODUCTS

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to refer to a question I asked the Minister of Health on February 1, 1994 as to whether she was prepared to stand up for the health of Canadians on the question of the government's proposed policy of lowering taxes on cigarettes.

The real question today is who sets tax policy and who defends health care policy in this country?

First of all on the question of who sets tax policy, Canadians are wondering whether it is the law breakers or the cigarette companies.

I must say the government certainly has some connections with cigarette companies such as that with Imasco, for example, which is the parent company of Imperial Tobacco. The Minister of Finance was formerly a member of the board. In 1992 Imasco donated \$47,477.30 to the Liberal Party of Canada. Canadians are wondering whether the cigarette manufacturers are setting tax policy.

Is it the provinces and territories? It would seem it is not the provinces and territories in conjunction with the federal government because the provinces and territorial health ministers are meeting tomorrow. The government has said it will state its intention on this matter tomorrow before that meeting is completed.

The Minister of Health in her response to my question said she was concerned about health. She did not answer as to whether as Minister of Health she would stand up for the health of Canadians and advocate that cigarette taxes not be lowered.

Rather, she said that she was very concerned about the high level of tobacco use among young people. I suggest to the Minister of Health that she might have cited the Statistics Canada study which indicates there was a direct decrease in consumption of tobacco products by teens as the price went up. However the minister refused to say where she stood on this issue.

I would say also it is clear that the direct health cost results of lowering the tax will place a further burden on the provinces. Today there is a news release from the British Columbia health minister which states tobacco related illness is estimated to cost British Columbia nearly \$1 billion annually.

I would also ask as I did on February 1 whether this government is prepared to compensate provinces and territories for increased health costs as a result of decreased cost of tobacco products.

It is clear that the use of tobacco is a very high contributor both to the health costs of Canadians and alas to the death of Canadians with some 37,000 Canadians a year dying as a result

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of tobacco use. In fact, a recent survey on selected causes of preventable death indicated that tobacco was number one far outweighing traffic accidents, suicides, AIDS, homicides, fires, accidental poisoning and undetermined deaths. The relationship between tobacco use, health care costs and indeed the life and death of Canadians has been shown clearly.

I would appreciate hearing what the government proposes to do in terms of the health of Canadians and whether Canadians are going to have a Minister of Health who advocates both within the cabinet and this House of Commons for the health of Canadians and takes that responsibility seriously .

In view of the fact that in the next couple of years we will be undergoing a very comprehensive review of health care and health care costs, it does not augur well that we have a Minister of Health who would not stand up for the health of Canadians, but chose to be evasive and not to answer the questions on this issue.

(1835)

Ms. Susan Whelan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I am to respond to the question of February 1 and that is what I will do.

Research indicates that at least 38,000 die each year as a result of tobacco related diseases. These deaths reflect smoking behaviours of more than two decades ago when the risks of smoking were less understood.

Even now more than 100,000 children and teens begin smoking every year in Canada.

Enough is known about the hazards of smoking that we can predict with gruesome confidence that one in four of these young new smokers will die prematurely from conditions like emphysema, heart disease and lung cancer.

Tobacco deaths are preventable and even one preventable death let alone thousands constitutes a tragedy. This is unacceptable.

Canada's national strategy to reduce tobacco use has gone a long way toward reinforcing the idea that smoking is no longer

cool for youth and a lot less socially acceptable among adults than once was the case in this country.

This strategy has proceeded on a broad front with federal legislation restricting cigarette advertising and requiring strong visible health warnings on the product package, with health promotion campaigns aimed at encouraging young people to think twice about starting to smoke and to break free from social pressures to start smoking, and with federal legislation to raise the age at which people may legally be sold tobacco products to 18.

Tobacco smuggling is a serious threat to Canada's strategy against smoking because it is making cigarettes available to young people through illicit channels.

Unless we put a stop to smuggling we will find it increasingly difficult to keep tobacco out of the hands of young teens, which is the very purpose of the sales of tobacco to young people act. With this law we expect Canada's retail sector to take a responsible approach to ensuring tobacco is not available for sale to young people but to make it work to control tobacco access by young persons.

The tobacco market has got to move above ground where we can see it, where we can manage it, and where our programming can have its full effect.

Canada leads the world in taking a comprehensive strategic approach to reducing the toll of sickness and premature death caused by tobacco smoking. We have no intention of forfeiting this lead. The government is committed to implementing innovative programs and legislation to maintain the momentum of our national strategy to continue to reduce addictions to tobacco in Canada and to continue to prevent tobacco related deaths.

I want to inform the House that it is the government that sets tax policy in this country.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: In accordance with Standing Order 38(5), the motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.37 p.m.)

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